



UF Lastinger Center for Learning
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

SCHOLASTIC

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UF Lastinger Center for Learning Selects Scholastic as Partner in New Worlds Reading Initiative

Largest Statewide Reading Program of its Kind Kicks Off with Books Shipping to Kids Across Florida

GAINESVILLE, Florida -- December 8, 2021 -- The Lastinger Center for Learning at the University of Florida announced the selection of Scholastic as its strategic partner in [New Worlds Reading](#)—a program to ship free books, in English, Spanish and Haitian Creole, to over half a million K-5 students who are not yet reading on grade level across the state of Florida to advance literacy and a love of reading.

Through the program, books will begin shipping out in early December to arrive in mailboxes throughout the month. Eligible Florida public and charter school students in grades K-5 will be able to receive a book a month, up to nine books throughout the year, and households with multiple eligible children could be the recipients of a multitude of books—all geared to young readers’ specific interests. Importantly, the program also features literacy resources and activities for families to engage with books alongside their children to help build confidence, strengthen language interactions, and literacy skills.

The New Worlds Reading Initiative was created by House Speaker Chris Sprowls, who announced his intention during his designation speech to propose legislation that would close the achievement gap in reading. During his first legislative session leading the House, the New Worlds Reading Initiative was unveiled and received unanimous, bipartisan support, leading to Governor DeSantis signing the legislation into law in June of 2021. During his address, Speaker Sprowls explained that his motivation for the initiative was simple: “If a child can read, they can learn. If they can learn, then everything becomes possible.”

As the initiative continues to take shape and the month of December marks the first month that books will begin shipping to young readers, Sprowls said: “When schools, parents, private businesses, higher education and elected leaders all come together for the benefit of a child’s future - good things happen. Children need to be given the foundation of reading to build the foundation of their life. We are proud to see this worthy initiative take off and even more excited that children will have books in their hands to read with their parents, siblings and friends this month.”

“This is a partnership among so many stakeholders—communities, families, students, schools and the state of Florida,” said Dr. Philip Poekert, director of the Lastinger Center for Learning. “At Lastinger, we’re proud to play a part in it, and to partner with a trusted name like Scholastic to deliver on the promise of this program.”

“The New Worlds Reading Initiative is directly aligned with our mission at Scholastic, which is about helping children learn to read and love to read,” said Rose Else-Mitchell, president of Education Solutions at Scholastic. “We are honored to partner with the Lastinger Center and the State of Florida, in delivering millions of books directly to families across Florida and helping kids build the habits of reading by choosing books for their own at-home library.”



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In the first shipment, books will be delivered to nearly 70,000 students currently enrolled in the program. In its first year, the program will include titles in English, Spanish and Haitian Creole, across a variety of topics and genres.

To participate in the program, parents or caregivers of eligible students should visit www.newworldsreading.com to learn about eligibility and enrollment in the program. Any parent or caregiver who has further questions about eligibility for the program should contact their child's teacher.

The UF Lastinger Center was selected by the state to organize and launch the New Worlds Reading Initiative. In turn, Lastinger selected Scholastic to procure and distribute books through a formal proposal process. The program will continue to receive support from the Florida Department of Education. Contact new.worlds@coe.ufl.edu for information on making an individual or tax credit contribution.

About the UF Lastinger Center for Learning:

Housed within the University of Florida College of Education, the Lastinger Center for Learning is an education innovation hub that develops solutions designed to improve outcomes across three education milestones: kindergarten readiness, reading proficiency by third grade, and algebra proficiency by ninth grade. The Lastinger Center's innovations serve children and educators in every community in Florida and have expanded both nationally and globally. The remarkable scope of the Lastinger Center's work and the impact of its collective efforts have drawn state, national, and international recognition and investment. Learn more at www.lastingercenter.com.

About Scholastic:

For more than 100 years, Scholastic Corporation (NASDAQ: SCHL) has been encouraging the personal and intellectual growth of all children, beginning with literacy. Having earned a reputation as a trusted partner to educators and families, Scholastic is the world's largest publisher and distributor of children's books, a leading provider of literacy curriculum, professional services, and classroom magazines, and a producer of educational and entertaining children's media. The Company creates and distributes bestselling books and e-books, print and technology-based learning programs for pre-K to grade 12, and other products and services that support children's learning and literacy, both in school and at home. With 15 international operations and exports to 165 countries, Scholastic makes quality, affordable books available to all children around the world through school-based book clubs and book fairs, classroom libraries, school and public libraries, retail, and online. Learn more at www.scholastic.com.

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