

PRESS RELEASE

New **Project CHILD** Report Offers Hope for Florida's Failing Third Graders *Innovative program demonstrates 99% success rate superseding state levels.*

Tallahassee, FL 10/11/06: The Institute for School Innovation (ISI) announces a 99% passing rate on the FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test) for Project CHILD students in 15 Florida schools across 9 districts. This compares to a statewide passing rate of 86% for all elementary schools. In the 2005-2006 school year, 14% of Florida's third graders (28,593 students) did not meet the FCAT criteria to be promoted to fourth grade. However, for Project CHILD third graders enrolled throughout their primary grades, the failure rate was only 1%. This included students with special needs.

Dominic Calabro, President of Florida TaxWatch, a government watchdog group that has also evaluated Project CHILD classrooms through the years, notes the tremendous fiscal impact of failure on Florida's taxpayers. "A failure rate of 1% compared to 14% represents a savings of over \$180 million at current FTE per student cost. Effective prevention makes economic sense."

In Florida, third graders who do not pass the state reading test must be retained. "Mandatory retention has been characterized as a ticking time bomb, as tens of thousands of third graders are being held back each year. At the same time, social promotion where students are passed along unprepared for future grades is also a time bomb. Preventing failure from occurring in the first place is the best solution," said Dr. Richard Kunkel, ISI Board member and former Dean of the College of Education at Florida State University.

Project CHILD (Changing How Instruction for Learning is Delivered) offers a three-dimensional approach to teaching and learning that safeguards the best of the past (caring teachers and involved students) yet adds the promise of the future through differentiated instruction tailored to each child's learning styles with a strong technology component. Students work at their own pace at various work stations using computers, hands-on activities, and textbooks. Teacher Stations address small groups and individualized instruction.

The CHILD model teams three teachers across three grade levels (K-2) and (3-5) each specializing in a core subject – math, writing or reading – and teach their subject to all three grades. This approach allows teachers to become experts in a single subject area and work with these same children for three years. CHILD students have security, continuity, and personal attention from a team of three dedicated teachers. "Before students enter school they must be inoculated against certain diseases. What if our children could also be inoculated against failure? It appears that Project CHILD students may have this protection," said Dr. Sally Butzin, ISI Executive Director and developer of the CHILD instructional system. "We hope that as the yearly trend of positive data becomes widely known, Project CHILD can reach all Florida schools as a retention prevention strategy."

ABOUT ISI: The Institute for School Innovation is a private non-profit organization that provides ongoing research and development, as well as teacher training and coaching to successfully implement essential Project CHILD components. Project CHILD was developed in 1988 at Florida State University. For more information and a copy of the full report "[A Retention Prevention Strategy](#)" visit www.ifi.org.