

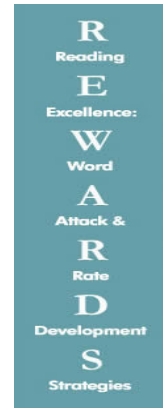
# Florida Center for Reading Research

## REWARDS

### What is REWARDS?

*REWARDS* is an acronym for Reading Excellence: Word Attack and Rate Development Strategies. It is an intense, short-term intervention reading program that is specifically designed for students in fourth through twelfth grades who have mastered skills associated with first- and second-grade reading but have difficulty reading long words and/or who read slowly (i.e., 60 to 120 correct words per minute). It does not address students who read below a mid-second-grade reading level. Instead, *REWARDS* provides those intermediate and secondary students who read between a 2.5 and 5.0 reading level with flexible strategies for decoding multi-syllabic words in order to build reading accuracy and fluency. This is accomplished by teaching a strategy to segment a word into parts, read the word part by part, and then read the word independently. Students learn that they can be flexible in dividing the word into parts as long as they can ultimately make the word into a real word.

The program consists of 20 lessons lasting 40 to 50 minutes each and is administered by teachers or paraprofessionals in a whole class setting. The lessons are explicit, yet flexible, with a high level of teacher/student interaction. From this, the teacher is able to monitor and make instructional adjustments on an on-going basis. Each lesson includes a description of the activity and a detailed lesson plan. The materials consist of a Teacher's Guide and a student workbook for each student. The Teacher's Guide contains black line masters for a pre & posttest, fluency passages, overheads, fluency graphs, and an incentive program employing a point system used for either motivational purposes or to determine grades for the students.



### How is REWARDS aligned with Scientifically Based Reading Research?

Scientific research on reading has shown that students must acquire skills in five critical areas in order to become proficient readers. These areas include: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. *REWARDS* is designed to be a reading intervention program focusing on fluency-building, not a complete reading program. One component of phonemic awareness, syllable blending and segmenting, is addressed in the word attack activities of each lesson. Beginning phonics skills are practiced in the pre-skill activities, but are not taught directly. The program is designed to teach a flexible strategy that is easily remembered and applied by students, allowing them to decode words with up to eight word parts. Students are taught to move from overt (circling and underlining words parts and vowel sounds) to covert (recognizing the word parts and vowel sounds) strategies of decoding. Because certain fundamental skills are required to use these covert strategies effectively, the first 12 lessons are dedicated to training in these basic skills: circling decodable word parts (affixes), underlining vowel sounds, articulating the word at a normal pace, then faster, then making it a real word. Helping students determine the accurate pronunciation using oral language in conjunction with context clues is included in the pre-skill strategy training. Lessons 13-20 focus on fluency with the introduction and

practice of the *REWARDS* flexible decoding strategy. This strategy allows students to identify known affixes and their meanings as well as vowel sounds and uses that information to form word parts, thus enabling them to read longer words within sentences and content passages.

Although vocabulary and comprehension are not addressed directly, some attention is given to vocabulary development in lessons 1-12. As described above, students learn the meanings of affixes that make up longer words, which assists them in comprehending the content of the passage. Lessons 13-20 provide comprehension questions that accompany the passages. *REWARDS* stresses that when a student can read more words, their reading vocabulary comes closer to their oral vocabulary, thus their comprehension improves.

Training for the implementation of *REWARDS* is generally accomplished in a one-day format. Trainers work as independent contractors, and a list of these trainers is provided at [www.rewardsreading.com](http://www.rewardsreading.com). However, the Teacher's Guide provides detailed directions for use of the program.

### Research Support for REWARDS

*REWARDS*, first published in 2000, was developed based on research supporting the value of teaching intermediate students flexible decoding skills for multi-syllabic words. The strategy taught in *REWARDS* is based on research showing that the most effective way to identify unknown words in text is to first "sound them out" and then to use passage context to find a word that matches both the sounds of the letters and the meaning of the passage (Cunningham, 1998; Snow, Burns, and Griffin, 1998). The authors developed *REWARDS* and conducted research to evaluate its effectiveness based on the understanding of the relationship between word recognition and reading comprehension, the fact that beginning in fifth grade the average student encounters approximately 10,000 new words and the knowledge that while multisyllabic words don't make up all the words read they do carry most of the meaning in passages (Nagy and Anderson, 1984).



Anita Archer (1981), one of the *REWARDS* authors, conducted an early study in which several slightly different versions of *REWARDS* were implemented and compared to a decoding program not specifically designed to teach multisyllabic words. The participants included 34 fourth grade students and 14 fifth grade students who had been nominated by their teachers as reading-deficient (e.g., grade equivalency scores ranging from 2.7 to 3.5 and 2.5 to 3.8 on the Word Identification and Word Attack subtests, respectively, of the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests) (Woodcock, 1971,1973). These students were randomly assigned to one of three treatment groups or one control group. Each of the three treatment groups engaged in the same 30 minutes of *REWARDS* pre-skill instruction during the first half of the intervention, which lasted for nine days, whereas the control group received only instruction in monosyllabic word decoding for 30 minutes a day. After pre-skills training, a criterion test (from the *REWARDS* program) was administered in order to measure the level of mastery that occurred across the three treatment groups, and to determine whether similar levels of attainment occurred for these groups but not for the control group. Each of the three treatment groups then received an additional nine days of various versions of *REWARDS* instruction followed by administration of the posttest measures, similar to those included in the Teacher's Guide for *REWARDS*. The participants in the control groups continued to receive only monosyllabic word training. Post testing with

the Word Identification and Word Attack subtests of the *Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests* (Woodcock, 1971, 1973) indicated that all three REWARDS groups had significantly higher scores than the control group, indicating support for the REWARDS strategy instruction as effective in teaching multisyllabic decoding skills.

One of the other *REWARDS* authors, Vicky Vachon, conducted a study to examine the differential effectiveness of 4 variations in *REWARDS* instruction with middle school students with reading deficiencies. However, because this study did not include a control group, it does not validate the efficacy of *REWARDS* itself. No other studies of *REWARDS* are currently available.

We conclude that there is a beginning level of research support (Archer, 1981) for the use of *REWARDS* as an intervention to teach intermediate and secondary students necessary decoding and fluency building skills. Additional experimental research is needed to allow for conclusive support of *REWARDS*.

## Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of *REWARDS*:

- It is easy to implement and can be used successfully by a wide variety of professionals, paraprofessionals, and volunteers.
- *REWARDS* is a short-term intervention that can be completed in four or five weeks.
- Student progress is easily monitored, charted, and rewarded, thus increasing motivation.

Weaknesses of *REWARDS*:

- None were noted.

## Which Florida districts have schools that implement REWARDS?

Alachua	352-955-7527	Lafayette	386-294-1351
Broward	954-765-6271	Leon	850-487-7147
Columbia	386-755-8000	Palm Beach	561-434-8200
Duval	904-390-2115	Santa Rosa	850-983-5010
Escambia	850-469-6130	Suwannee	386-364-2604
Hamilton	386-792-1228	Taylor	850-838-2501
Hillsborough	813-272-4050	Washington	850-638-6222
Jackson	850-482-1200	Bay	850-872-4329

## For More Information

[www.rewardsreading.com](http://www.rewardsreading.com)

## References

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227 N. Bronough St., Suite 7250 • Tallahassee, FL 32301  
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