

# Decatur Daily

## Decatur Adds Reading Program

By Bayne Hughes

© 2008 *The Decatur Daily* (Alabama), June 15, 2008

### Elementaries implementing “*Imagine It!*”

**D**ecatur City Schools has a new program that school officials hope pushes reading scores past their wildest imaginations.

They said “*Imagine It!*” is the first systematic reading and language program for grades pre-kindergarten through fifth. SRA, a division of McGraw-Hill Education, publishes the program. SRA trainer Jennifer Pinson is leading a two-week workshop that began June 9 for teachers and principals at the Professional Training Center on Bank Street. She will train teachers in July and August and visit each school at least twice during the school year to coach teachers.

Pinson said “*Imagine It!*” follows a plan that builds on what students learn from grade to grade.

Pre-kindergarten students start learning about sounds and then move into the alphabet.

Kindergarten begins focusing on the sound-letter relationship so students can begin putting them together and start reading words.

First-graders expand their words and begin developing a fluency and

comprehension in their reading. Second and third grades review spelling and reading as they develop comprehension skills. Fourth and fifth grades work on word structures, learn Greek and Latin roots, and expand their vocabulary and comprehension.

Assistant Superintendent Ed Nichols said the school system is spending \$525,000 of the \$670,000 that it gets from the state to purchase textbooks. This is about \$300,000 more than the state mandates local school systems spend on reading instruction.

Director of Curriculum Jeanne Payne said “*Imagine It!*” doesn’t replace the state’s nationally recognized Alabama Reading Initiative. She said initiative leaders endorsed the reading program. The state requires elementary teachers to spend at least 90 minutes a day on reading.

“This really just reinforces what (teachers) learned in ARI,” Payne said.

Walter Jackson Elementary third-grade teacher Beth Adams served on the textbook committee that selected “*Imagine It!*”

She called it an updated version of “*Open Court*,” a reading curriculum used in the kindergarten, first- and second-grade classes in the past three years.

“Previously in the reading initiative we just had to identify the student’s needs based on an individual assessment and then just pull a lot of materials together,” Adams said.

Somerville Road Elementary Principal Dee Dee Jones is a former reading coach with the initiative.

She said “*Imagine It!*” plugs the gaps. The city has a problem when students move often from one school to another in the city.

She said the transition into a new class will be easier because everyone will be studying the same reading program.

Frances Nungester Elementary Principal Cheryl Boman said one of the best things about “*Imagine It!*” is it provides all the materials teachers need in class. The program includes science and social studies books that allow students to work on their reading while studying other subjects.

*Making the Difference™*

**1-888-SRA-4543**

Resources and ordering information at [SRAonline.com](http://SRAonline.com)