



ROBERT KELLY, PH.D.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (CEO)

Dr. Robert Kelly is the Chief Executive Officer of READ USA, Inc., a Jacksonville-based nonprofit organization focused on closing the literacy gap in Duval County that was founded in 2016. He joined the READ USA team in June 2021 as Chief Operating Officer and later served as Chief Academic Officer before becoming CEO in May 2022. In his current role, Rob oversees READ USA's rapidly growing team and the organization's research-based, multi-layered approach to solving the literacy crisis in our country.

Rob began his career in education as a classroom teacher. Upon receiving his Florida educator certification in elementary and middle school, he taught first and fourth grades in Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville. Rob later became a school literacy coach at Bayview Elementary and supported teachers with core classroom instruction by modeling, planning, and providing professional development. During this time, he became interested in the various reasons some students struggle to learn to read and enrolled in a degree program at Nova Southeastern University to study school psychology. After earning his master's degree in school psychology in 2009, Rob discovered another interest: understanding processes of early literacy. In other words, studying, experimenting, and developing methods that improve how children learn to read. These studies invigorated him to shift his professional learning from a psychological lens, which tends to take a reactive deficit approach, to a literacy processing framework, which is more proactively focused on high-quality early literacy instruction.

In pursuit of this newfound interest, he accepted a position as a district literacy specialist where he supported teachers and administrators in Duval County Public Schools with literacy instruction by modeling, planning, and providing school-based and district-level professional development. Rob assisted with elementary literacy curriculum development and planned and supported district initiatives such as summer school, character education, and the annual Superintendent's Book Celebration. During this time, he also was a member of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) review committee as a reading content specialist, the membership director of the Duval Literacy Association, and the newsletter editor for the Florida Literacy Association.

While working at the district office with colleagues involved with Reading Recovery®, Rob was introduced to a new way of thinking about how children learn to read, which led him to pursue the Reading and Literacy in Early and Middle Childhood doctoral program at The Ohio State University. In 2017, he completed his Ph.D. in Education at The Ohio State University. He went on to serve as Senior Lecturer at OSU, Assistant Professor of Literacy at Queen's College, CUNY, and Assistant Professor of Literacy Education and Reading Center Director at Jacksonville University.

Rob uses empirical methods to research factors that impact beginning reader's progress, particularly the books teachers select and the instructional procedures they use to support beginning readers. He is also interested in the ways representations of gender and race of characters, authors, and illustrators in children's literature shapes children's perceptions of the world around them. Rob seeks to continually develop and provide professional learning opportunities for educators regarding considerations for selecting appropriate books and instructional methods for beginning readers.

Rob also currently serves as the Literacy Chair of the Florida Literacy Association and is the Immediate Past President of the Duval Literacy Association, both fully voluntary nonprofit organizations focused on lifting educators in our community.