

# Chapman University School of Education Receives Grant to Develop Fifth Graders' Reading Comprehension in Science and Social Studies

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Officials announced today that Chapman University's School of Education has been awarded a \$490,000 grant to study the development of reading comprehension skills of fifth graders in the science and social studies content areas over the next two years. "This grant is another testimonial to our faculty who are working directly with teachers and children to both improve schools and produce top-tier national research," says Don Cardinal, Ph.D., Dean, School of Education at Chapman University.

The grant, entitled the Read for Real Project, is a collaborative effort between Chapman University and Zaner-Bloser Educational Publishers, based in Columbus, Ohio. The Project will be directed by Principal Investigator Roxanne Greitz Miller, Assistant Professor of Education at Chapman's Orange campus, and Co-Principal Investigator Robert C. Calfee, Distinguished Professor Emeritus in University of California Riverside's Graduate School of Education.

The project is funded by Mathematica Policy Research Group, one of the nation's premier research agencies in social and educational policy issues, through a contract from the U.S. Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences. Mathematica's staff will compare the effectiveness of five promising approaches to reading comprehension instruction in fifth grade science and social studies. The Read for Real Project is one of the five programs chosen through a comprehensive review process by some of the nation's foremost scholars in reading comprehension.

Reading comprehension is critical to success in school and in the workplace. Results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show limited improvement nationally in reading comprehension over the past few decades and a substantial achievement gap between students of high and low socioeconomic backgrounds. While both reading and mathematics have been targeted for improvement by *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), reading achievement has proven far more resistant to reform efforts than mathematics. For instance, the Education Trust's 2004 report that reviewed NCLB data over a three-year span, reported 23 of 24 states had improved in math, but only 15 of 23 states had shown improvement in reading.

The Read for Real Project builds upon an existing supplemental reading comprehension series, *Read for Real*, from Zaner-Bloser Educational Publishers. The series presents students with research-based reading comprehension strategies they can use before, during, and after reading high-interest selections about science and social studies topics. Miller and Calfee's prior work



**Roxanne Greitz Miller, Ed.D.**



**Robert C. Calfee, Ph.D.**

has demonstrated the benefits of such an approach. “We found that teachers traditionally view reading comprehension as something done separately from instruction in content area subjects. By creating a cohesive instruction and assessment model that addresses reading comprehension within the content areas, rather than as separate domains, we have seen students and teachers take great strides toward deeper reading comprehension and writing ability. The greatest gains were made by students most in need of help, those from low-achieving backgrounds and students for whom English is a second language,” said Principal Investigator Roxanne Greitz Miller.

In its first year, the Read for Real Project will train nine teachers in the Orange Unified School District in using the materials and in developing additional lessons that emphasize the strategy-based approach to reading comprehension in the content areas. During the second year, the Project will be implemented by 60 fifth-grade teachers selected from across the United States to participate in a national field trial. Students will be observed and evaluated on their progress in multiple areas related to reading comprehension, as well as science and social studies achievement.

Project activities will begin this August. More information on the project can be obtained by contacting Professor Miller at [rgmiller@chapman.edu](mailto:rgmiller@chapman.edu) or (714) 628-2628.

**Related Links:**

- **School of Education at Chapman University**
- **Graduate School of Education at UC Riverside**
- **Mathematica Policy Research Group**
- **U.S. Department of Education, Institute for Education Sciences**

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