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ABSTRACT

This book suggests that, powered by the dynamics of the economy, the reading crusade of Americans, a blueprint for action, and unprecedented momentum, a significant reading breakthrough in reading achievement is within reach in the United States. By "starting early," it addresses the fact that the roots of reading take hold well before children go to school; and by "finishing strong," it notes that schools alone cannot do the job of teaching children to read--parents must stay involved, the community must help, and nothing is more important than a highly skilled, well-prepared teacher. After an executive summary that discusses how to help every child become a reader, and an introduction that addresses the "right kind of reading war," chapters in the book are: (1) Raising Readers: The Tremendous Potential of Families; (2) Ready to Read: Building Skills through Early Care and Education; (3) Read to Succeed: How Schools Can Help Every Child Become a Reader; and (4) Every Child a Reader: How Citizens, Public Leaders, and Communities Can Help. (Contains approximately 150 references; appendixes contain a 28-item annotated list of reading resources, and summaries of recent state laws on reading for children in grade 3 and younger.) (RS)

Start Early, Finish Strong

How to Help Every Child Become a Reader

U.S. Department of Education
America Reads Challenge

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U.S. Department of Education
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Secretary

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Director

November 1999 edition (*includes revisions to original July 1999 publication*)

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PLEASE NOTE: The use of the term White in this report refers to non-Hispanic Whites. The term Black refers to non-Hispanic Blacks. The term Hispanic refers to people from countries and cultures whose primary language is Spanish.

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Start Early, Finish Strong

How to Help Every Child Become a Reader

On the eve of the millennium, the United States is poised for a breakthrough in student reading achievement. If we can move beyond the "reading war" over instructional methods, we have good reason to be optimistic about progress in reading in the near future. This progress can be predicted based on the synergy of four key factors.

1. The need to read has never been greater. As difficult as life has been for illiterate Americans in the past,[1] the economy of the near future will offer even fewer jobs for workers with poor reading skills.[2] The Information Age and the advance of technology into daily life make the job prospects for poor readers bleaker than ever. We must improve reading achievement now, or risk denying a substantial portion of students the opportunity to contribute to and participate fully in our society.[3]

2. More Americans at all levels of society—federal, state, community, school, and family—are mobilizing to improve reading. The American public understands that when our students fail to read, *we* are failing *them*. An unprecedented pro-literacy movement, focused on children under age 9, is driving activities in thousands of communities today and could do so in thousands more tomorrow.

The Clinton-Gore administration has joined Congress to create the boldest national reading initiative in 30 years.[4] Governors and legislatures in the majority of states are taking

decisive action regarding illiteracy,[5] and many mayors of cities with stubborn illiteracy rates are tackling the challenge head-on.

Newspapers, businesses, libraries, sports teams, community service groups, employees, college students, and volunteers of all ages are stepping forward to tutor children, work with parents, provide books, and support schools.[6] In fact, in 1999 we are witnessing a year of unparalleled activity to get more children on the road to reading.

This crusade is reshaping our view of the reading challenge. No longer can we simply point fingers at schools for failing to teach students to read. Every parent, teacher, and citizen has a role to play to spark dramatic improvement in reading.

By expanding our view of who contributes to students' reading success, we are increasing the opportunities for millions of Americans to endow our children with this lifelong skill. If we succeed in engaging this untapped pool of adults, the results will revolutionize education in this country.

3. A blueprint for action is now available. The U.S. Department of Education commissioned the National Research Council to write a scholarly and independent review of all reading research on children. The council's 1998 landmark report, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*,[7] clearly lays out what we can and must do to help every child become a reader. This widely respected report calls for an end to the "reading war" over instructional methods and for the adoption of a variety of common sense and research-based techniques.

The National Research Council found that children benefit from experiences in early childhood that foster language development, cultivate a motivation to read, and establish a link between print and spoken words. Later, students need to develop a clear understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds, and an ability to obtain meaning from what they read.

Teaching with a flexible mix of research-based instructional methods, geared toward individual students, is more effective than strict adherence to any one approach.

Teachers need to understand the most up-to-date reading research and be able to implement it in their classrooms.

Teachers also must be able to identify reading difficulties in students early on and marshal appropriate interventions in response. Young learners need continuing encouragement and individualized instruction to succeed.

4. For the first time since reading achievement has been measured, national reading scores have improved in all three grades tested. On the latest National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Report Card,[8] average reading scores in grades 4, 8, and 12 rose from one-third to one-half of a grade level between 1994 and 1998. While much remains to be done, this modest progress reflects a renewed commitment to improve reading and reveals the potential for greater success if everyone works together, using the best and latest research.

The Task Ahead

Powered by the dynamics of the economy, the reading crusade of our citizens, a blueprint for action, and unprecedented momentum, a significant reading breakthrough is within our grasp. *Start Early, Finish Strong* lays out what we must do to accelerate the pace, and to leave no child behind.

Start Early

By starting early, we address the fact that the roots of reading take hold well before children go to school. We cannot focus only on fourth-grade reading scores as the problem, because children's reading habits and skills are already well established by that age. We now know we should start much earlier—even from birth—to develop a child's reading ability. Research shows we can improve reading achievement by starting in early childhood to build cognitive and language skills.[9]

Parents and early caregivers play an essential role in laying the foundations for literacy by talking and reading daily to babies and toddlers. A recent parent survey offers a hopeful sign: more preschoolers are being read to daily by family members than in recent years.[10] Yet more than 4 in 10 preschoolers, 5 in 10 toddlers, and 6 in 10 babies are not read to regularly.[11] All parents of young children need encouragement to read to their children. Grandparents and other adults can become a child's daily reader too.

Six in 10 children spend a substantial part of each day in the care of someone other than a parent.[12] Child care providers and early childhood teachers can do much more to prepare young children for reading success.

Working in preschools, child care centers, nursery schools, and home-based care settings, this corps of adults has tremendous potential to enhance young children's language development and thus prepare them to read better. Many of these providers and teachers, however, need better training[13] and higher wages[14] to more effectively promote the cognitive, language, social, and emotional development that are the foundations of reading success.

Finish Strong

When a child enters school ready to read, what happens next? That's when all adults in the child's life must be prepared—to "finish strong." Schools can't do it alone. But improvements in primary school—kindergarten through third grade—present a tremendous opportunity to boost reading achievement. We now know how to finish the job that parents and caregivers start: parents must stay involved, and nothing is more important than a highly skilled, well-prepared teacher.[15]

Universities, colleges of education, state teacher licensing boards, and legislatures must raise standards for proficiency in reading instruction for teacher candidates.[16] Veteran teachers need high-quality, ongoing professional development in research-based reading instruction.[17] Teachers need time to work together to improve their teaching techniques, and elementary school principals can integrate a schoolwide focus on

reading achievement.[18] Parents and community members can form reading compacts with schools to marshal all their resources to help more children succeed.[19]

A key factor for a strong finish is the involvement of the whole community in the pro-literacy crusade. The seeds of this crusade are already sprouting in cities and towns nationwide, and these examples can be shared with and replicated in many communities.

Every elementary school child who needs a tutor should have one, for extra reading practice during or after school.[20] All students, but especially poor children, benefit from summer reading programs to prevent erosion of reading skills and promote the joy of reading.[21] Many more children need books to read and adults to read to them.[22] Every citizen can help and millions more can contribute to make every child a proficient reader.

The momentum is with us for a breakthrough in student reading achievement. To seize this moment in history, we must lay down our weapons in the old reading war and engage *new* troops in the right kind of reading war—the war on illiteracy. If we all commit to "start early, finish strong," we can achieve a breakthrough and help *every* child become a good reader.

ENDNOTES

1 Low literacy is strongly related to unemployment, poverty, and crime. About 43 percent of those with the lowest literacy skills live in poverty, and 70 percent of the prison population falls into the two lowest levels of reading proficiency. 1998 *National Institute for Literacy Fact Sheet.*

2 Eight of the 10 fastest-growing jobs in the next decade will require either a college education or moderate to long-term postsecondary training. U.S. Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Silvestri, G.T. (1997). *Occupational Employment Projections to 2006.* Monthly Labor Review, November 1997, Table 3, p. 77.

3 In 1998, nearly four in 10 fourth-graders nationwide failed to achieve even partial mastery of the reading skills needed for school success. In our highest-poverty schools, nearly seven in 10 fourth-graders fail to read at this *Basic* level. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (1999). *The 1998 NAEP Reading Report Card for the Nation.* NCES 1999-459, by Donahue, P.L., Voelkl, K.E., Campbell, J.R., and Mazzeo, J. Washington, D.C.: Author.

4 The Reading Excellence Act authorizes $260 million in 1999 for professional development of teachers, out-of-school tutoring, family literacy and transitional programs for kindergarteners. The U.S. Department of Education issues competitive grants to the states, which then hold grant competitions that favor school districts with children most in need.
www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/REA/index.html

5 Forty-two states reported significant new literacy activity at the National Reading Summit in September 1998, and more than 20 states enacted reading improvement legislation between 1996 and 1999. Many governors have pledged further action. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs.
www.ed.gov/inits/readingsummit

6 More than 2.2 million children have been tutored in reading through the Corporation for National Service. More than 22,000 college students served as reading tutors under the Federal Work-Study program in 1997-98, and thousands more serve as volunteers. The President's Coalition for America Reads and many other organizations are active across the nation. U.S. Department of Education, America Reads.
www.ed.gov/americareads

[7] National Research Council. (1998). Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

[8] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (1999). *The 1998 NAEP Reading Report Card for the Nation*. NCES 1999-459, by Donahue, P.L., Voelkl, K.E., Campbell, J.R., and Mazzeo, J., Washington, D.C.: Author.

[9] Counting, number concepts, letter names and shapes, associating sounds with letters, interest in reading, and cooperation with other children are all relevant to learning to read. Wells, C. G. (1985). *Preschool Literacy-Related Activities and Success in School*. Literacy, Language, and Learning. London: Cambridge University Press.

[10] About 57 percent of children ages 3 to 5 were read to daily by a family member in 1996, up from 53 percent in 1993. U.S. Department of Education. (1996). *National Household Education Survey, 1995*. Washington, D.C.: Author.

[11] Only 48 percent of parents of toddlers ages 1 to 3, and 39 percent of parents of infants reported reading daily to their children in 1996. Young, K. T., Davis, K., and Schoen, C. (1996). *The Commonwealth Fund Survey of Parents with Young Children*. New York: The Commonwealth Fund.

[12] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (1996). *Child Care and Early Education Program Participation of Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers. Statistics in Brief*. NCES 95-824. Washington, D.C.: Author.

[13] Higher education and specialized training enhance the ability of early childhood teachers to do a better job of advancing children's language skills, a key predictor of later reading success. Whitebook, M., Howes, C., and Phillips, D. (1990). *The National Child Care Staffing Study*. Oakland, CA: National Center for Early Childhood Workforce.

[14] Inadequate funding is the primary reason for the low quality of care experienced by most children. Gomby, D., Larner, M., Terman, D., Krantzler, N., Stevenson, C., and Behrman, R. (1996). *Financing Child Care: Analysis and Recommendations. The Future of Children: Financing Child Care*, 6(2), 5-25.

[15] National Research Council. (1998). *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

[16] ibid.

[17] ibid.

[18] ibid.

[19] Effective compacts between parents and schools increase parental involvement in their children's education, with positive student outcomes, particularly in high-poverty schools. D'Agostino, J., Wong, K., Hedges, L., and Borman, G. (1998). *The Effectiveness of Title I Parent Programs: A Multilevel Analysis of Prospects Data*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, Calif., April 1998. Note: A new *Compact for Reading Guide* is available free from the U.S. Department of Education. See Reading Resources, Appendix I at the end of this document.

[20] An analysis of 65 studies of high-quality tutoring programs found positive, modest achievement effects across all the studies. Structured tutoring programs demonstrated higher achievement gains than unstructured programs. Students tutored in reading showed positive results for self-confidence, motivation to read, and views of their control over their reading abilities. Cohen, P.A., Kulik, J.A., and Kulik, C.L.C. (1982). *Educational Outcomes of Tutoring: A Meta-analysis of Findings*. American Educational Research Journal, 19, 237-248.

[21] Alexander, K. and Entwisle, D. (1996). *Early Schooling and Educational Inequality: Socioeconomic Disparities in Children's Learning*. In J.S. Coleman (ed.) Falmer sociology series, 63-79. London: Falmer Press.

[22] For America's poorest children, the biggest obstacle to literacy may be the scarcity of books and appropriate reading material. Needlman, R., Fried, L., Morley, D., Taylor, S., and Zuckerman, B. (1991). *Clinic Based Intervention to Promote Literacy*. American Journal of Diseases of Children, Volume 145, August, 1991, 881-884.

INTRODUCTION

The Right Kind of Reading War

The phrase *reading war* has been the popular description for long-running disagreements about the best way to teach children to read. Fierce battles have been waged by academics and theorists since the late 1800s (McCormick, 1999), with classroom teachers often spinning like weathervanes as they tried to align classroom practices with the prevailing winds.

The most recent conflicts, fought in school boards and state legislatures, are just the latest attempts by proponents of phonics and whole language to dominate the teaching of reading.

Through the years, though, the United States has been losing the *real* reading war—the war against illiteracy. Today, 10 million American schoolchildren are poor readers (Fletcher & Lyon, 1998). As a nation, we have failed to ensure that all children are good readers by the time they leave the primary grades.

Even with changing fashions in curriculum and instruction, and the overall push for education reform, the percentage of children who read well has not improved substantially for more than 25 years (NAEP 1996 Trends Report). Among our poorest children, more than half of all fourth-graders who are eligible for the free lunch program fail to read at the *Basic* achievement level needed for academic success (NAEP 1998 Reading Report Card). In our highest-poverty public schools, a whopping 68 percent of fourth-graders fail to reach the *Basic* level of achievement. Only one in 10 fourth-graders at these schools can read at the *Proficient* level, the ideal goal for all students (NAEP 1998 Reading Report Card).

Clearly, pursuit of the same old strategies won't help more children master reading. To win this *real* reading war, it's time to broaden our views on responsibility for reading, and enlist new and more effective troops—involved

parents, highly skilled child care providers, effective primary schoolteachers, and committed communities. We must start early and finish strong, to help every child become a good reader.

A National Crusade

In his 1996 *State of Education* address, U.S. Education Secretary Richard W. Riley issued a clarion call for a new national crusade: every American child must become a good reader by the end of third grade. President Clinton's 1997 *State of the Union* address launched a national literacy initiative, The America Reads Challenge, to pursue Riley's goal. And in 1998, a landmark study by the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences provided a blueprint for action to create a nation of readers. Significantly, the report, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children,* calls for an end to the old reading war and recommends a new research-based mix of instruction that suits each individual child.

We must start early by preparing young children to read, and we must finish strong by providing excellent instruction and community support in the primary grades.

Each of these recent actions has emphasized a common strategy for success: we must *start early* by preparing young children to read, and we must *finish strong* by providing excellent instruction and community support in the primary grades.

By starting early, we look to the roots of reading ability. Broadening our approach gives us the advantage of preparing children to read from birth, with the active involvement of loving families. Millions of early care and education personnel—in child care centers, preschools, and home-based child care—present a largely untapped resource for building the foundations for reading success. An early start enables every child to arrive at kindergarten ready to learn to read.

But a large survey of kindergarten teachers reported that 35 percent of children arrive at school unprepared to learn (Boyer, 1991). Children who lack reading readiness are more likely to develop reading problems when formal schooling begins (Scarborough, 1998). The preparation these children need comes from experiences rich with language and text, and from talking and reading with parents and caregivers (National Research Council, 1998).

Once in school, a child needs teachers with strong, research-based skills in reading instruction who have the support required to maintain these skills. Members of the community can help by tutoring children, helping parents, providing books, and supporting schools. Such a strong finish offers every student

the best opportunity to become a good reader by the end of third grade.

Following the release of the National Research Council's 1998 report, President Clinton signed The Reading Excellence Act, the most significant child literacy law enacted by Congress in more than three decades.

Most states have redoubled their efforts to significantly improve reading achievement. In recent years, more than 20 state legislatures have passed a flurry of new child literacy laws and budgets. (See Appendix II.)

We are witnessing a time of unparalleled activity to get more children on the road to reading.

Mayors, business leaders, community groups, and millions of individual Americans are taking the challenge and tackling the root causes of illiteracy. In 1999, we are witnessing a time of unparalleled activity to get more children on the road to reading.

The Need to Read

It would be hard to overstate the vital importance of learning to read well. Reading is the key that unlocks virtually all other learning.

Written language often delivers the content of science, mathematics, religion, politics, and other essential subjects. The Bible, the Torah, the Koran, and other great sacred texts are central to the world's religions. Our nation's founding documents also are written, as are the ballots through which we participate in civic life. Reading literature, poetry, and history allows us to reach out beyond our own lives to develop a broader and richer understanding of the human experience.

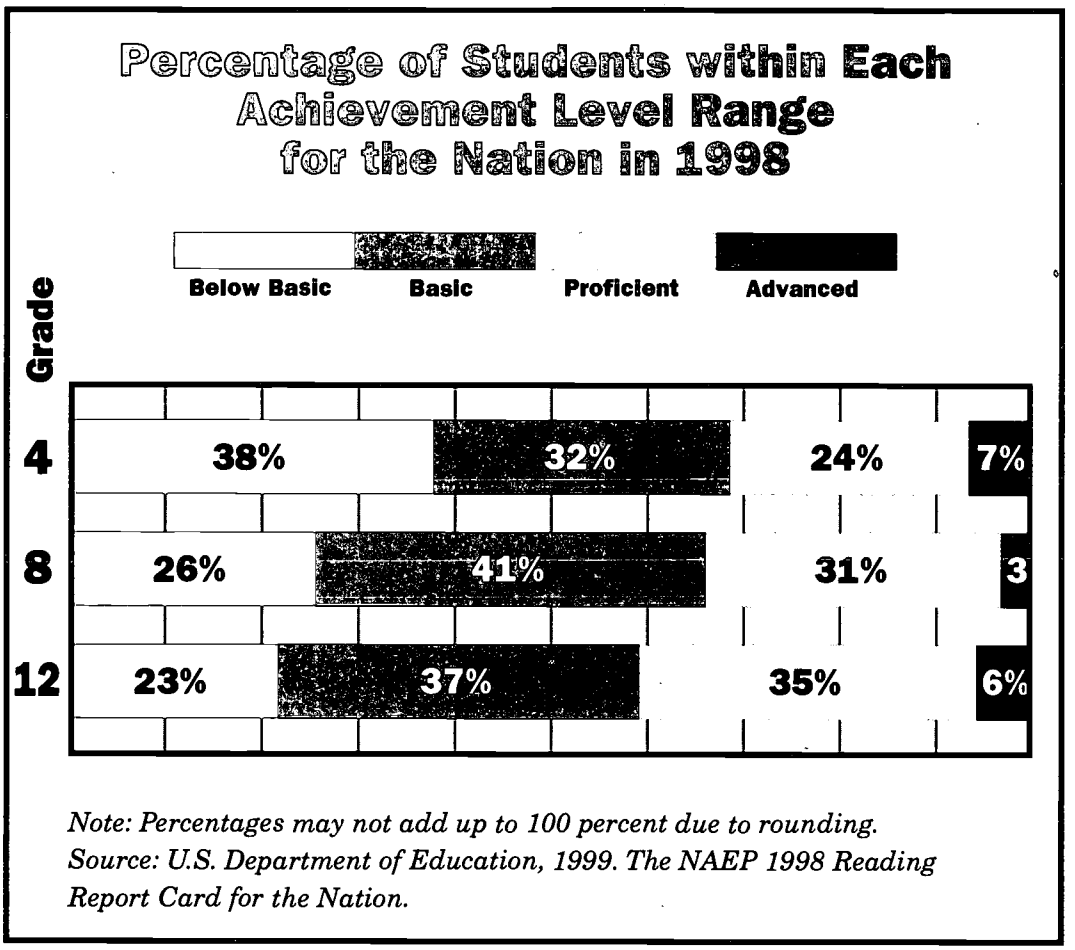
With all its wonder and power, even the Internet remains a text-driven medium: to navigate the World Wide Web, you must be able to read. As Vice President Gore has said, "In an economy

Why Third Grade?

Children are expected to *learn to read* in the primary grades, kindergarten through third, when most reading instruction is given. By fourth grade, students are expected to *read to learn*.

Over time, learning becomes more complex, with heightened demands on students to use reading skills to analyze or to solve problems. Good reading skills are required to study geography, do math, use computers, and conduct experiments. Even motivated, hard-working students are severely hampered in their schoolwork if they cannot read well by the end of third grade.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services



Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.
Source: U.S. Department of Education, 1999. The NAEP 1998 Reading Report Card for the Nation.

increasingly powered by information and technology, reading and the ability to learn are strategic skills."

Locked Out of the World of Words

For 38 percent of fourth-graders, access to the world of words is endangered because they read below the *Basic* achievement level, lacking even partial mastery of the reading skills needed for grade-level work (NAEP 1998 Reading Report Card). By eighth grade, 26 percent of the nation's students continue to read below the *Basic* level set for that grade, and by twelfth grade, 23 percent remain below the *Basic* level. (The latter figure, of course, does not include students who dropped out before grade 12 due to poor literacy skills.)

These struggling readers are disproportionately from families living in poverty, according to the National Research Council. Poverty, and for some children, language differences, contribute to the large gaps between White and Asian students and Black and Hispanic students.

In fourth grade, 64 percent of Blacks and 60 percent of Hispanics read below the *Basic* level, compared with 27 per-

cent of Whites and 31 percent of Asian/Pacific Islanders (NAEP 1998 Reading Report Card).

But poor readers should not be stereotyped; reading difficulties occur in every school and in all types of families. While roughly half of all children learn to read with relative ease, the others have more trouble (Lyon, 1997).

As many as one in five children will manifest a significant reading disability (Shaywitz et al., 1992). These students may not learn to connect the sounds of speech to written letters without intensive additional assistance—help that many do not receive (Lyon, 1997).

Without intervention, most poor readers remain poor readers, limiting their academic achievement and their potential. A startling 88 percent of children who have difficulty reading at the end of first grade display similar difficulties at the end of fourth grade (Juel, 1988). According to researchers at Yale University, three-quarters of students who are poor readers in third grade will remain poor readers in high school (Shaywitz et al., 1997).

The United States renewed efforts to reform its schools in 1983 when a blue-ribbon commission warned we were "a nation at risk." Efforts were launched again in the mid-1990s to raise academic standards.

Since then, many important changes have been made by local schools, districts, states, and the federal government. But thus far, instead of producing dramatic reading gains for all students, these changes have only begun to move us in the right direction.

The Right Direction, But a Long Way to Go

A 1991 international study found that American fourth- and ninth-grade students performed well in reading skills assessments compared with those in other advanced nations, surpassed only by students in Finland (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

But long-term trends seen in the NAEP show only minimal improvements in the reading proficiency of American 9-year-olds since 1971 (NAEP 1996 Trends Report). Thirteen-year-olds have just barely improved, and 17-year-olds read at about the same level as their counterparts did 25 years ago.

The gap in achievement between White and Black children narrowed between 1971 and 1984, a time of substantial new emphasis and resources, but has persisted since. The gap between White and Hispanic fourth-graders has

Definitions of NAEP Achievement Levels

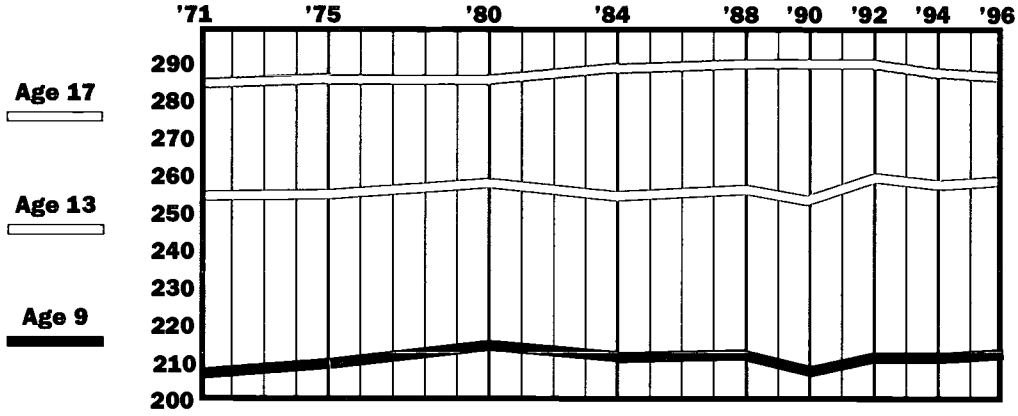
Basic: Partial mastery of the prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade.

Proficient: Solid academic performance and demonstration of competency over challenging subject matter for each grade.

Advanced: Superior performance.

Source: National Assessment Governing Board

Trends in Average Reading Scores for the Nation, 1971-1996



Source: U.S. Department of Education, 1997. NAEP 1996 Trends in Academic Progress.

actually *increased* since 1992 (NAEP 1996 Trends Report).

Signs of Hope

For the first time ever, between 1994 and 1998, NAEP reading scores improved in all three grades tested (grades 4, 8, and 12).

These gains, though modest, are equivalent to improving reading ability from one-third to one-half of a grade level. Lower-performing fourth-graders and most middle school students made the most significant progress.

However, while reversing a downward trend, fourth- and twelfth-graders' 1998 reading scores remained virtually the same as in 1992. (Modest gains were seen by eighth-graders).

Approximately four out of 10 fourth-graders remain below the *Basic* achievement level in reading (NAEP 1998 Reading Report Card).

Small pockets of improvement were seen by some Black students in 1998. Reading scores rose slightly for Black fourth- and eighth-graders since 1994.

Scores for eighth-grade Black children were also better than in 1992. (Black students' twelfth-grade scores remained the same.)

Still, only 10 percent of Black fourth-graders performed at or above the *Proficient* level, compared with 39 percent of Whites and 13 percent of Hispanics.

Hispanic twelfth-graders did see slight gains between 1994 and 1998. But fourth- and eighth-grade Hispanics students saw no significant change. White fourth-graders saw no change in 1998,

but White twelfth- and eighth-graders improved slightly since 1994. White eighth-graders' scores were also an improvement over their 1992 results. The scores for Asian/Pacific Islander and Native American students made no significant change across these assessments.

Aiming High, Falling Short

While proficiency in grade-level reading is the goal for every child, only a small portion of students achieve that high degree of mastery. About 31 percent of fourth-graders, 33 percent of eighth-graders, and 40 percent of twelfth-graders attained a *Proficient* level or higher in reading in 1998. Across the three grades, 7 percent or fewer reached the *Advanced* level of reading achievement, indicating superior performance. Fewer boys than girls reached the *Basic* and *Proficient* marks. Students whose parents had dropped out of or completed only high school also had significantly lower scores (NAEP 1998 Reading Report Card).

Three-quarters of students who are poor readers in third grade will remain poor readers in high school.

Poor reading ability can deter students from enriching activities and courses. Researchers have found that high school students with low reading skills spent less time in organized extracurricular activities such as clubs, teams, and bands, and more time shopping at the mall and talking on the telephone.

Poor readers are also less likely to take more than one year of math, science, and foreign language—the gateway courses to college (Siegel & Loman, 1991).

It is not surprising that more than 95 percent of high school dropouts score at the two lowest levels of reading proficiency on national assessments (U.S. Department of Education, OERI, 1993). These are the saddest casualties of losing the *real* reading war.

Poor Readers, Poor Prospects

Clearly, the inability to read well exacts a huge toll on individuals. But it costs the nation as well.

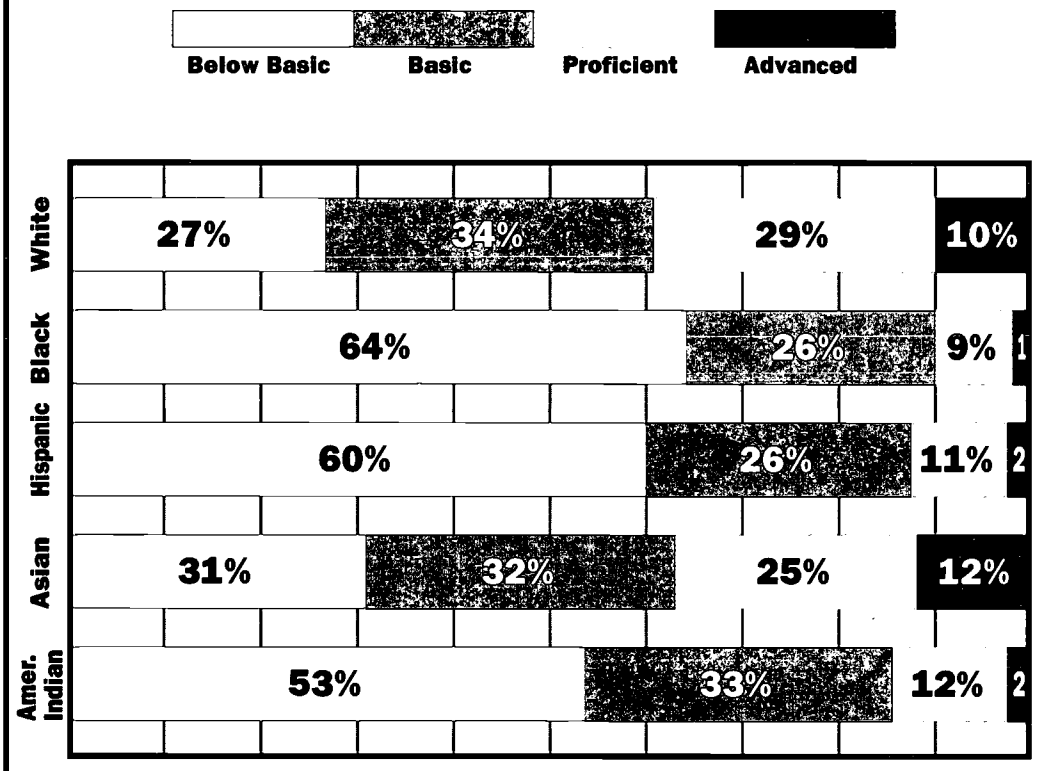
According to the National Institute for Literacy, family illiteracy often persists from one generation to the next. Low literacy is strongly related to unemployment, poverty, and crime. On average, welfare recipients ages 17 to 21 read at the sixth-grade level, well below what is needed to earn a living wage. In fact, 43 percent of those with the lowest literacy skills live in poverty.

Not surprisingly, those sent to prison generally have lower literacy skills than the rest of the population: 70 percent of prisoners fall into the lowest two levels of reading proficiency (National Institute for Literacy, 1998).

Increasingly, a strong work ethic and a strong back will not be enough to support a family. The global economy

Student Reading Performance By Race/Ethnicity

Percentage of fourth-grade students within each achievement level, 1998



Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.
Source: U.S. Department of Education, 1999. The NAEP 1998 Reading Report Card for the Nation.

demands that workers can read, write, compute, solve problems, and communicate clearly. Yet one in four adults cannot perform the basic literacy requirements of a typical job (U.S. Office of Technology Assessment, 1993). Seventy-five percent of today's jobs require at least a ninth-grade reading level (National Institute for Literacy, 1998). College-educated Americans are earning, on average, 76 percent more than Americans who have only a high school diploma (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999b).

In early 1999, Education Secretary Richard W. Riley issued a challenge to

America's students: reach beyond a high school diploma and aim to complete at least some college coursework. This challenge acknowledges a hard reality: of the 10 fastest-growing jobs in the next decade, *eight* will require either a college education or moderate to long-term postsecondary training (U.S. Department of Labor, 1997).

But literacy is about more than economics. Our ability to share information through the written word is vital in a democratic society. In order to live up to our democratic ideals and to share the richness that comes from thoughtful reflection, we must all be able to communicate and to make wise decisions.

It is clear that the United States cannot afford to lose the *real* reading war: we can no longer allow so many children to leave the third grade without the reading skills needed for school success.

To help all our children succeed and to compete as a nation, we must start early and finish strong; we must ensure that every American child becomes a reader.

The Secrets of Reading Success

A bumper sticker states, "If you can read this, thank a teacher." But the latest research indicates the situation is more complex.

Who plays the critical roles in preparing a successful reader?

First, as an essential starting point, families can maximize the benefits of parent-child communication from birth.

Second, caregivers and preschool teachers can be given training and resources to stimulate emergent literacy.

Third, children deserve well-trained teachers who understand reading development, who can pinpoint problems, and who can address them effectively (National Research Council, 1998).

But the consequential task of ensuring that children learn to read should not be left to families, providers, and teachers alone. Entire communities can rally around their children for literacy success. This means more partnerships between schools and communities. It means greater engagement of private enterprises, colleges, universities, and cultural groups. It means more volunteers and more opportunities for legions of mentors and tutors.

The momentum is with us for a breakthrough in student reading achievement.

Americans from all walks of life must step forward to win the war against illiteracy.

Unlike children who are struggling to decode words, we as a nation have already unlocked the secrets to better reading. If we start early and finish strong, we can help every child become a good reader.

The momentum is with us for a breakthrough in student reading achievement. The only question that remains is whether we are commited to literacy for every American child.


Louis Braille

CHAPTER 1

Raising Readers

The Tremendous Potential of Families

Recent research into human brain development is proving that parents truly are their children's first teachers. What parents do, or don't do, has a lasting impact on their child's reading skill and literacy. For example, there is considerable evidence of a relationship between reading regularly to a child and that child's later reading achievement (National Research Council, 1998).

But many parents are not yet making the most of simple, vital opportunities to stimulate full and healthy child development in the early years, and by extension, good reading readiness. As U.S. Education Secretary Richard W. Riley has said, "If every child were read to daily from infancy, it would revolutionize education in this country!"

Brain Development and Reading

Children develop much of their capacity for learning in the first three years of life, when their brains grow to 90 percent of their eventual adult weight (Karoly et al., 1998). A child's intelligence, so long as it falls within a normal range, does *not* determine the ease with which the child will learn to read. Rather, as children grow and experience the world, new neural connections are made. This orderly and individualized process, varying from child to child, makes reading possible.

As parents talk, sing, and read to children, the children's brain cells are literally turned on (Shore, 1997). Existing links among brain cells are strengthened and new cells and links are formed. That is why infants' and toddlers' health and nutrition, along with good functioning of the senses, are so important. The opportunity for creating the foundation for reading begins in the earliest years. Moreover, many pediatricians now believe that a child who has never held a book or listened to a story is not a fully healthy child (Klass, 1998).

IDEAS AT WORK

Parents as Teachers

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is an international family education program for parents of children from birth through age 5. Parents learn to become their children's best teachers. Evaluations have shown that PAT children at age 3 have significantly enhanced language, problem-solving, and social development skills. PAT parents read more often to their children and stay involved in their children's education.

The program has four main components: 1) home visits by trained parent educators, 2) group meetings for parents to share successes, concerns, and strategies, 3) developmental screenings to determine early if a child needs assistance, and 4) families' connections with community resources, including lending libraries, diagnostic services, and help for children with special needs.

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Given the course of brain development, it is not surprising that young children who are exposed to certain experiences usually prove to be good readers later. Just as a child develops language skills long before being able to speak, the child also develops literacy skills long before being able to read (National Research Council, 1998).

How Parents Help

By cooing, singing lullabies, or reading aloud to a baby, toddler, or preschooler, parents stimulate their children's developing minds and help build a base for literacy skills. Counting, number concepts, letter names and shapes, associating sounds with letters, interest in reading, and cooperation with other children are all relevant to learning to read (Wells, 1985). Researchers studying high school seniors found early educational experiences—such as learning nursery rhymes, watching *Sesame Street*, playing word and number games, and being read to—are all good predictors of later reading ability (Hanson et al., 1987).

Positive parental attitudes toward literacy can also help children become more successful readers (Baker et al., 1995). Enthusiasm about books and reading can be shared between a parent and child and deepen the child's interest in learning to read (Snow & Tabors, 1996). Children who learn from parents that reading is fun may be more likely to sustain efforts to learn to read when the going gets tough (National Research Council, 1998). Some experts believe that parental emphasis on reading as entertainment, rather than as a skill,

develops a more positive attitude toward reading in children (Baker et al., 1997).

Wise parents understand that play is the work of children. Parents can use the arts to help develop early language skills, from the first lullaby to dramatization of a favorite story (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1998). Dramatic play can develop vocabulary, concepts and creativity, all part of pre-literacy skill building. Music and other language-rich creative arts can stimulate a young child's language and literacy development through one-on-one interaction with a caring adult.

Doctors Prescribe Reading

Reading aloud to young children is so critical that the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that doctors prescribe reading activities along with other advice given to parents at regular check-ups.

Dr. Perri Klass, Medical Director of Reach Out and Read, a national pediatric literacy program involving hundreds of hospitals, clinics, and independent practices, strongly agrees. "With confidence," says Dr. Klass, "I tell parents to read to their children, secure in the knowledge that there's good evidence that it will help their language development, help them be ready to read when the time comes, and help parents and children spend loving moments together."

Yet studies show that many parents have not yet heard of this "prescription for reading." A national survey found that less than half (48 percent) of parents said they read or shared a picture book daily with their children ages 1 to 3. Even fewer, 39 percent of parents, read or looked at a picture book with their infants at least once a day. Most alarmingly, one in six parents of an

IDEAS AT WORK

Reach Out and Read

Developed at Boston City Hospital by Dr. Barry Zuckerman, Reach Out and Read is a national pediatric literacy program that trains pediatricians and volunteers to read aloud to children as part of their well-baby check-ups. The doctors also "prescribe" reading as essential to raising a healthy child from infancy through age 5.

At each check-up, the child is sent home with age-appropriate books, and parents are encouraged to develop the habit of reading with their children. This trailblazing program, with over 350 sites in 45 states, relies on funding from businesses and private foundations, in addition to book donations from publishing companies.

Contact: *Reach Out and Read*
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www.reachoutandread.org

infant (16 percent) said they do not read to their child at all (Young et al., 1996). Only 4 to 5 percent of adults are unable to read a children's book, although more may be uncomfortable doing so (National Institute for Literacy, 1998).

More than 4 in 10 preschoolers, 5 in 10 toddlers, and 6 in 10 babies are not read to regularly by parents or family members.

The 1996 National Household Education Survey, however, found some positive trends involving preschoolers. Fifty-seven percent of children ages 3 to 5 were read to every day by a family member in 1996, up slightly from 53 percent in 1993. When oral storytelling is also considered, the percentage of children exposed to narrative rose to 72 percent (up from 66 percent in 1993). Nonetheless, the growth in the percentage of children being read to has occured mostly in families least at risk—those at or above the poverty level, those headed by two parents, and those in which the mother has some college education.

Differences Among Families

The single most significant predictor of children's literacy is their mother's literacy level (Educational Testing Service, 1995). The more education a mother has, the more likely she is to read to her child. Studies show that 77 percent of children whose mothers have a college education were read to every day, while only 49 percent of children whose mothers had a high school education were read to daily (National Household Education Survey, 1996).

Similarly, children in poor families are less likely to be read to daily. The 1996 National Household Education Survey found that 46 percent of children in families in poverty were read to every day, compared with 61 percent of children in families living above the poverty line.

Some researchers have found that the home literacy environment can be an even stronger predictor of literacy and academic achievement than family income. That home environment includes the literacy level of the parents, the parents' educational achievement, and the availability of reading materials, among other factors (Dickinson, 1991).

While the overall economic status of the family has a great impact on whether families read to children, the employment status of the mother does not. The 1996 National Household Education Survey found little difference between mothers who work more than 35 hours a week and those who work less than that or are not employed. In families with mothers who worked full time, 54 percent of children were read to daily. When the mother worked part time, or was not employed, 59 percent of the children were read to daily.

In contrast, big differences are seen between dual-parent and single-parent

households, according to a recent study by the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research. Researchers found that parents in "traditional" families with a working father and an at-home mother spent an average of 22 hours a week directly engaged with their children under age 13. That was slightly more than the 19 hours spent by parents in dual-income families and more than double the 9 hours spent by single mothers (Hofferth, 1998). The National Household Education Survey found that

Children with higher reading scores have a greater variety of reading materials at home.

61 percent of preschoolers in two-parent households, vs. 46 percent in households with one parent or no parents, were read to daily.

Differences were also seen in the National Household Education Survey among racial and ethnic groups. Sixty-four percent of White families reported reading every day to children ages 3 to 5, compared with 44 percent of Black families and 39 percent of Hispanic families.

The Value of Words

Research demonstrates that the size of a young child's vocabulary is a strong predictor of reading—preschoolers with large vocabularies tend to become proficient readers (National Research Council, 1998). Children's vocabulary can be

Five for Families!

Researchers have identified five areas where the home and family can influence reading development in children:

1. Value Placed on Literacy: Parents show their own interest in reading by reading in front of their children and encouraging them to read, too.

2. Press for Achievement: Parents let children know that they are expected to achieve and help them develop reading skills.

3. Availability and Use of Reading Material: Homes with reading and writing materials for children—such as books, newspapers, writing paper, pencils, and crayons—create more opportunities to develop literacy.

4. Reading with Children: Parents who read to preschoolers and listen as older children read aloud help children become readers.

5. Opportunities for Verbal Interaction: The quantity and content of conversation between parents and children influence language and vocabulary development, both building blocks for later reading success.

Source: Hess & Holloway, 1984. Family and School as Educational Institutions

greatly enhanced by talking and reading with parents. In fact, the vocabulary of the average children's book is greater than that found on prime-time television (Hayes & Ahrens, 1988).

Children from lower-income families are at greater risk of having smaller vocabularies than other children. One study of the actual vocabulary of first-graders found that those from high-income families had *double* the vocabulary of those from lower-income families (Graves & Slater, 1987).

None of these statistics should be used to blame parents. Rather, we should use evidence of what works to rally and support all families to take full advantage of their tremendous opportunity to prepare their children for reading success.

The vocabulary of the average children's book is greater than that found on prime-time television.

Given what we know about brain development, it is clear that parents should not leave to schools alone the important tasks of language and literacy development. We must do more to enable and encourage parents to talk with their children and invest 30 minutes daily for reading. When parents are unable, grandparents, neighbors, babysitters, siblings, and other adults should step in to serve as the child's designated reader for the day. It is an experience that children will remember for a lifetime, and one that will form the foundation for all later learning.

Access to Books

Some experts believe that for America's poorest children, the biggest obstacle to literacy is the scarcity of books and appropriate reading material (Needlman et al., 1991).

In many homes, particularly those with adult non-readers, there simply aren't any books, magazines, or newspapers appropriate for young children.

Yet, studies show that parents who are given books and "prescriptions for reading" by their children's pediatricians are *four times* more likely to read and share books with their young children (Needlman et al., 1991). Mothers receiving welfare are *eight times* more likely to read to their children when provided with books and encouragement (Needlman et al., 1991).

The NAEP 1998 Reading Report Card found that students with higher reading scores were more likely to report four types of reading materials in their homes—encyclopedias, magazines, newspapers, and at least 25 books.

Borrowing Books

Of course, books are available at public libraries, but this resource is underutilized—only 37 percent of 3- to 5-year-olds visit a library at least once a month (National Education Goals Panel, 1997). Transportation and access can be obstacles for some families. Parents who are unfamiliar with libraries may be unaware that books can be borrowed for

The Consequences of Conversation with Children

More than 40 families were observed over several years to study how, and how often, parents talk with children. Researchers found a tremendous variety in the amount of words spoken to children in the first three years of life and in the quality of feedback they received. These verbal interactions with adults are major predictors of how prepared children will be to succeed in school.

While family income was highly related to levels of children's language exposure, the relationship was not absolute. Some middle-income families behaved more like high-income families, preparing their children for higher achievement through vocabulary development and other language skills. Other middle-income families behaved more like low-income families, with a paucity of language exposure for children.

An average child growing up in a low-income family receiving welfare hears one-half to one-third as many spoken words as children in more affluent households. At these rates the low-income child would know about 3,000 words by age 6, while the child of the high-income family would have a vocabulary of 20,000 words. To provide the low-income child with weekly language experience equal to that of a child from a middle-income family, it would require 41 hours per week of out-of-home word exposure as rich as those heard by the most affluent children.

Number of words heard at home per hour by 1- and 2-year-olds learning to talk:

low-income child

620

middle-income child

1,250

high-income child

2,150

Number of words heard by age 3:

low-income child

10 million

middle-income child

20 million

high-income child

30 million

Source: Hart & Risley, 1995. Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experiences of Young Children

Feed Me a Story!

What difference can reading aloud to a child for 30 minutes per day make?

If daily reading begins in infancy, by the time the child is 5 years old, he or she has been fed roughly 900 hours of brain food!

Reduce that experience to just 30 minutes a week and the child's hungry mind loses 770 hours of nursery rhymes, fairy tales, and stories.

A kindergarten student who has *not* been read to could enter school with less than 60 hours of literacy nutrition. No teacher, no matter how talented, can make up for those lost hours of mental nourishment.

Hours of reading books by age 5

30 minutes daily

900 Hours

30 minutes weekly

130 Hours

Less than 30 minutes weekly

60 Hours

Source: U.S. Department of Education, America Reads

free and that librarians can help them select books that are age-appropriate. Librarians also can direct parents with low literacy skills toward picture books and books on tape, also appealing to children who are struggling with reading. Many libraries offer reading support and story hours for families.

Once again, the parent's education level is significant, though even among the highly educated, library participation is not high. The National Education

Children of all ages watch as much TV in one day as they read for fun in an entire week.

Goals Panel found that about half of the children of college graduates make monthly trips to the library, compared with less than one-sixth of children whose parents never completed high school.

Access to quality reading materials should continue throughout a child's school years. But a 1996 survey found that average book spending for school libraries had frozen in place. Worse, 36 percent of school librarians reported having *less* money for books than the year before (Miller & Shontz, 1997). In 1998, cash-strapped schools in Seattle found their lack of contemporary titles to be such a deterrent to student reading that a citywide campaign was launched to replenish school libraries. The state of California is spending more

than $150 million in 1999 to restock school library shelves with new titles (Los Angeles Times, 1999).

Choosing Books over Television

A powerful barrier to raising readers sits in the living rooms or bedrooms of most American homes. Children of all ages watch as much television in one day as they read for fun in an entire week, according to a 1998 report of the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research. Overall, children under age 13 spend 90 minutes a day in front of the TV—down from two hours in 1981, but still one-quarter of their free time.

Even the littlest viewers are hooked. Children ages 3 to 5 spend an average of 13 hours and 28 minutes a week watching TV, almost as much as the 13 hours and 36 minutes that 9- to 12-year-olds watch TV weekly (Hofferth, 1998).

The youngest children spend the most time reading at home, but it is only a paltry one hour and 25 minutes a week. The reading habit actually *declines* among children between ages 6 and 12, who spend roughly 10 minutes less per week with books at home. Girls spend about 11 minutes per day reading, while boys spend 10 minutes. Reading rates did not differ on weekdays or weekends (Hofferth, 1998).

IDEAS AT WORK

Imagination Library

The Dollywood Foundation's Imagination Library promotes early learning by encouraging and enabling families to read together. Long committed to dropout prevention, the foundation has responded to research showing that investment in early childhood can build a strong foundation for school success. Administered by singer and actress Dolly Parton, this innovative program provides free books to families in her home region in Tennessee.

Each baby born in Sevier County receives a special locomotive bookcase and a copy *of The Little Engine that Could*. The child then receives a new book each month until he or she begins kindergarten at age 5, for a total library of 60 books. The program has distributed more than 100,000 books to 5,000 pre-kindergarten children.

The Imagination Express, a specially designed train, is driven by The Imagineer, who reads aloud and promotes reading at child care centers and community events throughout the Sevier County region.

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www.dollywood.com/foundation/library.html

IDEAS AT WORK

A Wealth of Children's Books in Spanish

The San Marcos campus of California State University hosts the Center for the Study of Books in Spanish for Children and Adolescents. The center aims to help more children develop an early love of reading and to become lifelong readers. The center offers workshops and publications, and boasts an 80,000 volume lending library of children's books in Spanish, believed to be the world's largest collection of its kind. The library also includes books in English on Latino culture.

The center offers a free searchable database of 5,000 recommended books in Spanish from publishers around the world. To assist Spanish-speaking parents and others, information on each book is provided in Spanish as well as in English, including subject headings, grade-level, bibliography, and brief descriptions.

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campus_centers/csb/

Children of older parents are more likely to read than are children of younger parents. Children of single parents spend less time reading than do children in two-parent households. Children with two working parents watch less television than "traditional" families with a male breadwinner and a mother at home. Children of better-educated parents watch less TV and read more often for pleasure. Kids with more siblings watch more TV than those in small families (Hofferth, 1998).

The imbalance between reading and television has a significant effect on academic results, the Michigan researchers found. Every hour of weekly reading translated into a half-point *increase* on test scores, while each hour of TV watching corresponded with a tenth of a point *drop* in scores (Hofferth, 1998).

A Hopeful Trend

There are reasons to be hopeful in 1999. The NAEP 1998 Reading Report Card found fewer students were watching excessive amounts of television compared with 1994, and more fourth- and twelfth-graders were watching a minimal amount—one hour or less per day—compared with 1992. In all three grades, students who reported watching three or fewer hours of television each day had higher average reading scores, and those who watched six hours or more had the lowest average scores. The same report also found that fourth-graders who were given time daily to read books of their own choosing had the *highest* average scores.

Parents cannot assume that school-

work makes up for too much TV. With in-class assignments and homework, many students report reading 10 pages or fewer each day—43 percent of fourth-graders, 57 percent of eighth-graders and 56 percent of twelfth-graders (NAEP 1998 Reading Report Card). On a positive note, more eighth- and twelfth-graders report reading 11 or more pages per day than in recent years.

When children are plugged into television instead of reading books, they are not developing the key literacy skills that will prepare them for school and help them learn. While there are some educational programs, most notably on public television, they are underutilized. Parents must be motivated to choose those programs more often.

IDEAS AT WORK

Parents: Taking Charge of Television Choices

PBS (the Public Broadcasting Service) created the Ready to Learn program to provide preschool children with skills for lifelong learning. Participating stations coach parents and caregivers on how to use television as a learning tool to improve children's reading and social skills.

A recent study by the University of Alabama's Institute for Communication Research found that coaching seminars had a lasting impact on parents' and children's behavior (Bryant, 1999).

Six months after parents attended a workshop, children were reported to watch 40 percent less television than before, and when they did watch, they chose more educational programs. Parents reported that the shows their children watched, to varying degrees, helped them prepare for school and acquire information. They also encouraged more reading.

Participating parents were more likely to set limits on the amount of time children watched TV. Parents and children watched television together much more often than before the workshop. The coached parents also were much more likely to discuss programs with their children, and the children were much more likely to ask questions about what they were viewing.

The coaching also had a significant impact on reading behavior. Parents read to their children more often, and for longer periods, than before the coaching. They chose more educational reading materials and took children more often to the library and bookstore. They also were much more likely to engage children in hands-on activities related to the books they had read.

Contact: *Jean Chase*
Ready to Learn
(703) 739-5000
www.pbs.org/kids/rtl

The Value of Parents

Parents serve both as teachers and role models in reading (National Research Council, 1998). Adults pass on to children their own expectations about education and achievement, both positive and negative (Fingeret, 1990). Parents who value reading are more likely to turn off the television, visit the library, and give books as gifts. But adults who rarely read books or newspapers themselves may be less likely to read to their own children (Fletcher & Lyon, 1998). Some parents with limited English proficiency may be reluctant to read aloud in their native language, out of concern that this would impede their children's English acquisition.

Few parents reach out for help from experts, either due to embarrassment, lack of access, or lack of time. Only 12 percent of parents of 3- to 5-year-olds attended a parenting class in 1996, and only 11 percent had taken part in a parental support group (National Education Goals Panel, 1997). It is a great national challenge to reach parents with literacy information and support, to better enable them to raise a family of readers.

Resources for parents and families may be found in Reading Resources, Appendix I of this book.

Action Steps for Parents

There are a number of steps that parents can take to help prepare their young children to become readers and to support the reading habit once they are in school. These include:

📖 Feed your child a diet of rich language experiences throughout the day. Talk with your infants and young children frequently in short, simple sentences. Tell stories, sing songs, recite nursery rhymes or poems, and describe the world around them to expose them to words. Name things. Make connections. Encourage your child's efforts to talk with you.

📖 Try to read aloud to your children for 30 minutes daily beginning when they are infants. Ask caring adults to be your children's daily reader when you are unavailable.

📖 Have your child's eyesight and hearing tested early and annually. If you suspect your child may have a disability, seek help. Evaluations and assessments are available at no cost to parents. Call the early childhood specialist in your school system or call the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities at (800) 695-0285 (Voice/TTY).

📖 Seek out child care providers who spend time talking with and reading to your child, who make trips to the library, and who designate a special reading area for children.

📖 Ask your child's teacher for an assessment of your child's reading level, an explanation of the approach the teacher is taking to develop reading and literacy skills, and ways in which you can bolster your child's literacy skills at home.

📖 Limit the amount and kind of television your children watch. Seek out educational television or videos from the library that you can watch and discuss with your children.

📖 Set up a special place for reading and writing in your home. A well-lit reading corner filled with lots of good books can become a child's favorite place. Keep writing materials such as non-toxic crayons, washable markers, paints and brushes, and different kinds of paper in a place where children can reach them.

📖 Visit the public library often to spark your child's interest in books. Help your children obtain their own library cards and pick out their own books. Talk to a librarian, teacher, school reading specialist, or bookstore owner for guidance about what books are appropriate for children at different ages and reading levels.

📖 You are your child's greatest role model. Demonstrate your own love of reading by spending quiet time in which your child observes you reading to yourself. Show your child how reading and writing help you get things done every day—cooking, shopping, driving, or taking the bus.

📖 If your own reading skills are limited, consider joining a family literacy program. Ask a librarian for picture books that you can share with your child by talking about the pictures. Tell family stories or favorite folktales to your children.

📖 Consider giving books or magazines to children as presents or as a recognition of special achievements. Special occasions, such as birthdays or holidays, can be the perfect opportunity to give a child a new book.

📖 Connect your children with their grandparents and great-grandparents. Encourage them to read books together, talk about growing up, tell stories, and sing songs from their generation.

📖 Ask about free readings and other programs at bookstores in your community.

CHAPTER 2

Ready to Read

Building Skills Through Early Care and Education

As the 20th century nears its end, it is a fact of American family life that young children spend a substantial part of their days in the care of someone other than a parent. More than 13 million infants, toddlers, and preschoolers receive regular care from adults other than their parents—roughly six out of 10 children under age 6 who are not enrolled in kindergarten (U.S. Department of Education, OERI, 1996). According to the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research, the average number of hours spent per week by children ages 3 to 5 in school settings nearly *doubled* from 11.5 hours in 1981 to 20 hours in 1997 (Hofferth, 1998).

The National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force estimates that 3 million people provided child care in 1998. The U.S. Department of Labor has projected the need for nearly 300,000 new child care workers between 1996 and 2006, making the occupation among the 10 fastest-growing in the nation.

These statistics give us important information for winning the war against illiteracy. For some children, the support of parents and elementary school teachers is not enough. While most parents are eager to learn more about early childhood development and education, work and family pressures strain their time and resources. Elementary school teachers do not even meet children until well after key periods have passed for cognitive and language development.

Architects of Reading Success

If we are serious about starting early to create a nation of readers, then we must do more to enlist the burgeoning corps of adults who work in early care and education—in preschools, child care centers, nursery schools, and home-based care settings. We must also address the reality that many of these early care and education providers need assistance with basic skills and training to fulfill

their potential. As a nation, we must acknowledge that these Americans are not just children's caretakers. They are architects of foundations that are critical for reading and academic success.

Many studies have established that high-quality early care and education lay the foundation for school success by enhancing cognitive and language development, as well as social and emotional competence (National Institute for Child Health and Development, 1997). More specifically, the 1998 National Research Council report found that early childhood programs can contribute to the *prevention* of reading difficulties. These programs contribute by providing young children with enriched, research-based literacy environments, and by identifying and removing

IDEAS AT WORK

Bright Beginnings, Charlotte, NC

Bright Beginnings is a public pre-kindergarten program in North Carolina's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools. Focused on literacy, the program provides 4-year-olds with a literacy-rich, resource-rich, full-day school experience. Each school day is constructed around four 15-minute literacy circles, where teachers engage children in reading and literacy activities.

The school district has developed its own pre-kindergarten curriculum, content standards, and performance expectations that set high goals for every child. Pre-kindergarten standards have been developed in the areas of social and personal development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the creative arts, physical development, and technology.

Supported mainly through federal Title I funds, the program currently serves more than 1,900 children. Plans call for reaching all 4,000 children in the school district who need high-quality preschool experiences to get ready for school.

The district collaborates with Head Start, special education, and other public and private partners. All teachers are early childhood specialists with at least a four-year degree and are certified to teach by the state.

Bright Beginnings serves only eligible children who are selected according to federal funding guidelines. An initial program evaluation shows promising outcomes.

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www.cms.k12.nc.us/k12/curricul/prek/index.htm

possible obstacles to reading success.

Unfortunately, fulfilling the promise of early education is easier to imagine than to realize. By the time they enter kindergarten, most children have experienced some kind of early education or child care. But access to this care, as well as the quality of care, varies greatly. Children from low-income families, who are most apt to benefit from early intervention, are the *least* likely to attend preschool. In fact, the preschool participation gap between rich and poor has actually widened over the past two decades (National Education Goals Panel, 1997).

When we fail to make the most of this important period in young children's lives, we set the stage for later difficulties. Kindergarten teachers have estimated that 35 percent of America's children start school unprepared to learn (Boyer, 1991). In 1998, teachers in another national survey reported that about half of all children have problems making the transition to kindergarten (National Center for Early Childhood Development and Learning, 1998). Many of these children will have difficulty learning to read.

More Children in Child Care

The opportunities for early care and education to help—or hinder—America's victory in the war against illiteracy have multiplied with the expansion of child care services. Much of this demand has been fueled by the tremendous expansion of women's roles in the workforce. The percentage of mothers of infants and toddlers working outside the home has nearly *tripled* from 21 percent in 1965 to 59 percent in 1994 (Shore, 1997).

But even among households in which the mother is not employed, one-third use regular child care for their youngest children (U.S. Department of Education, OERI, 1996). Preschoolers spend an average of 35 hours a week in child care if their mothers work outside the home, and 20 hours per week if their mothers are not employed (Shore, 1997).

High-quality early childhood programs can help prevent reading difficulties.

Child care starts early: 45 percent of infants under age 1 are regularly cared for by someone other than a parent, most by a relative in a private home. As babies grow, their chance of being cared for by non-parental adults also grows, from 50 percent of 1-year-olds to 84 percent of 5-year-olds. Similarly, the percentage cared for outside of private homes grows from 11 percent of 1-year-olds to 75 percent of 5-year-olds (U.S. Department of Education, OERI, 1996). Thus, an enormous potential exists for early childhood providers to influence later reading success.

Choices in Child Care

Individual and cultural preferences influence family choices about the use of early childhood programs. More than six

out of 10 Black children (66 percent) and White children (62 percent) receive supplemental care and education, compared with 46 percent of Hispanic children. There are also wide income differences in families' child care patterns: only half of all households with incomes of $30,000 or less use child care, compared with three-quarters of households with incomes of $50,000 or more (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

Besides influencing whether families use child care at all, income also influences the *type* of care that families select. This has significance for the war against illiteracy: the care families choose makes a difference.

The Limitations of Income

In addition to having greater access to

IDEAS AT WORK

Building Literacy Through the Arts in Early Childhood

The Arts Education Partnership, representing more than 100 national organizations, researched the role of the arts in early childhood. The study identifies the best kinds of experiences for babies, toddlers, preschoolers, and young elementary school students to build cognitive, motor, language, and social-emotional development.

Under the philosophy that play is the business of young children, the partnership study found that the arts engage children in learning, stimulate memory, and facilitate understanding. Role-playing games, poems, songs, rhyming, dramatic storytelling, and other creative arts play can develop language skills and a love of learning.

The study's report, *Young Children in the Arts,* includes developmental benchmarks and appropriate arts activities for children from birth to age 8. Parents and adult caregivers are encouraged to use character voices and dramatic gestures when reading or telling stories and to make sock puppets to increase the enjoyment of the tale. Show-and-tell stories can be created with photographs, and young children can pantomime their favorite book characters before a mirror. Older children can write poems and improvise stories with simple costumes.

Resources, research, and programs are available through the database of the Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts at www.wolftrap.org/.

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regulated care, higher-income families are much more likely to use center-based care—nursery schools, child care centers, and preschools—than are lower-income families (National Education Goals Panel, 1995; West et al., 1995). In low-income neighborhoods, the supply of

Center-based child care is associated with better language comprehension and school readiness skills.

any kind of regulated child care, whether in centers or family child care homes, is usually inadequate (Siegel & Loman, 1991).

This lack of options increases the number of poor children in unlicensed family child care or relative care (Fuller & Liang, 1995; Love & Kisker, 1996). Research shows that, in general, unlicensed care arrangements are of lower quality than licensed centers or homes (Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995; Kontos et al., 1994). Among those who offer services in a private home, 50 percent of non-regulated providers have been found to offer inadequate care, compared with about 13 percent of regulated providers (Families and Work Institute, 1994).

Advantages of Center-based Care

Although many families prefer family

IDEAS AT WORK

A Jump Start

Jumpstart recruits college students to help children who are struggling in preschool. The mentors are paired for almost two years with 3- and 4-year-olds in Head Start or other programs for children living in poverty. The Jumpstart mentors work one-on-one with children to teach and reinforce basic academic and social skills.

Jumpstart forms partnerships with early childhood caregivers and involves families in their preschooler's development. The summer program provides an intensive preschool experience for young children during the two months before kindergarten.

Jumpstart serves children in Boston; New Haven, Connecticut; New York City; Washington D.C.; Los Angeles; and San Francisco. The program aims to engage 1,000 college students as mentors by the year 2000 and to reach more than 12,000 children. Mentors may receive stipends or wages through AmeriCorps or the Federal Work-Study program.

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child care arrangements for their home-like atmosphere and small numbers of children, center-based care is the preference of most families for their older, preschool children (Leibowitz et al., 1988). Because centers are designed to serve larger groups of children, they often offer greater resources for preschoolers' literacy development, such as books, tapes, and computers.

Additionally, a recent multi-site study found that center care is associated with better cognitive and language outcomes and a higher level of school readiness, compared with outcomes in other settings of comparable quality (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 1997b). But not all center-based care is equal. Children who attended centers that met professional guidelines for child-staff ratios, group sizes, and teacher education had better language comprehension and school readiness than did children enrolled in centers without these standards.

But the doors to high-quality early care and education are often closed to low-income families, either because of

IDEAS AT WORK

The Gardner Children's Center, San Jose, CA

For this bustling child care center, serving children from 6 weeks old through seventh grade, literacy is the foundation of all learning. Each child is read to daily. Lesson plans are based on "Ten Best Books," which each teacher chooses to ensure that all children learn the joy of reading. Every classroom has a designated reading area, and both pre-kindergarten and school-age children regularly visit the Biblioteca (the Spanish language library) for story hour and book selection. Teachers aim to make visiting the library a lifelong habit.

The Gardner Children's Center also reaches out to families to promote literacy. At orientation, all parents are given a book in their home language and coached on the importance of reading to and with their children. These messages are reinforced at parent conferences twice a year. A family literacy night is celebrated through a partnership with the local public television station.

Also, parents learn to share literacy activities at home with their children in English and Spanish. Children's books are distributed at the annual health fair. At holiday time, every child enrolled in the program, and each sibling, receives at least one book as a gift. The total environment communicates the value and joy of reading.

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cost or location. These barriers result in many poor children entering school without the early educational choices available to their affluent classmates, placing them at greater risk of reading difficulties.

Low Funding, Low Quality

Child care providers have struggled to satisfy the demand for services. Unfortunately, this struggle has resulted in the chronic, twin calamities of low wages and high employee turnover. The under-funding of early care and education—including fees, subsidies, and donations—is acknowledged to be the chief cause of low quality (Gomby et al., 1996; National Education Association, 1998).

Both parents and child care teachers bear the burden of the current inadequate funding system. Clearly, parent fees put high-quality early care and education out of reach for many working families. Yet, this system also perpetuates low salaries, which fail to attract and retain highly skilled teachers. The impact is negative for all involved—child care providers, families, and children—and ultimately, for our nation as well. Low-quality early care and education put children's development at risk, including the development of abilities associated with reading success.

In 1989, a national study reported that the quality in most child care centers was "barely adequate" (National Center for the Early Childhood Workforce, 1989). In 1999, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) found that fewer than 10 percent of American youngsters ages 3 and under are likely to receive "excellent" care (Booth, 1999). About 20 percent of child care centers are estimated to provide unsafe and unhealthy care (Shore, 1997). The 1995 Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study found that child care at most centers is poor to mediocre, and almost half of infant and toddler care may be detrimental. The recent NICHD study found that 61 percent of child care arrangements—including centers, family child care homes, in-home sitters, and relative care—to be poor to fair quality (Booth, 1999).

Six for Success!

Both child development theory and research on successful practices point to six key features of high-quality early care and education programs:

1. High staff-child ratios
2. Small group sizes
3. Adequate staff education and training
4. Low staff turnover
5. Curriculum emphasizing child-initiated, active learning
6. Parent involvement

Source: National Education Association, 1998

The States Take Action

Many states are taking action aimed at improving child care quality, in part because a growing amount of public money

is being spent on child care. Although states traditionally spend the lion's share of funds for children on elementary and secondary education, states increased expenditures on child care by 55 percent between 1996 and 1998 (National Governors' Association, 1998).

This investment is important not only to meet the demands of the marketplace

Fortunately, child care reforms that improve health and safety can also improve cognitive and language development.

but also, if the quality of care is high, to put more children on the path to school success. Thus, quality improvement efforts must attend to children's development—cognitive, language, social, and emotional—as well as reduce risks of physical harm.

Forty-four states reported to the National Governors' Association that they were working on child care quality issues in 1998. One positive trend finds 16 states paying higher reimbursements to child care providers who meet higher quality standards. Fortunately, reforms to boost health and safety often parallel reforms that can improve opportunities for cognitive and language development.

For example, improving child-staff ratios and requiring smaller class sizes enables teachers to have individual conversations, read with small groups, and implement classroom practices that research shows are necessary to promote literacy and later school success (Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995). Research also has found that favorable adult-child ratios increase children's imitation of adults and increase children's verbal interactions (National Education Association, 1998). Despite this evidence, only 18 states maintain requirements for a 10-to-1 ratio throughout the preschool years, and some states allow ratios *twice* as high (General Accounting Office, 1998).

Quality of Early Childhood Teachers

Whether they work in child care, preschool, or public school, research consistently shows that the quality of teachers is the key to quality education. This is especially true in the early years.

A national study found that when child care providers had more years of education and more college-level early education training, they provided more sensitive, developmentally appropriate care to children (Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995). Higher education and specialized training also allow early childhood teachers to do a better job of advancing children's language skills, a key predictor of later reading success (Whitebook et al., 1990).

But not all child care teachers get the professional preparation they need. In a study for the U.S. Department of Education, 93 percent of child care teachers reported having some child-related training, but only 36 percent had formal, college-level teacher preparation, and only

24 percent held a credential from a professional organization. Among home-based providers, only 64 percent reported any child-related training and just 6 percent were accredited by a professional organization (Kisker et al., 1991).

Early childhood teachers find little incentive under current state requirements to prepare themselves better to support literacy development. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) recommends that all early care and education teachers have formal training at the bachelor's level, but most states require that child care workers hold only a high

Education and training helps early childhood teachers to advance children's pre-literacy skills.

school diploma. Only nine states require any college credit in early childhood for child care center teachers. Only two—Hawaii and Rhode Island—require a bachelor's degree in any field with specialized training in early care and education (Azer & Eldred, 1998).

Just as improvements in child-staff ratios and class size benefit all areas of children's development, more professional training opportunities and higher standards for early childhood teachers would enhance children's growth, including their preparation to be successful readers.

Efforts to Improve

Small but promising steps have been

IDEAS AT WORK

A Family Place

The Family Place Library recruits child care providers to bring children to the library for learning fun. This library also provides Storytime Kits for child care providers to use in their homes. The kits include books, videos, puzzles, puppets, and activities. Educational toys, including adaptive toys for children with disabilities, can also be borrowed.

The library also offers extensive literacy resources and educational programs to families.

The Family Place Library, a joint venture between New York's Middle Country Public Library and Libraries for the Future, is funded by the Hasbro Children's Foundation. Family Place Library is a national project operating programs in six communities.

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www.lff.org

taken to enhance the professional preparation of early childhood teachers. One study showed that even a modest increase in high-quality training can benefit children.

These researchers found that even 18 to 36 hours of training for family child care providers resulted in improved caregiving environments and stronger relationships between adults and children. A taste of professional development also whetted the participants' appetites—after completing the training, 95 percent of the providers said they wanted more instruction (Galinsky et al., 1995).

However promising, this level of preparation does not approach what is needed to provide our youngest children with the foundations for healthy development. More comprehensive approaches to training can strengthen the early childhood work force. The Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition offers a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential,

IDEAS AT WORK

A New Option for Certification in Child Development

The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training (BAT) is taking a collaborative approach to credentialling child care providers. Through BAT's partnership with the state of West Virginia's apprenticeship program, candidates who take four semesters of college courses and get 4,000 hours of on-the-job training receive certification from the U.S. Department of Labor as a *Child Development Specialist*.

Hundreds of providers have graduated from the program, and many hundreds more are actively pursuing completion of the requirements. Florida, Minnesota, and Maine have followed suit, with Maine requiring six semesters of college courses.

The program draws on core teams of educators, health professionals, parents, and employers. The system creates a career ladder for child care providers who earn their salaries while in the program and receive incremental wage increases as their skills, abilities, and knowledge increase.

Employers report almost no turnover among participating providers, and the providers report high satisfaction with their careers. Plans are under way to launch similar projects in 10 more states in 1999.

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which is used as one of the standards in the licensing of child care teachers and center directors in 46 states and the District of Columbia. The credential calls for a high school diploma, 120 hours of training in specified categories, and 480 hours of experience, along with a formal assessment procedure.

With leadership from Wheelock College's Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education, many states are developing more coherent early childhood training systems, with increased collaboration between higher education institutions and community partners.

Other state efforts include the T.E.A.C.H. project (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps). In North Carolina and a small number of other states, this innovative project provides college scholarships for early childhood teachers, administrators, and family child care providers. Completion of the program leads to higher compensation.

Experts recommend that everyone working in early care and education hold a license based on strict educational standards.

These promising trends are consistent with recommendations by experts in the field. The *Not By Chance* report (Kagan & Cohen, 1997) summarizes four years of discussions by early childhood and policy experts. They recommend that every person employed in early care and education programs hold an individual license to practice, based on demanding standards of education and training.

Licensing Priorities

Hairdressers in more than 40 states are required to have between 1,000 and 2,100 hours of training at an accredited school to get a license (BeautyTech, 1999). Yet 39 states and the District of Columbia do not require child care providers to have any early childhood training prior to taking children into their homes (Azer & Caprano, 1997).

In the literacy area alone, the 1998 National Research Council's report sets forth a long list of in-depth knowledge and skills that all early childhood educators must have if children are to enter school ready to become successful readers.

The Orton Dyslexia Society calls for all preschool and kindergarten teachers to be able to, at minimum: stimulate oral expressive language, language comprehension, and print awareness; foster phonological awareness and recognition of the links between sounds and letters; and identify language problems of children at risk for reading difficulty. One-shot workshops and minimal training requirements will not be enough to

Books Aloud: A Child Care Experiment

A recent study called Books Aloud, in and around Philadelphia, found that children's early literacy skills can be enhanced by simultaneously flooding child care centers with books *and* training caregivers to read aloud (Neuman, in press).

This $2 million study, funded by the William Penn Foundation, targeted more than 330 child care centers serving more than 17,000 low-income children. Centers were flooded with nearly 90,000 books—an average of five new, high-quality books per child.

At the start of the study, more centers had TVs than library nooks; the majority had neither. The centers had negligible funding for supplies, so the books they did have were in shabby condition.

Research has found that talk between adults and children in some child care settings can be dominated by imperatives—adults telling children what to do (Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995). The Books Aloud teachers received 10 hours of training from preschool specialists on how to enrich the language and literacy opportunities they offered to children. Caregivers were shown that, in addition to being fun, reading aloud also teaches children about vocabulary, narrative structure, and the relationship between spoken and printed words.

Child care teachers were encouraged to designate a reading area in their center and storytime in their schedule. They were coached on how to prepare for storytime and extend the concepts of the book through discussions, questions, and hands-on activities, such as puppets.

The frequency of literacy interactions between adults and children, such as talking about stories and developing skills through singing, counting, and rhyming, *doubled* over seven months. Teachers regarded reading aloud as an opportunity for interactive learning. This increased the children's motivation, interest, and reading time. Books Aloud children frequently asked to be read to, pretended to read, and played with books during their free time more often than similar children who were not in the program. Books Aloud children outperformed their peers in specific abilities that lead to successful reading, such as knowledge of letters and understanding of print, writing, and narrative. Gains were still evident six months after the program had ended.

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produce the skilled professionals needed to support children's language and literacy development.

The Need for Coordination

An equally challenging obstacle to the consistent preparation of high-quality early childhood teachers is the isolation and lack of coordination in the early care and education field. Providers range from Head Start teachers to private nursery schools teachers to a neighbor caring for a handful of toddlers. Settings range from family homes and churches to private centers and public preschools. Funding ranges from private to local to state to federal.

Child care providers need greater coordination at the local level to foster children's language and literacy development.

This fragmented array of early childhood services has resulted in an inequality of resources and lack of communication about good teaching practices, undermining our commitment to provide high-quality education to all children. Greater coordination is needed at the local level to link this mosaic, share resources, increase access, improve overall care, and foster children's language and literacy development.

It is not unusual for children entering a single kindergarten class to display a five-year range of literacy skills. Some children may have the reading ability of an 8-year-old, while others may have the language skills of a 3-year-old (Riley, 1996). Although children will always arrive at school with different learning needs, better early education will increase the number of kindergarteners who are ready to become successful readers.

Only by rejecting business as usual and facing up to these many challenges can we take advantage of the tremendous opportunities to improve child literacy through early care and education. Policymakers and early childhood administrators can work actively to support child care teachers and to bolster their contributions to reading success.

Watching Kids, Watching Cars

The median hourly wage for parking lot attendants ($6.56) remains higher than the median hourly wage for child care workers ($6.48).

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1997

Resources for early care and education providers may be found in Reading Resources, Appendix I of this book.

Action Steps for Policymakers

Local, state, and national policymakers can improve our systems of early care and education and promote literacy. Policymakers can:

📖 Develop innovative strategies to adequately fund America's early care and education system. Redesign the current financing system to ensure affordable, high-quality care for children and families and competitive compensation for teachers.

📖 Broaden expectations for high-quality care to include enhanced early learning environments that promote language skills and literacy.

📖 Provide high-quality preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds who are at risk for later school difficulties, and examine ways to provide universal preschool.

📖 Strengthen links between family child care homes, child care centers, and public schools to share resources and training.

📖 Ensure that accreditation and licensing requirements in early care and education incorporate research-based practices that support children's cognitive, language, social, and emotional development, and that build successful readers.

📖 Develop policies and structures, such as Offices for Young Children, through which state and local authorities can coordinate services in early care and education.

📖 Create incentives for early childhood programs to use research-based knowledge in program design.

📖 Where necessary, modify minimum standards for group sizes and adult-child ratios to create better literacy environments for children.

📖 Support efforts to build an early childhood career ladder, with increased responsibilities and compensation for practitioners with higher qualifications. These efforts should attract and keep the staff who are best at helping children learn.

📖 Support efforts to improve staff training and ongoing professional development. Coordinate training efforts across programs and sponsoring agencies. Fund scholarships and create incentives to encourage providers to pursue advanced training.

📖 Use public information campaigns to encourage parents to seek effective child care that develops language and other pre-literacy skills.

Action Steps for Practitioners

Child care providers, teachers, directors, and others can actively prepare young children for reading success. Practitioners can:

📖 Use research-based recommendations and resources to improve literacy environments for children.

📖 Converse frequently and informally with babies and children to build vocabulary, strengthen concepts, and enhance language skills. Encourage and respond to children when they try to communicate.

📖 Read to children every day. Encourage children to talk about the story or characters. Read one-on-one with a child when he or she asks.

📖 Read to infants even before they can speak. Babies love to listen to voices and will associate books with pleasant feelings.

📖 Encourage volunteers to read with children. Find volunteers through colleges, high schools, community and seniors organizations, religious groups, and businesses.

📖 Engage children in daily activities to build reading readiness, such as singing nursery rhymes and playing sound, word, and letter games.

📖 Use the arts to engage young children in the development of language and communication skills.

📖 Set up a reading and writing area for children. Make sure the area is well lit, with interesting books and writing tools. Include books for and about children with special needs, and books about the children's languages and cultures.

📖 Encourage parents to read to and with their children, either in English or in their home language. Lend a range of books overnight.

📖 Make frequent trips to the library. Contact your librarian to plan a guided tour. Ask about bilingual story times or special story hours.

📖 Seek out continuing education and training in child development and in effective teaching practices. Learn to identify "red flags" that may signal barriers to successful reading.

📖 Find ways to coordinate training with other early care and education organizations. Joint training may be scheduled at a central site such as a library. Network to share information and resources.

CHAPTER 3

Read to Succeed

How Schools Can Help Every Child Become a Reader

We now know that helping all children learn to read by the end of third grade is complex, and that family members, caregivers, and preschool teachers can play significant roles in developing reading readiness.

But clearly schools play the major role in teaching reading. Schools can help us win the war on illiteracy by turning *all* children who are ready to read into independent readers and giving those children who *aren't* ready the education they need to succeed.

While older children, teenagers, and even adults can be taught to read with intensive and often costly remediation, the easiest time to learn is during the early elementary years. The primary grades (kindergarten through third) present the best opportunity for each child to become a competent reader.

The Challenge of the Primary Years

Roughly half the nation's children learn to read easily regardless of the method of instruction (Lyon, 1997). But as many as *two in 10* children are considered significantly reading impaired. These children will need intensive instruction to master the complex process of reading (Shaywitz et al., 1990).

But with prevention and early intervention, experts have found, reading failure in the primary grades can be reduced to *less than one in 10 children* (Vellutino et al., 1996; Torgeson et al., 1997; Foorman et al., 1998). Even first-graders who have the greatest reading challenges can reach grade-level reading by the end of second grade with intensive, targeted intervention (Vellutino et al., 1996). This means that more than *nine out of 10 children can become average readers or better.*

But many of our children are failing to reach their reading potential. The NAEP 1998 Reading Report Card found that nearly *four in 10* American fourth-graders are failing to read at the *Basic*

achievement level, having little or no mastery of the reading skills needed for grade-level work. In our highest-poverty schools, nearly *seven in 10* fourth-graders fail to read at the *Basic* achievement level.

The Perils of Waiting Too Long

One reason for the disparity between children's capacity to learn and their rates of reading failure is that too few students receive effective aid. Most children don't get special reading help until

Learning to Read: Not a Moment, But a Process

Experts stress that learning to read and write is not an act, but many steps on a developmental continuum. Preschool and primary school teachers can assess individual children's progress by setting realistic goals and allowing for individual variations. It is appropriate to expect most children to achieve "early reading" by age 7.

Children with learning disabilities, limited English proficiency, or other learning challenges also need high, but achievable goals. These goals should be established by teachers, families, and specialists working together.

Phase 1: Preschool
Awareness and Exploration
Children explore their environment, building foundations for learning to read and write.

Phase 2: Kindergarten
Experimental Reading and Writing
Children develop the basic concepts of print and begin to experiment with reading and writing.

Phase 3: First Grade
Early Reading and Writing
Children read simple stories and write about a meaningful topic.

Phase 4: Second Grade
Transitional Reading and Writing
Children begin to read more fluently and write using simple and more complex sentences.

Phase 5: Third Grade
Independent and Productive Reading and Writing
Children continue to refine reading and writing for different uses and audiences.

Phase 6: Fourth Grade and Up
Advanced Reading

Source: Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children—A Joint Position Statement of the International Reading Association and The National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998
(800) 424-2460
Full text at:
www.naeyc.org/public_affairs/pubaff_index.htm

age 9 or later (Lyon, 1997). This "too little, too late" approach condemns three-quarters of these 9-year-olds to poor reading achievement throughout high school (Shaywitz et al., 1997).

As parents and teachers know, the more often young children fail in reading, the less motivated they are to continue struggling (National Research Council, 1998). This surrender can happen as early as the middle of first grade (Lyon, 1998).

Reading failure can be devastating to a child's self-image. Almost 90 percent of children who have difficulty reading at the end of first grade display similar difficulties in fourth grade (Juel, 1988).

Out of embarrassment, these discouraged readers may try to hide their deficiency, avoid reading aloud, and pass up chances to practice reading at home. As the average student needs to see a word between four and 14 times before recognizing it automatically, this limited exposure to words is costly (Lyon, 1997). Without extra practice and intervention, the young student slips further and further behind.

What Teachers Need to Know

The majority of teachers and parents agree that reading is the most important subject for students to learn (Hart, 1994). Disagreements have raged primarily over a different question: How should reading be taught?

The National Research Council made clear in its landmark 1998 report, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, that we need not choose between one or another method of instruction favored by publishers or politicians. Like the commission that prepared 1983's *A Nation at Risk*, the National Research Council panel found that a comprehensive approach by well-prepared teachers is far more successful.

To successfully teach reading, the panel found, elementary school teachers must fully understand the structure of the English language, and the similarities and differences between written and spoken language. Teachers need a strong knowledge of child development, including psychology, language, and emergent literacy development. They must keep abreast of the most up-to-date research on reading and be able to use a variety of research-based teaching methods in the classroom.

Teachers need sophisticated training in how to teach young children that spoken language is made up of words, which contain sounds that are represented by letters and groups of letters. They must understand the ways that language conveys meaning, in various social and cultural contexts. Good teachers must be able to diagnose reading problems and respond to them with appropriate interventions. They need to gain feedback from colleagues and to work in an environment that emphasizes literacy (National Research Council, 1998).

Gaps in the Classroom

While not exhaustive, this list of prerequisite skills and knowledge reveals how successful reading instruction requires complex teacher preparation. Teaching reading today is truly a job for an expert (Orton Dyslexia Society,

Effective Literacy Instruction

Researchers identified nine characteristics shared by outstanding first-grade teachers in five states. In these classrooms, most students were reading and writing at or above first-grade level. The characteristics of these teachers include:

1. Ability to Motivate High Academic Engagement and Competence
Most students were engaged in academic activities most of the time, even when the teacher left the room.

2. Excellent Class Management
Teachers in the most effective classrooms managed student behavior, student learning, and instructional aides and specialists well, using a variety of methods.

3. Ability to Foster a Positive, Reinforcing, Cooperative Environment
These classrooms were positive places. The rare discipline problems were handled constructively. Students received a lot of positive reinforcement for their accomplishments, both privately and publicly, and students were encouraged to cooperate with one another.

4. Teaching Skills in Context
Word-level, comprehension, vocabulary, spelling, and writing skills were typically taught in the context of actual reading and writing tasks.

5. An Emphasis on Literature
The students selected books from extensive classroom collections. The teachers read literature and conducted author studies.

6. Much Reading and Writing
Teachers set aside 45 minutes for language arts, providing long, uninterrupted periods for reading and writing. Both the students and teacher read daily to themselves, to a buddy, to a group, to an adult volunteer, or to the class as a whole. Everyone wrote daily in journals.

7. A Match between Accelerating Demands and Student Competence
The teachers set high but realistic expectations and consistently encouraged students to try more challenging (but not overwhelming) tasks.

8. Encouraging Self-Regulation
Teachers taught students to self-regulate, encouraging students to choose appropriate skills when they faced a task rather than wait for the teacher to dictate a particular skill or strategy.

9. Connections across Curricula
Teachers made explicit connections across the curriculum—providing students with opportunities to use the skills they were learning. Reading and writing were integrated with other subjects.

Source: National Research Center on English Learning & Achievement, 1998
http://cela.albany.edu

1997). But researchers at the National Institutes of Health have found that only a tiny fraction of teachers are able to teach reading effectively to children who do not grasp it easily (*New York Times*, 1997).

Some teachers may lack an adequate understanding of the structure of written and spoken English, of the spelling system, or of how these relate to teaching reading (McCutchen et al., 1998). Experienced teachers may still be misinformed about the differences between speech and print (Moats, 1995). Others may need to grasp the fundamental importance of a child's understanding of how units of sound, or phonemes, are represented by letters of the alphabet (National Research Council, 1998).

Gaps may exist in the teacher's training in phonological awareness, or how spoken language has a structure distinct from its meaning. Others may be unaware or misinformed about semantics and what a student must know to comprehend what he or she reads. Few teachers are familiar enough with successful, research-based techniques. Many teachers express frustration with their limitations in helping increasingly diverse students reach their reading potential (Moats, 1995).

Inadequacies in Teacher Education

One major cause for the lack of preparation to teach reading is the inadequacy of teacher education. Novice teachers receive little formal education in reading instruction before entering the classroom; most have taken only one course in the subject as undergraduates (Goodlad, 1997). In some teacher colleges, reading is but a part of a single course in English language arts (National Research Council, 1998).

The National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education reports that virtually all states require at least some coursework in reading methods. But few require knowledge of the structure of the English language, the psychology of reading development, or other subjects needed to teach children with reading difficulties. This "overview" approach is inadequate to prepare novice teachers to assist the 50 percent of all students who do not learn reading easily (Moats & Lyon, 1996).

Many teachers are frustrated with their limitations in helping increasingly diverse students reach their reading potential.

Surveys of college students in teacher education courses have found that the professors often do not demonstrate the most effective instructional techniques, and that the course content is generally more theoretical than practical. These students rarely get the supervised practice time they need to develop effectively as reading teachers (Lyon, 1989).

Sporadic Professional Development

Professional development offerings for

teachers already in the classroom are often sporadic and do not compensate for the teachers' lack of preparation in college (National Research Council, 1998). Licensing is often linked to "seat time," or the hours a teacher spends in any course, regardless of its utility. One-shot workshops with little relevance to the classroom are most typical.

Instead, licensing should encourage high-quality, ongoing training in research-based principles, with adequate time for teachers to work in teams and practice new teaching techniques (Darling-Hammond, 1996). The National Research Council panel has created a list of what teachers need to know to successfully teach reading. This list should be the basis of elementary school teacher preparation and professional

IDEAS AT WORK

Reading Success Network: The Coach Approach

The Reading Success Network is a national network of schools actively pursuing schoolwide change to propel the reading achievement of every student. Schools join the network and identify a coach, who receives ongoing support, training, and materials, and participates in a Leadership Forum.

Coaches work with classroom teachers to provide powerful instruction in reading that allows all children to succeed, including those at risk of reading failure. Publications, a Web page, and a listserv support teachers, administrators, and parents at local Reading Success schools.

The Reading Success Network is operated by the U.S. Department of Education's Comprehensive Assistance Centers, a network of 15 regional centers designed to improve teaching and learning for all.

Based in California, the network is aligned with *Every Child a Reader*, the report of the California Reading Task Force, and *Teaching Reading*, the program advisory.

The network promotes:

- A comprehensive and balanced reading approach
- Continuous student monitoring and modification of instruction
- A proven and rigorous early intervention program
- Clear grade-level standards for student progress
- High-quality print and electronic instructional materials
- Reading as a priority of the school and community
- Continuous and ongoing staff development

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development across the nation.

Teacher training—whether preservice or inservice—should be based on developing and demonstrating competency. Rigorous and practical preparation should be linked in some way to licensure and credential renewal. Some experts advocate a medical school model for teacher preparation that includes a full year of "residency" in a real school before taking charge of a classroom (Archibold, 1998).

Others stress the advantages of the business school model, using extensive case studies and technology such as videodiscs to view actual classrooms (Risko & Kinzer, 1997). The latter approach connects a college student with the classroom experience, which studies show can improve the student teacher's problem-solving ability and other skills (Risko et al., 1996).

A National, State, and Local Challenge

There is a growing national consensus that standards should be raised for the entire teaching profession. The National Research Council's call for better teacher education and training in reading complements this broader teacher quality agenda.

For example, Education Secretary Riley's call for colleges of education to create more clinical experiences for their students is highly relevant to improving the teaching of reading. As state and national leaders explore better ways to educate and train teachers, the urgent needs of preschool teachers and kindergarten through third-grade reading instructors should be top priorities.

Some states have already strengthened their teacher education programs. Texas requires 70 percent of a teacher college's graduates to pass a certification exam for the institution to maintain its accreditation. Pennsylvania requires prospective teachers to keep a B average in both liberal arts courses and in the subject they seek to teach.

On the local level, most districts are not making up for inadequacies in their teachers' readiness to teach reading. On average, less than .5 percent of school district resources are invested in professional development (Darling-Hammond, 1996).

Opportunities for Improvement

This push for better reading teachers comes at an opportune moment in American education. A surge in student enrollment—the "baby boom echo"—and the retirement of a substantial percentage of older teachers will require the nation to hire 2.2 million teachers over the next 10 years (U.S. Department of Education, 1998a). That is equal to hiring every doctor in the United States two and one-half times.

This tectonic shift presents the nation with an unprecedented opportunity to raise the professional standards for teachers. In addition, a recent national poll by Recruiting New Teachers found overwhelming public support for raising teacher standards and providing teachers with more time to keep up with developments in their field (Recruiting New Teachers, 1998).

In fact, time is a precious commodity for both primary school teachers and

pupils. To improve reading instruction, teachers must take time to teach children letters and sounds and how to read for meaning. They must give children more time to practice reading and writing, using many types of books and reading materials. They also must take time to maintain children's motivation to read. And teachers need time to give more intensive and systematic individual instruction to those who need it.

Starting School Early

Even highly qualified teachers cannot reach students who are not yet in their classrooms. In nearly half the states, children are not required to attend school until age 7. While 38 states require school districts to *offer* kindergarten, only 14 states require students to actually *attend* kindergarten.

Children who have had high-quality preschool and kindergarten experiences have much less difficulty learning to read than children who have not been exposed to early education (National Research Council, 1998).

When all children are enrolled in high-quality early learning programs before entering elementary school, our rates of reading failure surely will go down.

IDEAS AT WORK

The Reading Excellence Program

In 1998, President Clinton signed the Reading Excellence Act, the most significant child literacy law in three decades. The Reading Excellence Program awards grants to states to improve reading. The program is designed to:

- Provide children with the readiness skills and support they need to learn to read once they enter school.
- Teach every child to read by the end of the third grade.
- Use research-based methods to improve the instructional practices of teachers and others.
- Expand the number of high-quality family literacy programs.
- Provide early intervention for children with reading difficulties.

States compete for $241 million in grants. Successful states hold competitions for local school districts. The first round of grants was awarded in summer 1999, with local grants to follow. Because low-income children experience reading failure at higher rates than their more affluent peers, the funding is directed toward the state's poorest districts and schools.

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A Whole-School Approach

Beyond offering kindergarten, many schools that raise reading achievement develop a schoolwide focus on literacy (National Research Council, 1998). Educators work together to develop comprehensive plans for professional development, assessment, use of technology, and new ways of using instructional time to teach reading and writing skills. Often, they bring literacy experts directly into the planning process. Architects of the most successful schoolwide efforts view research-based classroom instruction as just the foundation.

What else is helpful, besides a well-trained teacher? As stated, research supports devoting more class time to reading and writing (Education Trust, 1998). Students also benefit from one-on-one attention and expert tutoring integrated with classroom instruction (Slavin et al., 1989). Project-based learning that links reading and writing activities is also advantageous (National Research Council, 1998). Many schools measure and monitor students' reading skills to provide immediate, appropriate interventions (Education Trust, 1998). Also, reading and writing are an important part of every subject their students study.

In these successful schools, parents are involved in improving reading in the school *and* at home. Extra practice time is available through trained, volunteer tutors recruited from colleges, businesses, and retired citizens groups. Community members are viewed as stakeholders in the school's success.

IDEAS AT WORK

Principals in Pajamas

Kissing pigs, shaving mustaches, wearing pajamas to school—these are creative ways in which principals at San Diego's Benchley-Weinberger Elementary School have motivated their students to read. Principal Steven Hill believes reading should be fun and challenges the school's 500 students to read a million pages a year. When they meet that goal, they get something special. Hill once shaved off a mustache he'd had for 20 years—on television.

Benchley-Weinberger is an "Achievement through Communications" magnet school. The school's teachers receive specialized training in reading, writing, listening, and observing. The school also utilizes creative community, nonprofit, and private partnerships.

Benchley-Weinberger scores on reading tests are in the top 10 percent in San Diego, and the gap between Blacks, Hispanics, and other students has been reduced.

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Principles for Success

The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) identifies research-based principles for improving student reading achievement.

At successful schools:

- Entire school staffs, not just first-grade teachers, are involved in bringing children to high levels of achievement.
- Goals for reading achievement are clearly stated.
- High expectations are shared with all participants.
- Instructional means for attaining these goals are articulated.
- Shared assessments are used to monitor children's progress.

Instructional programs in successful schools have many components, including:

- A range of materials and technology
- A focus on reading and writing
- Parental involvement in their children's reading and homework
- Community partnerships, including volunteer tutoring programs

Source: CIERA 10 Principles, Full text on-line at www.ciera.org/resources/principles/index.html

Students with Special Needs

As states and schools work to improve the teaching of reading, special attention must be paid to those children who are likely to require the most help—those who are poor, those who have learning and other types of disabilities, and those with limited English proficiency.

A major insight of the National Research Council's report is that most children with disabilities or disadvantages learn to read in much the same way as other children. They may require much more time and intensive assistance, and benefit from certain environments, materials, and strategies. But what matters most is excellent instruction by qualified teachers who call upon a flexible menu of choices to suit the special needs of each learner.

Good teaching means the ability to address a variety of learning strengths and needs in the same classroom. It means starting with what students already know about reading in any language or format (e.g., Braille or Spanish) and building on and linking that knowledge to an English literacy context. Research-based strategies that are proven in many different populations are helpful in improving instruction for students with special needs. Teachers should always consider whether the research describes effective teaching strategies for students who are similar to their own.

Delays in language development are not unusual among children with disabilities. Children with speech difficulties, such as those with cerebral palsy,

may have trouble communicating orally. Children with hearing loss may use seemingly immature language that belies their actual intellectual development. Some mentally disabled children may struggle to express themselves, to understand what is said to them, and to comprehend language in general (Dodge & Colker, 1996).

When teaching children with special needs, teachers should capitalize on each child's individual strengths. If a child has trouble paying attention, the teacher may choose not to finish reading a book. Instead, the teacher might engage the child in conversation, asking questions about the story that require more than a yes or no response. The child may be able to draw a picture or make up a song about the book's characters (Arnold, 1997) to enhance comprehension and maintain motivation.

Nearly 7 in 10 fourth-graders in our poorest urban schools fail to read at the Basic level needed for school success.

While not all disabilities and disadvantages are addressed here, many children who experience reading difficulties have the following risk factors: living in poverty, having a learning disability, having limited proficiency in English, or having a hearing impairment.

High-Poverty Schools: A Staggering Challenge

Because poverty is a very high risk factor for illiteracy (National Research Council, 1998), poor children's rates of reading failure are staggering. The *Promising Results* report (U.S. Department of Education, 1999) found that 68 percent of fourth-graders in our poorest urban schools failed to read at the *Basic* level needed for academic success, compared with 38 percent nationwide. Only one in 10 fourth-graders at these schools can read at the *Proficient* level. More than half of all fourth-graders receiving a free or reduced-price lunch (a measure of poverty) read below the *Basic* achievement level in 1998 (NAEP 1998 Reading Report Card).

Signs of Progress

Despite huge achievement gaps between poor and more affluent students, positive trends are emerging. The 1996 national reading scores of students in high-poverty schools, while still unacceptably low, have improved significantly since 1992 (1996 NAEP Trend Report). For example, in 1996, 9-year olds attending such schools read nearly a full grade-level better than their counterparts had four years before.

Gains made by the lowest achievers were mainly responsible for the small increase in the nation's average reading score between 1994 and 1998. These students improved about half a grade-level in four years. About 80 percent of these low achievers attend Title I high-poverty schools (U.S. Department of Education, *Promising Results*, 1999).

A study of three-year achievement trends in 13 large urban school districts with high concentrations of poverty found signs of progress. The number of elementary school students who met district standards for reading proficiency *increased* in seven districts: Houston, Jefferson County (Louisville), Miami-Dade, New York City, Philadelphia, San Antonio, and San Francisco. The gap between students in the highest- and lowest-poverty schools *decreased* in four districts: Houston, Miami-Dade, New York City, and San

Blue Ribbon Schools:
How Principals Promote Reading

Innovative principals across the nation are striving to raise reading achievement for all students in their schools. Some take a schoolwide approach by engaging non-teaching staff and teachers from other disciplines. Others are pairing children from different grades to read together. Many are reaching out to parents and the community to support young readers through extended learning time after school and in the home. Creative events and book challenges inspire students and motivate them to read more often. Here are some examples from the National Association of Elementary School Principals:

Schoolwide Focus: At an elementary school in Cape Coral, Florida, teachers, staff, parents, and peers all serve as reading "teachers." As a supplement to classroom instruction, schoolwide activities build reading and writing skills in social studies, science, health, and mathematics. A principal in Washington, Pennsylvania, rescheduled a dozen Title I teachers to reduce class sizes for longer language arts sessions. Many schools are instituting schoolwide computer programs and other technology to aid, motivate, and monitor young readers.

Parents: At an elementary school in Boca Raton, Florida, parents support students in friendly competitions between teams to read the most books. Parents are coached to ask comprehension questions about each book before validating its completion, and the local newspaper publishes the pictures of top readers. School murals monitor team progress for all to see. Some schools hold Family Reading Nights each year, with vocabulary word bingo, musical chairs with phonics, computer reading games, and treasure maps for reading comprehension.

Peers: Many schools, such as one in Shreveport, Louisiana, use a "book buddy" system, which pairs an older student with a younger child for extended reading time. This approach

Antonio (U.S. Department of Education, *Promising Results*, 1999).

Of six states able to provide three-year trend data on students in high-poverty schools, five reported improvements in reading performance: Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, North Carolina, and Texas (U.S. Department of Education, *Promising Results*, 1999). In Texas, 82 percent of fourth-grade students in the highest-poverty schools scored at or above the proficient level in the 1998 Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, a 15 percent gain from 1996.

can build skills of *both* learners as it boosts their motivation to read.

Another school in Talladega, Alabama, encourages older students to be "roving readers" by reading aloud before lower grade-level classes to earn certificates of accomplishment. These students build fluency and confidence as they model successful reading for younger pupils.

Community: Schools such as one in Springfield, Illinois, bring tutors into the school for supplemental reading and writing activities. Tutors may be trained through AmeriCorps, senior citizens groups, or colleges in the America Reads work-study program, among others. This approach connects the community at large with young learners who benefit from one-on-one attention to their reading progress. It also provides positive role models for pupils. Some schools, like one in Irmo, South Carolina, partner with the local library to engage elementary students in summer reading with the U.S. Department of Education's free *Read*Write*Now!* kits.

Fun with Books: A school in Grove City, Pennsylvania, holds an annual event at Halloween, which motivates students to dress up as characters from favorite books and tour senior centers and nursing homes. Teachers also don costumes for this Literacy Parade, which is preceded by oral book reports that develop skills in comprehension and analysis. A Houston, Texas, school uses Scrabble games to build vocabulary. A Coventry, Rhode Island, school sponsors "Reading Month," with a PTA book fair, picnic, presentations of children's original books, and a challenge to choose books over TV. Other principals promise fun rewards for the whole school for exceeding book goals, such as a hot air balloon demonstration, ice cream parties, or seeing the principal eat lunch on the roof.

Source: National Association of Elementary School Principals, Best Ideas for Reading from America's Blue Ribbon Schools, 1998.

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These victories offer solid hope that reading achievement can be raised for *all* students.

Schools That Beat the Odds

What can schools do to help poor children become better readers? Surveys were taken at schools receiving funds through Title I, the federal program that aims to raise poor students' achievement, especially in reading and math. The surveys reveal certain strategies that are common in high-poverty, high-performing schools.

First, they use standards to design the curriculum, assess student work, and evaluate teachers. Second, they lengthen instructional time in reading. Third, they spend more on professional development. Fourth, they engage parents in their children's education. Fifth, they monitor student progress and get extra help for those who need it. Finally, school staff often are held accountable for their success by the state or district (Education Trust, 1998).

What can teachers do to help poor children become better readers?

IDEAS AT WORK

Parents as Partners: The Compact for Reading

The Compact for Reading is a free guide on how to develop a compact, or written agreement, among families, teachers, principals, and students. The compact describes how all partners can help improve the reading skills of children from kindergarten through third grade, including those with disabilities and with limited English proficiency. Tutors and other community members can also be partners in a Compact for Reading.

Research shows that schools with properly implemented compacts raise student achievement higher than similar schools without compacts. Principals reported greater family involvement in homework and more parents reading with children at home. Schools with the greatest need seem to benefit the most (D'Agostino et al., 1998).

The Compact Guide comes with a School-Home Links Kit to help implement local compacts. Developed by teachers for the U.S. Department of Education, the kit provides 100 reading activities for each grade from kindergarten through third. Three to four times a week, a teacher can provide these easy-to-use activities to families to expand student learning at home and encourage family involvement in reading activities.

Contact: *U.S. Department of Education*
(877) 4ED-PUBS
www.ed.gov/pubs/CompactforReading

Students scored better on reading tests when their teachers felt able to use a variety of assessment tools and to teach diverse groups (U.S. Department of Education, *LESCP,* 1998). Fourth-graders made better progress in reading when teachers gave them more total exposure to reading and opportunities to talk in small groups about what they read (U.S. Department of Education, *LESCP*, 1998).

The poorest readers in fourth grade gained in both vocabulary and comprehension skills when teachers gave them reading material of one paragraph or more; reading materials in core subject areas; and opportunities to work on computers, workbooks, and skill sheets. More able readers seemed to benefit from reading aloud (U.S. Department of Education, *LESCP*, 1998).

Lessons Learned

More Title I school teachers are applying these lessons, with increasing numbers allowing low achievers to select their own books, read aloud, and talk in small groups about their reading every day (U.S. Department of Education, *LESCP*, 1998). These teaching strategies are well supported by research chronicled by the National Research Council.

In Massachusetts, a dozen high-poverty, urban elementary schools that apply research-based principles are outperforming other schools in their districts. These schools seek a balance of instructional methods, including literature-based and phonics approaches. Students spend extended time on reading and writing, and teachers work in small groups to focus on pupils' individual needs (Dwyer et al., 1998).

The Summer Reading "Drop-Off"

Successful students have fun during the summer, but they don't take a vacation from reading. Too many students, however, don't exercise their reading muscles during the summer months.

For decades, studies have shown that this summer reading "drop-off" has predictable, negative consequences for student achievement, particularly for disadvantaged children (Hayes & Grether, 1969; Murnane, 1975; Heyns, 1987; Karweit et al., 1994). A Baltimore study found that large differences in achievement between high- and low-income elementary school children were due almost entirely to gains made when school was *not* in session (Alexander & Entwisle, 1996).

It has long been known that, in high-poverty schools, gains made by poor children during the school year are eroded or erased during the summer, leaving them once again behind their better-off peers in the fall (Pelavin & David, 1977). Students in high-poverty schools make faster progress in reading achievement during first grade than their more affluent peers. Sadly, however, this reading growth *slows* more than that of their peers the following summer (Rock, 1993). Students in high-poverty schools do not return to the higher rate of growth that they showed in first grade. Instead, they progress at a reduced rate

of growth throughout the second grade (Karweit et al., 1994).

Disadvantaged students who don't spend their summers reading and learning are at the greatest risk of skill erosion (Alexander & Entwisle, 1996). Energetic summer reading programs, including tutoring and mentoring by adults, can help disadvantaged students improve their academic skills (Reisner et al., 1989; Olsen, 1979). Tutoring can also boost students' motivation and attitudes toward reading (Cohen et al., 1982), an advantage for those who find reading difficult (National Research Council, 1998).

The U.S. Department of Education promotes summer reading for all children through the *Read*Write*Now!* program. The program offers creative tools and materials for adults to help children practice and enjoy reading outside the classroom.

*Read*Write*Now!* is but one of many summer reading promotions taking place across the country, from baseball parks to book camps to Story-Mobiles. When more children spend the summer honing their reading skills rather than losing them, teachers will not have to

IDEAS AT WORK

Summer Reading—Share the Fun!

The America Reads Challenge at the U.S. Department of Education has free materials to keep more children reading during the summer and throughout the year.

The Read*Write*Now! Activity Poster, available in English and Spanish, includes a colorful illustration on the front and a set of fun activities on the back. The activities include writing a book review and having it published on the America Reads Web site.

The Read*Write*Now! Basic Kit helps pair young children with adult partners for shared summer reading activities. Each child pledges to read for 30 minutes each day, and the adult pledges to join the child at least once each week. The child also obtains and uses a library card and learns new vocabulary words weekly. The kit's activities are appropriate for babies through sixth-graders, and include a certificate of accomplishment. (This kit is available on-line at: www.ed.gov/Family/RWN/Activ97.)

The Read*Write*Now! Tip Sheet for Developing a Community Reading Program is for librarians, teachers, camp counselors, and community leaders. The booklet offers straightforward suggestions on how to start a summer or after-school reading program. It is available in English and Spanish.

Contact: *U.S. Department of Education*
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www.ed/gov/americareads

play catch-up each fall. More students will read at grade-level from the first bell.

Learning Disabilities

Approximately 5 percent of all children in public schools are identified as having a learning disability (Lyon, 1996), and the vast majority of learning-disabled children—as many as 80 percent—experience their primary difficulties in learning to read (National Research Council, 1998).

But some children with learning disabilities are not recognized by their school system. Experts believe the actual prevalence of learning disabilities is between 5 and 10 percent (Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1987.)

While schools are four times more likely to identify a reading disability in boys, research shows the disability is equally common among girls (Shaywitz et al., 1990). In some studies, a reading disability has been documented in about 20 percent of school-age children (Shaywitz et al., 1996).

Early, Intensive Intervention

Most children who are identified with significant reading disabilities in the third grade are still reading below grade-level in high school (Shaywitz et al., 1997). For interventions to succeed, *all* children at risk for reading failure should be identified and helped *before* age 9 (Lyon, 1996).

As many as two-thirds of reading-disabled children can become average or above-average readers if they are identified early and taught appropriately (Vellutino et al., 1996; Fletcher & Lyon, 1998).

Those with the most challenging reading disabilities need even more help. From 2 to 6 percent of children may not learn to read well, even with early reading interventions (Vellutino et al., 1996; Torgeson et al., 1997; Foorman et al., 1998). These children should be carefully evaluated to determine the nature of their disability and the impact the disability has on their learning. They may require more highly specialized reading programs, which include special education and related services (Council for Exceptional Children, 1997).

All children at risk for reading failure should receive help before age 9.

Disability or Difficulty?

A child with a reading disability and one with reading difficulty can be hard to tell apart, though their problems have different roots.

A reading disability seems to result primarily from the brain's struggle to process the sounds of speech as distinct from their meanings (Liberman & Shankweiler, 1991; Rack et al., 1992). This ability, called phonological awareness, is critical to understanding that words are made up of sounds that are

IDEAS AT WORK

The El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence

This community-wide effort to raise student achievement is based on the belief that *all* children can learn, if given the tools and encouragement to do so. Based in El Paso, Texas, the collaborative aims to improve teaching and learning from pre-kindergarten through university.

Two-thirds of children in El Paso schools come from low-income families, and half enter first grade with only limited English, making them high risks for reading failure. Yet in only five years, the achievement gap between White students and Black and Hispanic students has been cut by almost two-thirds.

The collaborative includes businesses, local government, University of Texas-El Paso (UTEP), El Paso Community College, superintendents from three large school districts, and a grassroots organization. This group plays a major role in redesigning and evaluating the University's teacher preparation program and helping provide field experiences for prospective teachers.

UTEP has completely revised its teacher preparation programs. Faculty from the Colleges of Liberal Arts, Science, and Education are involved in teacher preparation.

The College of Education has moved to a clinical, field-based model of teacher preparation, with University students remaining with the same schools for as long as three semesters. The dean of Education likens it to a teaching hospital program. The schools are committed to school reform, redesigning professional development, integrating technology, and building greater outreach to neighborhoods. Most students enrolled in the college and the schools are Hispanic.

Participating schools are given mentors who coach other teachers in improving instruction. UTEP faculty and outside experts offer institutes for school teams in reading, writing, and other core subjects. Technology is introduced early, with every first-grader obtaining an e-mail account. Parent centers offer instruction and engage families.

This project has attracted funding from the U.S. Department of Education, the Texas legislature, The National Science Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, and other private foundations.

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represented by letters of the alphabet. The segments of speech sounds, called phonemes, are the building blocks of syllables and words. Cracking this code helps would-be readers recognize words on the page (National Research Council, 1998).

Due to a limited exposure to books, children with a reading disability must overcome both an inadequate vocabulary and insufficient background knowledge to understand the meaning of what is read (National Research Council, 1998).

Children with a reading difficulty due to limited language exposure, poor instruction or other causes may also lack the vocabulary and background knowledge needed to read for meaning, as well as word recognition skills such as phonological and phonemic awareness.

Both kinds of poor readers can suffer from low motivation associated with early reading failure (National Research Council, 1998).

Early remediation of all children who are at risk for reading failure could significantly reduce the number of children mislabeled as learning disabled. This, in turn, could reduce the need of some children for ongoing intervention and permit greater focus of resources on the children who are acutely disabled (Fletcher & Lyon, 1998).

With national assessments showing 25 to 40 percent of American school children unable to read well enough to succeed in school, strategic interventions for *all* poor readers are a national imperative.

Limited English Proficiency

Children with limited English proficiency are those who speak a language other than English at home. For that reason, they may not speak, understand, read, or write English at the same level as their peers who have English as a first language. The limited-English-

Early remediation of all children at risk for reading failure could reduce the number of children mislabeled as learning disabled.

proficient population in this country has grown and changed dramatically. There are currently more than 3.4 million English language learners enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12 in this country (Macias, 1998), speaking more than 200 languages other than English (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Close to 75 percent of all students acquiring English speak Spanish as their first language (Fleischman & Hopstock, 1993).

Most limited-English-proficient students are in the elementary grades, and approximately 40 percent of these students were born in the United States (Fleischman & Hopstock, 1993). Many are poor, and more than one-third of Hispanic students attend high-poverty schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1997). English language learners in the

primary grades are twice as likely to be poor compared with their English-speaking peers (Moss & Puma, 1995). Three out of four students with limited English at all grade levels qualify for free or reduced-price lunches by living near or below the poverty line (Fleischman & Hopstock, 1993).

But students acquiring English are diverse in many other ways. Not only do they speak many different languages, but they also come from a large variety of cultures. These students also have different educational experiences: some students have a strong academic foundation and schooling in their native language, while others have received little or no schooling. The lack of any strong literacy or academic background, in addition to the challenge of learning to read in a second language, puts many English language learners, particularly those in high poverty, at risk for developing reading difficulties.

These students' reading difficulties may be manifested in one or more ways. They may have difficulty connecting the sounds of language to their written representation. They may have trouble comprehending what they read. Also, they may not be motivated to read.

The Role of Parents

We know that foundations of early literacy development begin in infancy, with positive interactions between caregivers and babies. These include conversations around books, storytelling, songs, rhymes, word games, and other family activities. This kind of language and literacy development engages babies and young children in communication that provides the basis for later reading success.

Parents of young children with limited English proficiency may need extra encouragement to engage in some of these activities. Their own English language skills may be limited, or they may hesitate to use their native language at home, assuming that it will not help their children succeed in school. Some parents whose culture emphasizes speaking to children in a directive style may benefit from coaching to try a more conversational style. This practice gives parents another way to nurture their child's language skills and vocabulary development (Espinosa & Lesar, 1994).

The challenge of learning to read in a second language puts many students, particularly the poor, at risk for reading difficulties.

Some parents who don't speak English are less likely to expose their children to early literacy experiences than English-speaking parents (Liontos, 1992). In general, mothers whose first language is not English are less likely to read to their children regularly (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Some of these parents may hold back out of respect for the role of schools and

teachers in educating their child (Espinosa, 1995).

Many low-income parents face additional, logistical barriers that make time scarce for book reading, library visits, and early language development. This combination of factors can cause many children from homes with limited English to enter kindergarten behind their peers in language and literacy skills (Espinosa, 1995).

Aiding Literacy Development

We know that a strong base in any language provides the foundation for reading success (Cummins, 1979; 1989). And surveys show that most parents who speak languages other than English, such as Hispanics, place a high value on education (De La Rosa & Maw, 1990). Thus, parents should be encouraged to talk with and read to their children in their native language. Hearing stories read aloud in their first language exposes children to the sounds of written words in a familiar context (Nathenson-Mejia, 1994). Books also can be read aloud by grandparents, older siblings, and other family members.

Parents as Teachers

Parents with little experience reading to their children may be more comfortable starting out with storytelling and writing activities (Landerholm et al., 1994). Traditions of oral storytelling can ease a parent into language and literacy-building activities. Children and parents can create homemade books that transcribe family stories and cultural legends in their home language (Nathenson-Mejia, 1994). Illustrated by the child, these books can be re-read often to strengthen family bonds as well as reading skills.

When low-income, language-minority parents see themselves as teachers, their children benefit. Researchers have found that when parents whose English is limited engage their children in reading, storytelling, problem-solving, and varied learning activities, the children enjoyed above-average academic success (Ebener et al., 1997). Also, when non-English-speaking parents were coached in communicating and reading to their children, practicing in class as well as at home, their children scored significantly higher on reading attitude tests (Cervantes et al., 1979).

Parents should be encouraged to talk with and read to children in their native language. A strong base in any language provides the foundation for reading success.

Librarians can help non-English-speaking parents select native language books for children and even order new titles based on families' interests. Culturally appropriate community outreach will be required to increase the motivation of these families to use the library regularly.

Preschool Opportunities

Studies that show the advantages of quality preschool programs in preparing children for school success have significance for children whose home language is not English, such as Hispanics. However, only 39 percent of Hispanic 3- to 5-year olds, compared with 65 percent of Blacks and 57 percent of Whites, enroll in early childhood programs (U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

Many Hispanic families cannot afford private preschools (Schwartz, 1996). Yet even when income is not a barrier, Hispanic parents have historically preferred family care for their youngest children. Nearly half of Hispanic mothers stay home to raise their children,

IDEAS AT WORK

The FLASH Program for Parents with Limited English

The Families Learning at School & Home Program (FLASH) is designed to assist Florida parents of different languages and cultures. Its twin goals are to build children's literacy skills and get parents more involved in their children's schools.

FLASH targets limited-English-proficient Hispanic and Haitian parents and caregivers of students in kindergarten through grade 6 in Dade and Broward County Public Schools. It is a joint project between the school districts and Florida International University's College of Education.

FLASH has four main strategies. First, it aims to improve the literacy skills of families. Second, it aims to increase their proficiency in English. Third, it gives parents and caregivers specific skills and knowledge to enable them to play a more active role in their children's education. And fourth, FLASH works to improve the academic skills of the parents' children, who are learning English as a second language.

Evaluations of FLASH are encouraging. Parents showed significant gains in knowledge about the school and its functions. Parent involvement in school-related activities increased significantly, including time spent participating in school activities, volunteering at school, and helping children with homework. FLASH was recognized as an Academic Excellence Program in 1995 by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs, which helped fund the program.

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and many who work choose relatives over center-based care (Fuller et al., 1994). In the home, Hispanic parents are more likely than White parents to regularly teach their children letters, numbers, words, songs, and music. They are less likely, however, to read or tell stories regularly, or visit the library (U.S. Department of Education, 1994).

Many non-English-speaking families also live in poverty. For most low-income children, high-quality preschools build up the social, emotional, physical, or cognitive skills that may have been underdeveloped in the home (Schwartz, 1996). For youngsters with little or no English spoken at home, preschool also offers valuable exposure to English (Kagan, 1995).

Research shows that initial reading instruction is most effective in a student's first language.

Some communities are identifying these benefits to non-English-speaking parents and building bridges between families and preschools (Lewis, 1993; Blakes-Greenway, 1994). Early childhood professionals can form partnerships with parents, to build on home and community strengths and link the home language with that of the school (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

But many early childhood professionals need additional training to address the needs of young second-language learners (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual and Minority Language Affairs, 1998). Training should be provided in early literacy development, second language acquisition, family and community involvement, and diverse linguistic and cultural settings. This base of skills and knowledge can enable early childhood teachers to provide for children's special needs while building on their strengths.

English Language Learners in School

The National Research Council's panel found that school-age children with limited English should learn to understand and *speak* English before learning to *read* in English. Therefore, initial reading instruction is most effective in a student's *first* language. If feasible, teachers should speak and use books and other materials in the student's first language (National Research Council, 1998).

Children who can read in any language are readers. There is no need to repeat the entire process of reading instruction if a child simply needs to learn English. Therefore, a teacher must assess the student's reading skills and abilities in the primary language, and help him or her transfer those abilities to reading in English.

This is more easily accomplished if the teacher speaks the child's language. However, a skilled teacher who does not understand the child's primary language can still learn much about the child's reading abilities by

IDEAS AT WORK

Toward Universal Newborn Screening

The National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management (NCHAM) was established in 1995 at Utah State University to promote the earliest possible detection of hearing loss and the best possible techniques for assisting people with hearing loss.

With funding from federal, state, and private sources, the center conducts research, develops training materials, provides training and technical assistance, and disseminates information about early identification and management of hearing loss.

Only one in five newborns is screened for hearing impairment More than 500 hospitals offer these screenings, and five states operate universal hearing screening programs. NCHAM aims to maintain momentum toward universal newborn hearing screening.

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observing him or her reading text in that language and by connecting with community resources.

Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children

Hearing loss occurs in three of every 1,000 births (Utah State University, 1999). Even a slight impairment can hurt language development and academic achievement. This issue is of growing concern, as deaf and hard-of-hearing babies and toddlers are not consistently identified early in life and provided access to language and communication (Padden & Ramsey, 1998). Children with hearing loss in just one ear are 10 times as likely as children with normal hearing to be held back a grade in school (Utah State University, 1999).

Early Detection

The average age of identification of hearing loss in the United States is 2½ years, with milder losses at times not detected until a child enters school (Commission on Education of the Deaf, 1988).

The implications are especially significant, since language acquisition begins at birth and progresses very rapidly during the first three years of life. Deprived of critical language learning opportunities, many children with unidentified hearing loss experience disruptions in social, emotional, cognitive, and academic growth.

Research has shown that identification of hearing loss and appropriate intervention *before* a baby is 6 months old can significantly improve language and cognitive development (University of

Colorado, Boulder, 1999). Children who are identified with hearing loss this young can enter first grade as much as one to two years ahead in language, cognitive, and social skills, compared with children identified at a later age (Utah State University, 1999).

The issue is not the ability to learn—deaf and hard-of-hearing children have as much capacity to read and write as their non-deaf peers. Recent research has found that one factor contributing specifically to reading success is, not surprisingly, earlier detection of deafness. Early detection leads to earlier placement in educational programs that offer the best reading instruction for deaf and hard-of-hearing children (Padden & Ramsey, 1998).

Technology can play an important role in helping hearing-impaired children learn to read.

A major obstacle faced by children with hearing loss is the lack of the speech foundation on which reading usually rests (McInerney et al., 1998).

The U.S. Department of Education has noted in its Deaf Policy Guidance letter (1992), "[T]he communication nature of the disability is inherently isolating, with considerable effect on the interaction with peers and teachers that make up the educational process. . . Even the availability of interpreter services in the educational setting may not address deaf children's needs for direct and meaningful communication."

Strategies for Success

Studies have found that early reading strategies can involve learning to match sign language to words in print (Andrews & Mason, 1986; Withrow, 1989). More recent research suggests that, while deaf children may focus on visual strategies during early reading development, as reading skills develop, they use other strategies as well (Padden & Hanson, 1999).

Therefore, children with hearing loss may need different kinds of reading instruction as their skills develop. This may include an emphasis on spelling rules and phonological awareness. Deaf children can benefit from exposure to large amounts of written text to build vocabulary and comprehension.

Technology can also play an important role, through the captioning of television programs and videos, computer-assisted real-time captioning, assistive listening devices, and computer software.

The skill of teachers in assessing children's strengths and limitations and in building individual strategies shapes successful reading instruction. This is true whether addressing students with special needs or turning marginal readers into good readers.

Resources for educators and administrators may be found in Reading Resources, Appendix I of this book.

Action Steps for Policymakers

Policymakers can have a great impact on the success of schools in raising reading achievement for all students.
Policymakers can:

📖 Support colleges and universities in revising the reading instruction curriculum so that it focuses not only on theory but also on practical applications of reading development principles.

📖 Ensure that prospective teachers have balanced instruction that provides foundations in a wide range of research-based approaches to reading.

📖 Require college students preparing to be teachers to have extended learning experiences in diverse classrooms prior to graduation.

📖 Provide the training, support, and materials for all teachers in kindergarten through third grade to become more proficient in reading instruction.

📖 Provide incentives for teachers to pursue master's-level training to become reading specialists.

📖 Encourage the community to support ongoing, intensive, high-quality professional development for teachers as a way to improve reading instruction.

📖 Create new avenues through which to circulate new research findings on reading instruction quickly and effectively

📖 Provide teachers with assessments to gauge reading skills and to aid in the design and implementation of effective, individualized reading intervention.

📖 Devise incentives for teacher education programs to seek national accreditation.

📖 Support the effective instruction of limited-English-proficient students. Ensure that these students have language-appropriate books and other materials.

📖 Require college students preparing to be teachers to take the time to practice research-based techniques and to get feedback from master teachers.

📖 Develop performance-based assessments for the initial licensing of teachers that require prospective elementary school teachers to demonstrate their ability to teach reading.

Action Steps for Educators

Teachers, principals, superintendents, and other school personnel have a direct impact on student reading gains. In addition to local initiatives, educators and administrators can consider the following:

📖 As early as possible, assess each child's developing reading ability and determine appropriate interventions.

📖 Support high-quality professional development for teachers in research-based instruction and allow sufficient time for teachers to coach and support each other.

📖 Seek opportunities to consult with knowledgeable and experienced reading specialists to discuss schoolwide strategies for literacy improvement on an ongoing basis.

📖 Implement research-based strategies to promote a schoolwide focus on literacy, including allocating extended blocks of time to reading and writing in the early grades.

📖 Find ways to increase one-on-one reading between children and adults by recruiting volunteers or re-deploying staff members during the school day, after school, and during the summer.

📖 Develop relationships with community organizations and private industry for aid in offering high-quality professional development.

📖 Promote independent reading, at least 30 minutes a day, by providing students and parents with specific reading assignments, age-appropriate reading lists, and home assignments linked to class work that involve family members.

📖 Teach children whose first language is not English to read in their native language if instructional guides, learning materials, and locally available proficient teachers are available.

📖 Encourage parents to stay involved in their children's education. Encourage open communication between home and school to enhance a child's progress and success. Consider initiating a specific compact on reading between schools and families.

📖 Contact local libraries, literacy groups, houses of worship, businesses, and community members to provide at-risk children with high-quality, after-school, and summer learning opportunities that support and encourage literacy development.

CHAPTER 4

Every Child a Reader

How Citizens, Public Leaders, and Communities Can Help

Many Americans are energized by the challenge of helping all children learn to read. Committed citizens and public officials are attacking the problem head on, from the nation's capital to statehouses to city halls, from libraries to pizza chains to ballparks.

Their work is informed by mounting research on how to achieve the best results. Activities touch on key issues—training teachers, reading to children, accessing books, and increasing support for parents and child care providers. There is consensus on the need to touch the lives of children who are the hardest to reach—those who are the *least likely* to enter school ready to read and the *most likely* to complete third grade as poor readers.

Businesses, nonprofit organizations, sports teams, newspapers, and local, state, and federal governments are sponsoring programs aimed at winning the war on illiteracy. Many such programs have been profiled as *Ideas At Work* in earlier chapters of this book. This chapter spotlights more examples of *Ideas At Work* from a variety of organizations taking strategic action to ensure that all children become good readers. These additional programs are but a fraction of the good work being done from coast to coast.

National Leadership

America Reads

The U.S. Department of Education's America Reads Challenge calls on every American to do what he or she can to help a child become a successful reader. America Reads encourages parents and caregivers to read and talk daily to children from infancy. America Reads advocates research-based college training and high-quality professional development for teachers. America Reads also encourages community efforts to recruit and train reading tutors to supplement classroom reading instruction.

America Reads promotes local literacy partnerships between parents, schools, libraries, child care centers, universities, businesses, and nonprofit groups. It also disseminates reading research and recommends further study. Since its launch in January 1997, nearly 300 organizations, from libraries and religious groups to schools and businesses, have stepped forward to join The President's Coalition for America Reads.

America Reads unites schools, libraries, and youth and community groups to sponsor summer and after-school reading programs across the country. In 1999, nearly 2 million *Read*Write*Now!* Activity Posters have been distributed, in English and Spanish, to enlist parents, grandparents, schools, and communities to help keep children reading during the summer. The *Read*Write*Now!* Tip Sheet, in English and Spanish, offers ideas for starting a community reading program.

Financial Aid for Tutors

Through the Federal Work-Study program, more than 22,000 college students at 1,100 colleges and universities earned financial aid by serving as reading tutors in the 1997-98 academic year. Many more participated in the 1998-99 academic year. By 2000, almost all of the 3,300 colleges, universities, and trade schools receiving federal work-study funds are expected to have a reading tutor program.

The Higher Education Act of 1998 included additional funding for the Federal Work-Study program that will allow more college students to earn financial aid as reading tutors. Schools and community groups can contact their local college or university financial aid office to ask about placements for work-study tutors at virtually no cost.

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To order publications: (877) 4ED-PUBS

Corporation for National Service

The Corporation for National Service (CNS) is a major partner with America Reads. AmeriCorps members operate America Reads tutoring programs and recruit and train volunteers nationwide. In just five years, AmeriCorps members have taught, tutored, and mentored more than 2.2 million children.

In addition to AmeriCorps, thousands of Americans participate in reading improvement programs through AmeriCorps*VISTA, Senior Corps, Foster Grandparents, Seniors In Schools, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, and Learn and Serve America. AmeriCorps members also organize 45,000 community volunteers in elementary school reading programs.

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Training Tutors

The U.S. Department of Education, the Corporation for National Service, and the Regional Educational Laboratories provide training to community literacy leaders and federal work-study tutors.

In 1998, the U.S. Department of Education awarded $3 million to communities in 40 states for ongoing training of 10,000 reading tutors. The $50,000 grants support community partnerships that offer high-quality tutor training to community volunteers, such as senior citizens and employees, and to college students who may earn financial aid by serving as reading tutors. Most local partnerships consist of a university, a school, and a community group.

A 1999 report, *So That Every Child Can Read... America Reads Community Partnerships,* was created to share the best practices of these projects.

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Even Start

Even Start is a federally funded family literacy program. It helps break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving educational opportunities for the nation's low-income families with young children. Since its modest beginnings in 1989, Even Start grew to more than 730 projects by 1998.

Approximately 40,000 families participate in Even Start projects across the nation. More than 90 percent of participating families have incomes substantially below the poverty level, and 85 percent of the parents have neither a high school diploma nor a GED. Even Start families represent a wide spectrum of racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Even Start views literacy as a legacy to be passed down through a family. The project has three interrelated goals. First, through parenting education, it helps parents become full partners in the education of their children. Second, through early childhood education, it assists children in reaching their full potential as learners. Third, through adult basic education, it provides literacy training for parents. Each component builds upon the other, creating a composite that is more powerful and enduring than any single piece.

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Action in the States

State leaders are making great strides to improve reading achievement. Many state literacy efforts focus on early care and education, early intervention, and teacher quality. States also seek to involve parents and citizens to extend learning time beyond the classroom. Iowa and South Carolina are reducing class size in kindergarten through third grade for basic skills instruction, particularly in reading. Many are placing a premium on applying the most successful, research-based ideas.

Recently Enacted State Laws

More than 20 states have enacted reading improvement laws since 1997. (See statute summaries in Appendix II.) State timetables for results range from the 1998-99 school year through 2004.

Early Care and Education

To provide quality early childhood services, Colorado's Early Education and School

Readiness Program funds initiatives to help achieve readiness goals for at-risk children. The funds support accreditation efforts of early childhood care centers and professional development for early childhood teachers and caregivers. Utah, too, is designing programs for child care centers to work with and train volunteers to create an environment that fosters reading growth. South Carolina's First Steps initiative will provide subsidies for child care that prepares children to enter school ready to learn.

Early Assessment and Intervention

To ensure that children are reading at grade-level and that schools intervene if they are not, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Indiana, Oklahoma, and Texas—to name a few—have enacted legislation to create assessment and intervention programs in the early grades. Ohio established a Fourth-Grade Guarantee to require that students read at grade-level before going on to middle school and high school.

Teacher Quality

To improve teacher performance, some states, including Mississippi, New Hampshire, Virginia, and Washington, have funded teacher development and credentialing programs. California's Commission on Teacher Credentialing is required to gauge the skills and abilities of all reading teachers in the primary grades. In June 1999, California launched professonal development institutes to provide reading instruction training to 6,000 primary school teachers.

Also new in 1999, South Carolina's Governor's Institute for Reading will offer research-based professional development to kindergarten through third grade teachers. Idaho recently required new teachers to pass an exam based on new literacy standards for certification. Idaho also requires kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers to complete three credits in state-approved reading instruction for recertification every five years.

Parental Involvement

Arizona, Colorado, Oregon, and other states are encouraging parental involvement through programs that teach parents how to help their children in reading. The Texas Reading Initiative directs information and resources to parents, in addition to schools and communities.

Extended Learning Time

A 1999 California initiative offers four hours of instruction per day to children in kindergarten through fourth grade when school is not in session, including summertime. Virginia's Literacy Passport requires students who fail literacy tests to receive after-school or summer school instruction. Washington and Ohio sponsor large tutoring programs that match thousands of trained volunteers with elementary school student who need extra help and encouragement.

Statewide Efforts

Many statewide programs are tackling the challenge of illiteracy in diverse and creative ways. Here are a few examples from across the nation.

Delaware

Delaware Reading Is Fundamental Initiative

Launched in 1998 by Delaware First Lady Martha S. Carper, the Delaware Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) Initiative aims to bring literacy services and free books to young children and their families. Supported by the state Department of Education, corporations, and foundations, the initiative serves every first-grader in public school and every preschool child enrolled in Head Start, Even Start, or the Parents as Teachers program. Over five years, this statewide, first-in-the-nation project will reach about 80,000 children.

The initiative serves first-graders through RIF's intensive Running Start program. Almost 100 percent of 9,000 first-graders met their reading goals as each child read (or had read to him or her) 30 books in 12 weeks. The preschool program provides reading readiness activities for the classroom and home, read-aloud modeling for parents and caregivers, and children's books to take home. More than 3,500 children received three new books in 1998.

A University of Maryland study of the project found an increase in the quality of first-grade classroom libraries, in students' motivation to read, in students' reading achievement, and in the quality and quantity of home literacy practices (Gambrell, 1999).

The second year was launched by Mrs. Carper with community reading rallies, reading recognition programs, public service announcements, and other motivational events. The First Lady also led the spouses of the nation's governors in a national campaign for child literacy for one year.

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Ohio

OhioReads

Ohio's Fourth-Grade Guarantee requires all school districts to assess students' reading skills at the end of first, second, and third grades. If students fail, they are offered extra help. Beginning in 2001, fourth-graders who fail in reading will not be promoted.

Recently, the scope of the challenge was laid bare when 53 percent of all fourth-

graders failed the reading section of the state proficiency test. So Governor Bob Taft does more than serve as figurehead for the new OhioReads program. He also serves as a weekly tutor for a Columbus third-grader.

Taft has called for a corps of 20,000 volunteer tutors from Ohio businesses, the public sector, service organizations, colleges and universities, senior citizens, parents, and the general community. In 1999, the Ohio legislature unanimously supported $25 million for the OhioReads initiative. In addition to tutor recruitment, funds will support public school needs, such as professional development for teachers and community grants for after-school and summer reading programs.

The private sector was quick to respond to the governor's challenge. The Limited, a clothing retailer based in Columbus, immediately offered $250,000 to help 400 employees tutor kindergarten children in local schools. OhioReads is to be launched in September 1999.

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South Carolina

First Steps

South Carolina was one of just 10 states or jurisdictions where fourth-graders showed improvements on the NAEP reading assessments between 1994 and 1998. In June 1999, Governor Jim Hodges secured $20 million from the legislature for South Carolina First Steps, an early childhood program. The program aims for all children to enter school healthy and ready to learn.

"Gov. Hodges' First Steps initiative is designed to provide children and their parents with access to high-quality preschool education, parenting education, and family literacy programs," said State School Superintendent Inez Tenenbaum. "It will help our students build the academic foundation they need for success."

Modeled on North Carolina's successful Smart Start program, First Steps will be community-based: it aims to unite state and local agencies, churches, parents, teachers, and businesses to identify and address children's needs.

Hodges also secured funding to continue to lower class size in primary schools so that no kindergarten through third-grade teacher has more than 17 students. The governor's proposal for a new Reading Institute was also approved by the legislature. The Institute will research the best ways to teach reading, provide extensive training for elementary school reading teachers, and monitor results annually.

Hodges is also asking the parents of every South Carolina public school child to sign a new "Compact with Our Children" in 1999 and at the beginning of each subsequent school year. This pledge calls for teachers, parents, and students to share the responsibility for children's education and to live up to high standards. Parents pledge to:

- Read to young children.
- Encourage older children to read to themselves.
- Provide a quiet, well-lit study area at home.
- Ensure regular and punctual school attendance.
- Provide adequate rest, food, and a healthy environment.
- Support school activities by volunteering, visiting the classroom, and attending parent-teacher conferences.

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Utah

Utah Reads

In 1998, Governor Michael Leavitt launched Utah Reads, a literacy campaign to ensure that all Utah students are reading at grade-level by the end of the third grade. In March 1999, the legislature approved funds for local school districts to develop personalized instruction plans for readers in first through third grades. Funds were also approved for community-based literacy efforts.

Staff development on early literacy success is available to all preschool teachers and child care providers. Professional development for elementary school teachers includes the use of informal tests to assess and monitor students' progress in reading. Utah Reads is training principals on early literacy issues and research-based classroom practices.

A community volunteer tutoring program is being developed with a link to Utah's Promise. The goal is to have 12,000 struggling readers at or above grade-level by the end of third grade. Utah communities are identifying volunteers and training them to tutor children in local schools. In some schools, older students tutor younger children. Utah Reads provides grants for purchases of new books for tutoring sessions.

The Utah reading initiative also promotes family involvement. First Lady Jacalyn Leavitt leads the "Read to Me" campaign, which aims to help parents understand the importance of reading aloud to their children. Public service announcements will be broadcast, and a literacy resource kit will be given to parents of newborns.

"This is the cornerstone of my budget," Leavitt said. "I've made a decision to make literacy one of my highest priorities as governor. Reading is the most fundamental skill for success in learning. Literacy is not just a school or government responsibility. It starts with parents at home."

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Local Efforts

Local communities are expanding their efforts to improve children's reading abilities. Popular grassroots initiatives include summer reading programs, book drives, tutoring sessions, and events featuring professional sports teams. Here are examples of local literacy projects.

Atlanta

Fast Break for Reading

The Atlanta Hawks basketball team sponsors Fast Break for Reading, a program now in more than 100 schools. Players and dance team members join mascot Harry the Hawk at school assemblies to promote reading. Students who complete the program win tickets and discount vouchers. In 1998, students collectively read 18,500 books, earning 2,600 tickets valued at $92,000.

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www.NBA.com/hawks/comm_affairs.html

Boston

ReadBoston

Nearly 50 percent of Boston's third-graders do not read at grade-level. Under the leadership of Mayor Thomas M. Menino and Superintendent Thomas W. Payzant, ReadBoston unites families, schools, and the community to help *all* Boston's children

become able readers by third grade. Support includes research and referral help, workshops, financial assistance, reading tutors, and books for children.

A major thrust of the campaign is to promote more effective reading instruction in elementary schools. The Primary Literacy Project's list of seven essential elements of strong reading programs has been formally adopted by the school system. More than $7 million in new public and private funding has been allocated to improve reading instruction. Reading programs such as Success for All and the Early Learning Literacy Initiative are being implemented in at least 75 percent of the city's elementary schools.

The Boston Public Schools is intensifying its efforts to promote literacy in summer 1999. All second-graders at risk of reading failure are attending month-long summer sessions and will receive extra instruction in reading throughout the school year.

ReadBoston's focus has expanded to include family involvement. Home visiting programs, preschools, community agencies, and schools work with ReadBoston to develop practical strategies to engage families in helping their children become ready to read. In 1999, more than 6,000 families participate in home reading programs throughout the city. Recent community initiatives include giving 250,000 new books to children and placing 1,000 volunteers and work-study students in schools and community settings.

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Seattle

The Stanford Book Fund

In honor of Seattle's school superintendent, the late John Henry Stanford, the Seattle community rallied to re-supply the school system's libraries. Organized by the Alliance for Education in 1998, the Stanford Book Fund raised $600,000 from more than 2,000 community and business partners to buy a new book for every child in the public school system. This is in addition to $300,000 raised by Stanford himself from private donors for new library books.

The Seattle-based rock group Pearl Jam donated $78,000 from a benefit concert and encouraged radio station promotions that raised even more. The Seattle Sonics and the Washington State Lottery donated $100 for every three-point shot scored by Sonics guard Hersey Hawkins. Other major donors included Microsoft, The Ackerley Group, Boeing, and PEMCO. An anonymous donor gave $100,000.

In the spring of 1999, the first delivery of 31,175 books was presented to 100 school libraries. Each book bears a special Stanford Book Fund sticker with its namesake's quote: *"The most important gift we can give our children is the gift of reading."* More books will be delivered throughout the summer.

Contact: *Jacque Coe*
Alliance for Education
500 Union Street
Suite 320
Seattle, WA 98101-2332
(206) 205-0329
Fax: (206) 343-0455
www.alliance4ed.org

Morgantown, West Virginia

Energy Express

Energy Express is a six-week summer reading program that seeks to feed the minds and bodies of children in parts of West Virginia. It aims to meet twin challenges: the erosion of skills that makes summertime costly for new readers and the nutritional decline faced by students accustomed to receiving free meals at school.

College students are trained to serve as mentors for children in rural, low-income communities. Mentors provide free books and exciting learning experiences to keep children reading. Activities include shared reading, writing, drawing, and other creative arts projects. The mentors also provide two nutritious meals each day, ensuring that children can focus on feeding their imaginations.

Energy Express partners with AmeriCorps to help support the hundreds of West Virginia college students who serve as mentors. It focuses on developing strong partnerships at the local level between schools, parents, communities, and state agencies and organizations.

Contact: *Ruthellen Phillips*
Energy Express
West Virginia University
407 Knapp Hall
P.O. Box 6031
Morgantown, WV 26506-6031
(304) 293-2694
Fax: (304) 293-7599
rphillips@wvu.edu

Everybody's Business

Many diverse businesses are making extraordinary efforts to help more children succeed in reading. Here is a sampling of literacy efforts in the private sector.

Pizza Hut: Tasty Rewards

Pizza Hut's BOOK IT! National Reading Incentive Program rewards young readers with free pizza, along with recognition buttons, stickers, all-star reader medallions, and praise. In its fourteenth year, BOOK IT! enrolls about 22 million students in more than 895,000 classrooms in nearly 56,000 elementary schools in all 50 states. In addition, Pizza Hut provides free pizzas for any child who completes the U.S. Department of Education's *Read*Write*Now!* summer activity program, a contribution worth millions of dollars.

Contact: *BOOK IT! Program*
P.O. Box 2999
Wichita, KS 67201
(800) 426-6548
www.bookitprogram.com

Time Warner: It's Time to Read

Time Warner's nonprofit Time to Read is the largest corporate volunteer literacy program in the United States. Five thousand Time Warner employees and community members volunteer each week to tutor 20,000 children, adolescents, and adults in reading.

With Time to Read, learners use magazines such as *Sports Illustrated for Kids, TIME* and *People* to develop lifelong reading and learning strategies that they can use in school, on the job, and at home. By making reading interesting and fun, Time to Read promotes literacy skills that are relevant to the learners' lives. More than 1 million volunteer hours are donated annually in 100 cities, at a cost of $175 per learner, for sponsor, tutor, learner, and training materials.

Every division of Time Warner participates in the program. Home Box Office, Time Inc., Time Warner Cable, Turner Broadcasting System, Warner Bros., and Warner Music Group all sponsor programs in their local communities where employees volunteer.

Contact: *Virginia McEnerney*
Time to Read
Time Warner Inc.
(212) 484-6404
Fax: (212) 484-6417
www.timewarner.com/ttr

Scholastic: More Books for Children

Scholastic Inc. has long supported community literacy programs through book donations and a discount book program. At the President's Summit for America's Future in 1996, Scholastic committed to donating more than 1 million books to national, state, and local literacy organizations that support the America Reads Challenge. In 1998, Scholastic exceeded that goal by donating 1.76 million books to programs such as Born to Read, Reach Out and Read, Reading Is Fundamental, Rolling Readers, Jumpstart, Toys for Tots, and First Book, among others.

Through the Sizzling Summer Books program in June 1999, Scholastic distributed 250,000 free books to students in the District of Columbia. Every public elementary school child was allowed to select three age-appropriate Scholastic books for summer reading.

In addition, Scholastic participates in national literacy events such as Read Across America Day. Scholastic offers special discounts, challenge grants, and fundraising packages to assist literacy programs in becoming more self-sufficient.

Contact: *Karen Proctor*
Scholastic Inc.
Literacy Initiatives
(212) 343-6157
kproctor@scholastic.com

Civic Journalism

America's newspapers are playing a major role in creating a nation of readers. Here is an example of what a newspaper can do to help more children learn to read.

Los Angeles Times: Reading by 9

The majority of third-graders in Southern California read below grade-level. In 1999, The *Los Angeles Times* announced its five-year Reading by 9 campaign that seeks to help 1 million children in the five-county area of greater Los Angeles achieve grade-level reading. The *Times'* extraordinary commitment will involve virtually every division of the company, as well as community, business, civic groups, media partners, and literacy groups. The *Times* estimates it will invest more than $100 million in the effort.

In partnership with the U.S. Department of Education, the *Los Angeles Times* is publishing hundreds of thousands of copies of *The Compact for Reading,* a guide and activity kit to link families and schools to improve student reading gains. The publication will be widely distributed at the local and national level in 1999.

By September 1999, Reading by 9 aims to have 6,000 trained reading tutors and

literacy volunteers helping children in schools across Southern California. In the 1999-2000 school year, the campaign will donate 1 million new books to kindergarten through third-grade classrooms. A broadcast and print public service campaign will promote the importance of reading.

As Times Mirror CEO Mark Willes has stated, "Failure to teach our children to read is a catastrophe of epic proportions. But it is not inevitable. We can, in fact, teach them to read, and to read well, and shame on us if we don't."

Contact: *Jan Berk*
Los Angeles Times Reading by 9
Times Mirror Square
Los Angeles, CA 90053
(877) READBY9
(213) 237-3039
Readingby9@latimes.com
www.latimes.com/readingby9/

The Nonprofits: A Pro-Literacy Tradition

Hundreds of nonprofit organizations are working throughout the United States to help children read well. Nonprofit organizations are providing tutors for children, organizing book drives, and assisting teachers and families. Here is a small sample of these efforts.

Association for Library Service to Children

The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association, serves children from birth to age 14 and their families and caregivers.

ALSC is a major partner with the U.S. Department of Education's America Reads Challenge in promoting summer reading. ALSC helped create the new *Read*Write*Now!* Activity Poster for kids and Tip Sheet for adults to start a community reading program. Virtually all of America's 16,000 public libraries have summer reading programs. Over the past 20 years, preschoolers have been added to summer reading efforts through "Read to Me" programs, where children receive recognition for books read to them by parents, older siblings, and caregivers.

Story hours for preschoolers and school-age children flourish in almost every local library. Librarians also offer staff development and training to teachers and child care workers. ALSC encourages librarians to form partnerships with schools, museums,

Head Start centers, health care providers, churches and synagogues, and other community groups. Librarians and community health centers are reaching out to new and expectant parents on the importance of reading daily to their child through national programs like Born to Read.

ALSC is also a partner with many public television programs that promote reading and literacy.

Contact: *Susan Roman*
Executive Director
American Library Association / Association for Library Services to Children
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611-2795
(800) 545-2433, ext. 2162
Born to Read
(800) 545-2433, ext. 1398
www.ala.org / alsc

Reading Is Fundamental

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) is the nation's largest nonprofit children's literacy organization, serving 3.5 million children annually at 17,000 locations. In recent years, RIF's volunteer corps has grown nearly 10 percent, to 240,000. RIF involves children in reading-related activities, encourages families to participate in their children's education, and enables children to select free books.

RIF partnered with Scholastic Inc. to donate 250,000 books to District of Columbia schoolchildren for summer 1999 reading. By 2000, RIF will have placed 200 million books in the hands and homes of America's children.

Among its many innovative programs, RIF has a partnership with the Mississippi State Department of Health called Healthy Start/Smart Start. Rather than using candy or tote bags as incentives for immunizations of small children, state health clinics are distributing books. Every child who is immunized receives a free book, and any accompanying siblings are also offered a book. Volunteers read with patients and coach parents on the importance of reading. Up to 60,000 poor children could be reached annually.

Contact: *Margaret Monsour*
RIF Inc.
600 Maryland Avenue, SW
Suite 600
Washington, DC 20024
(877) RIF-READ
www.rif.org

Phi Theta Kappa: Honorable Service

Phi Theta Kappa, the International Honor Society of the Two-Year College, has chosen the America Reads Challenge as its service project for 1998-2000. Phi Theta Kappa has thousands of chapters whose members are working in their communities to help all children learn to read. Phi Theta Kappa members serve as tutors, organize book drives, and raise funds for literacy organizations.

For example, Phi Theta Kappans at Tulsa Community College in Oklahoma created the Readers and Leaders series at a local elementary school. Tulsa's mayor, local celebrities, and athletes read children's stories to emphasize the role that reading had played in their successes. The speakers also donated the books to the school library.

Contact: *Jennifer Westbrook*
Director of Chapter Programs
Phi Theta Kappa Center for Excellence
1625 Eastover Drive
Jackson, MS 39211
(800) 946-9995, ext. 532
www.ptk.org/sprogram/amreads/amreads_intro.htm

Action Steps for Organizations

Every member of the community has something to offer a child. Community groups can:

📖 Encourage the staff of your organization or the members of your group to volunteer as tutors to read with children. Contact literacy programs and offer volunteers. Encourage release time to allow staff to meet with students.

📖 Start an after-school or summer community reading program. Provide transportation for children and tutors. Offer your organization's resources or building as a safe site in which the program can take place. Work with your local school to coordinate your efforts.

📖 Donate children's books to an early childhood center or parent-child play group. Organize members to read to children each week.

📖 Sponsor trips to the local library. Provide transportation or escorts. Assist those with special transportation needs such as a wheelchair lift.

📖 Involve families in local reading efforts. Conduct community outreach in stores, clinics, and communities of faith. Use the print, radio, and TV media. Take information about local reading programs into the schools. Involve families whose children have special needs.

📖 Work with reading specialists from your school system, college, or library to obtain training. Request assistance from your school district's special education office for volunteers working with students who have learning challenges.

📖 Hold an essay or speech contest among local children on the topic of "How Reading Has Made a Difference in My Life." Offer a small prize related to literacy, such as a reference book or a bookstore gift certificate.

📖 Cooperate with other community organizations and school staff on reading activities for students. Contact other reading programs and school staff for guidance.

📖 Find high-quality books for a wide age range that reflect the interests of children in your community. Offer these in the form of book lists or donate actual books to your local reading program. Offer to supplement the reading with related activities.

Action Steps for Universities

Higher education communities are making significant contributions to improving child literacy.

Administrators can:

📖 Help recruit and train Federal Work-Study students, community service volunteers, faculty, and staff as reading tutors. Increase the percentage of work-study slots that are reserved for reading tutors.

📖 Open classrooms to literacy programs when they are not in use. Link literacy programs with efforts to raise student expectations and pathways to college.

📖 Sponsor an on-campus summer reading program for elementary school children. Involve the local library.

Faculty can:

📖 Develop training materials for reading tutors. Offer training to students, community members, and families.

📖 Develop and conduct evaluations of local reading initiatives, and advise others on how to make literacy efforts more effective.

📖 Include tutoring and mentoring skills in academic programs involving teacher preparation, social service, and human resources.

📖 Share current research on reading and mentoring with organizers of local reading initiatives.

Students can:

📖 Ask your financial aid officer how the university plans to institute a reading tutor component to the Federal Work-Study program by 2000. Recruit work-study students, and staff, faculty, and student volunteers to fill tutoring positions.

📖 Volunteer to read with or to a child at a local school.

📖 Use student newspapers, radio, television stations, campus electronic bulletin boards, and other online information sources to promote involvement in America Reads.

Staff can:

📖 Enlist all staff to read with their own children and grandchildren. Distribute high-quality reading materials.

📖 Build bridges to family literacy organizations for your staff members to strengthen their literacy skills and upgrade their education and training.

Action Steps for Employers

Employers are significant stakeholders in the community and have the resources to make a real difference in the education of children.
Employers can:

📖 Encourage employees who are parents and grandparents to read and write with their children and grandchildren.

📖 Encourage customers to read and write with their children. Set up a supervised reading area for children while they wait for their families to shop. Place children's books and children's magazines in lounge areas or waiting rooms. Place word games on placemats to encourage reading and writing.

📖 Establish a lending library in the workplace so employees can take books and other reading materials home to their children.

📖 Set up high-quality, educational preschools and child care centers at or near work sites. Set up an educational after-school program for your employees' children. Include a well-stocked selection of books.

📖 Allow employees to use paid time each month to volunteer as reading tutors at local schools or child care centers. In partnership with reading specialists at your local school or college, support tutor training. Consider adding a multilingual component to your tutoring program.

📖 Help build coalitions to coordinate literacy efforts in the private sector. Contact your local newspapers, school districts, and other businesses to create district or regional efforts.

📖 Provide books, videos, consultants, and other resources to schools. Refurbish school libraries and reading centers to serve as the center of the school's literacy activities. Help schools modernize their teaching materials and equipment, including those to help children with special needs.

📖 Start a community reading program. Provide space at your workplace. Provide transportation for students and tutors. Encourage your employees to volunteer.

📖 Support after-school and summer school programs. Often employers can play a key role in bringing together schools and other community and cultural resources to start or expand programs.

APPENDIX I

Reading Resources

Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children

This landmark 1998 report of the National Research Council synthesizes the wealth of research on early reading development. It provides an integrated picture of how reading develops and how reading instruction should proceed. The book includes recommendations for practice, as well as recommendations for further research.

Cost: $35.95

To order: The National Academy Press
(800) 624-6242
www.nas.edu

Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success

This guide, developed by the National Research Council, explains how children learn to read and how adults can help them. Based on the 1998 National Research Council report *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, it provides ideas that parents, educators, policymakers, and others can use to prevent reading difficulties in early childhood and the primary grades.

Cost: $14.95

To order: The National Academy Press
(800) 624-6242
www.nas.edu

The Compact for Reading Guide and School-Home Links Kit

- The Guide explains how to develop an effective compact for reading. A compact is a written agreement among families, teachers, principals, and students from kindergarten through third grade. It describes how all partners can help improve the reading skills of all children—including those with disabilities and with limited English proficiency. Tutors and other community members can also be partners in a compact for reading.
- The School-Home Links Kit helps implement local reading compacts. Developed by a team of teachers in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education, this kit includes 100 one-page reading activities for each grade from kindergarten through third. Three to four times every week, teachers can provide these easy-to-use activities to families, which encourages involvement in reading activities and support of school learning.

Cost: Free

To order: U.S. Dept. of Education
(877) 4ED-PUBS
www.ed.gov/pubs/CompactforReading/

Read*Write*Now!
Poster, Tip Sheet and Basic Kit

- The Read*Write*Now! Activity Poster has a colorful illustration on the front and fun activities for children in kindergarten through grade six on the back. Students may write book reviews for publication on America Reads' Web site. Available in English and Spanish.
Cost: Free
To order: U.S. Dept. of Education
(877) 4ED-PUBS
- The Read*Write*Now! Tip Sheet for Developing a Community Reading Program—for librarians, teachers, camp counselors, and community leaders—offers straightforward suggestions for developing summer or after-school reading programs. Available in English and Spanish.
Cost: Free
To order: U.S. Dept. of Education
(877) 4ED-PUBS
- The Read*Write*Now! Basic Kit, created by reading experts to develop and build language and literacy skills from birth through grade 6, includes fun reading and writing activities, a vocabulary log, and a certificate.
Cost: Free
To download: U.S. Dept. of Education
www.ed.gov/Family/RWN/Activ97/

Simple Things You Can Do To Help All Children Read Well and Independently by the End of Third Grade

This booklet is a guide that all community members can use to help children learn to read and become better readers. It includes a general outline for starting a literacy program, with suggestions organized according to the type of group.
Cost: Free
To order: (877) 4ED-PUBS
www.ed.gov/americareads

NAEP 1998 Reading Report Card for the Nation

This report presents the results of the 1998 NAEP national reading assessment of fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade students. Performance is indicated in terms of average scores on a 0-to-500 scale, and percentages of students attaining three achievement levels: *Basic, Proficient,* and *Advanced.* The 1998 results are compared with those in 1994 and 1992. Data for participating states is included.
Cost: Free
To order: (877) 4ED-PUBS
http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading.asp/

Ideas at Work: How to Help Every Child Become a Reader

This directory of more than 100 ideas, projects, and programs is the companion to *Start Early, Finish Strong.* It includes federal, state, local, private, and nonprofit efforts.
Cost: Free
To order: (877) 4ED-PUBS
www.ed.gov/pubs/ideasatwork

Checkpoints for Progress In Reading and Writing: For Families and Communities, and For Teachers and Learning Partners
These two booklets provide developmental milestones for children from birth through grade 12 and explain what most children are able to read and write within these periods. Written for parents and community members, and teachers and tutors, the booklets outline necessary skills, suggest books for each age group to read, and offer strategies and resources to assist children.
Cost: Free
To order: U.S. Dept. of Education
(877) 4ED-PUBS
www.ed.gov/americareads/

Ready*Set*Read Early Childhood Learning Kit
This kit offers families and caregivers ideas on age-appropriate activities that help children learn about language. It includes a growth chart. Available in English and Spanish.
Cost: Free
To download: U.S. Dept. of Education
www.ed.gov/americareads/RSRkit.html

Young Children in the Arts: Making Creative Connections
This booklet includes developmental benchmarks and appropriate arts activities for children from birth to age 8.
Cost: $1.50
To order: Arts Education Partnership
(202) 236-8693
aep@ccsso.org
http://aep-arts.org/tfadvoc/taskforces/ecreport.html

Every Child a Reader
This innovative series of six-page pamphlets, written for teachers and teacher educators, presents summaries of research-based knowledge from a wide variety of sources, including the National Research Council's *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*. Effective, research-based strategies to implement in any classroom are presented in clear, concise language.
Cost: $10 per set
To order: Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA)
(734) 647-6940
ciera@umich.edu
www.ciera.org

Raising a Reader, Raising a Writer
This brochure for parents lays out simple ways to nurture a child into becoming a successful reader. The piece includes the characteristics of good child care and classroom settings, and what to ask your child's teacher.
Cost: 50 cents each; 100 copies for $10
To order: National Association for the Education of Young Children
(800) 424-2460
resource_sales@naeyc.org
www.naeyc.org

Read With Me: A Guide for Student Volunteers Starting Early Childhood Literacy Programs
This booklet provides guidelines for placing undergraduates as literacy volunteers to work with young children and is based on the Harvard Emerging Literacy Project. The booklet discusses the role of families and communities and includes a summary of brain research, a checklist, and resources.
Cost: Free
To order: (877) 4ED-PUBS
www.ed.gov/pubs/ReadWithMe

Helping Your Child Become a Reader
Based on the latest research, this guide for families with children from infancy through age 6 explains how and why to use language skills—talking, listening, reading, and writing—to help children grow into readers. It offers ideas for everyday activities to encourage a child's love of reading.
Cost: Free
To order: U.S. Dept. of Education
(202) 219-1556
velma_allen@ed.gov

Read*Write*Now! Tutoring Manual
This manual provides the reading tutor with tools and strategies for one-on-one tutoring of school-age children in grades 1 to 6.
Cost: Free
To order: Hadassah
(212) 303-8042
curtis@hadassah.org
www.ed/gov/americareads

Beginning to Read
This article gives an overview of the critical role that phonological awareness and word recognition play in teaching beginning reading to children with diverse learning needs. It includes tips for teachers.
Cost: Free
To download: www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/reading/ericE565.html

Learning to Read, Reading to Learn Information Kit
The kit provides information for parents and teachers to help children with learning disabilities succeed. It includes a resource guide, a list of principles for learning to read, an article from *American Educator*, and a bibliography.
Cost: Free
To order: U.S. Dept. of Education
(877) 4ED-PUBS
www.ed.gov/americareads

On the Road to Reading: A Guide for Community Partners
The guide advises community partners on how to become involved in the America Reads Challenge. It presents a step-by-step process and describes how most children learn to read, how tutors can help young readers, and how community partnerships support the progress of literacy.
Cost: Free
To order: U.S. Dept. of Education
(877) 4ED-PUBS
www.ed.gov/pubs/RoadtoRead/

Reading Helpers: A Guide for Training Tutors
This manual outlines 36 hours of preservice and inservice training for tutors working with children from preschool through third grade. Lesson plans, handouts, and an extensive resource list are included. This manual is used with *On the Road to Reading.*
Cost: Free
To order: National Service Resource Center
www.etr-associates.org/NSRC/

Where to Find Inexpensive or Free Children's Books
This brochure lists organizations and publishers to contact about free books and ideas for holding a community book drive.
Cost: Free
To download: LEARNS
www.nwrel.org.learns/resources/startup/inexpensive.html

Even Start: Facilitating Transitions to Kindergarten
This report presents promising strategies for transition to school used by Even Start projects. Even Start is a federal family literacy program for low-income children and adults that focuses on early childhood educational opportunities.
Cost: Free
To order: U.S. Dept. of Education
(800) 4ED-PUBS

Guidelines for Tutoring English Language Learners
This brochure lists simple guidelines for tutoring students whose home language is not English. It includes tips for the tutor and links to relevant resources.
Cost: Free
To download: LEARNS
www.nwrel.org/learns/resources/ell/index.html

Including Your Child
This booklet for parents with special-needs children covers the first eight years of life. It includes helpful suggestions for parents to help them relate to their special-needs children and to find support services for their children and themselves.
Cost: First copy free; $10 each additional
To order: National Library of Education
(800) 424-1616 (single copies only)
(202) 512-1800 (multiple copies)

Museums and Learning: A Guide for Family Visits
This guide for parents and teachers of children between the ages of 4 and 12 shows how museums can inspire, inform, and build skills for both classroom and lifelong learning. It is full of helpful suggestions for parents and teachers on how they can make the most of their museum visits for their children.
Cost: Free
To order: U.S. Dept.of Education
(877) 4ED-PUBS

Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE)
This on-line directory offers hundreds of educational resources supported by agencies across the U.S. federal government. Topics include language arts, educational technology, math, science, and arts. FREE includes extensive links to Web sites for children's learning.
Cost: Free
To use: U.S. Dept. of Education
www.ed/gov/free

International Reading Association
The International Reading Association provides a variety of resources for teachers, reading specialists, tutors, researchers, parents, and others concerned about literacy. Topics include balanced reading instruction, tutoring, assessment, classroom discussion strategies, integrated instruction, motivation for reading, and teaching English as a Second Language.
Cost: Varies by product
To order: International Reading Association
(302) 731-1600
www.reading.org/publications

Learning Disabilities Online (LD Online)
This Web site offers easy-to-understand information and resources on learning disabilities, such as dyslexia. It is a service of The Learning Project at WETA-TV, in cooperation with the Coordinated Campaign on Learning Disabilities.
Cost: Free
To use: LD Online
www.ldonline.org

U.S. Department of Education Publications
The U.S. Department of Education publishes a wealth of information for teachers, administrators, policymakers, researchers, parents, students, and others on reading and other educational topics.
Cost: Free
To order: U.S. Dept. of Education
(800) USA-LEARN for guidance
(877) 4ED-PUBS to order
www.ed.gov/pubs

Federal Work-Study Directory
This is a listing of more than 1,100 institutions of higher education that pay literacy tutors and mentors through the Federal Work-Study program. In 2000, every college or university receiving work-study funds will offer a reading tutor program.
Cost: Free
For contact information: Corporation for National Service
(202) 606-5000, ext. 280
jgale@cns.gov
For summaries of some programs:
Federal Work-Study On-line Directory
www.ed.gov/americareads

Additional Information About America Reads

- The toll-free number for comments or questions is (800) USA-LEARN or (800) 437-0833 (TTY).
- The toll-free number for ordering publications is (877) 4ED-PUBS or (877) 576-7743 (TTY).
- America Reads staff may be reached at (202) 401-8888. The fax number is (202) 401-0596.
- The America Reads Web site is www.ed.gov/americareads
- The America Reads Listserv is a forum for interested parties to ask questions and discuss best practices regarding children and reading. To subscribe, send an e-mail to lists@lyris.etr.org


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APPENDIX II

Summaries of Recent State Laws on Reading for Children in Grade 3 and Under

1996—June 1999

These are some examples of legislative action being taken by states with regard to reading for children in grade 3 and under. These examples were compiled primarily through the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs, the Education Commission of the States, and various state education agencies. Readers should keep in mind that in reviewing any particular legal questions they should consult the underlying state legislation, and that nothing in the following summaries of that legislation reflects the position of the U.S. Department of Education as to the meaning or effect of any state legislation or legal requirement.

Arizona

HB 2130; enacted 5/98

Requires that beginning in the 2000-2001 school year, school districts that provide education for kindergarten through third grade shall implement research-based, balanced, comprehensive, language arts instruction, which includes instruction in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The measure allows parents to select the method of language arts instruction for their child. The bill also changes teacher certification requirements and appropriates $1 million for teacher training, including $25,000 toward the development of a statewide reading curriculum.

HB 2293; enacted 5/98
Makes technical changes to existing requirements regarding pupils who do not meet the literacy and reading comprehension standards set by the Board of Education by providing intensive reading instruction, without instruction in any other subject matter, until the pupil can meet set standards. Requires intensive reading instruction for pupils who cannot pass an "Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards" test, created by the Board of Education.

SB 1006; enacted 4/99
Appropriates an additional $6,533,500 in FY 2000 and $7,067,300 in FY 2001 to enhance reading programs for students enrolled in grades kindergarten through third grade.

California

AB 1086; The Reading Instruction Development Program; enacted 1997
Extends the multi-faceted California Reading Initiative by establishing two grant programs for inservice training in reading instruction, as follows: 1) grants for inservice training for certificated employees teaching kindergarten and grades 1 through 3, inclusive, and site administrators, and 2) grants for inservice training for certificated employees teaching grades 4 through 8, inclusive, and site administrators. Separate applications are required for kindergarten through third grade and grades 4 through 8.

AB 1178; enacted 9/96
Requires the Commission on Teacher Credentialing to develop, adopt, and administer a reading instruction competence assessment to measure an individual's knowledge, skill, and ability relative to effective reading instruction. Applies to kindergarten through third-grade reading teachers.

AB 3482; Teacher Reading Instruction Development Program; enacted 7/96
Enacts *The Teacher Reading Instruction Development Program*, which would effectuate legislative intent, expressed in the bill, that each certified teacher of pupils enrolled in kindergarten and grades 1 through 3, inclusive, possess the knowledge and skills to effectively teach pupils to read. Enacts *The Comprehensive Reading Leadership Program*, which would encourage members of governing boards of school districts and teachers to implement comprehensive reading programs for kindergarten through third grade.

AB 2x; enacted 3/99

Establishes and provides funding, in the amount of $94 million, for six of Governor Davis' initiatives in kindergarten through third grade reading instruction and teacher and principal preparation.

Elementary School Intensive Reading Program. Authorizes local school districts to provide multiple, intensive reading opportunities to students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade. Instruction is to be offered four hours per day for six continuous weeks during the summer or when school is not regularly in session (although instruction may also be offered at other times, including before school, after school, on Saturdays, and during inter-sessions.) Appropriates $75 million for allocation by the Superintendent of Public Instruction to local school districts.

Governor's Reading Award Program. Establishes awards of up to $5,000 per school site, to be distributed by the Secretary of Education based on the number of books read per student. Appropriates $2 million to the Superintendent of Public Instruction for this program.

Public Involvement Reading Campaign. Establishes a reading campaign to promote the message that reading is a key to success in life and the responsibility of all Californians. Appropriates $4 million to the Secretary of Education for this campaign.

Governor's Teacher Scholars Program. Requests that the University of California establish a rigorous teacher preparation program for talented students beginning July 1, 2000, at the UC-Los Angeles and UC-Berkeley campuses. When fully operational, the program is expected to serve 400 students—200 at each campus. Participants will receive scholarships equivalent to tuition and campus-based resident fees, be required to teach for at least four years in a low-income school, and be required to repay their scholarship assistance if they teach for less than four years. Appropriates $500,000 to the University of California to develop this program (scholarships are to be funded through private donations.)

Governor's Principal Leadership Institute. Requests the University of California establish a rigorous, two-year administrator preparation program for talented students beginning July 1, 2000, at the UC-Los Angeles and UC-Berkeley campuses. When fully operational, the program is expected to serve 400 students—200 at each campus. Participants will receive scholarships equivalent to tuition and campus-based resident fees, be required to serve for at least four years in a public school, and be required to repay their scholarship assistance if they serve for less than four years. Appropriates $500,000 to the University of California to develop this program (scholarships are to be funded through private donations.)

California Reading Professional Development Institutes. Requests the University of California, California State University, and independent colleges and universities provide intensive reading instruction training to kindergarten through third-grade teachers—or those who supervise beginning reading teachers. The program began in June 1999 for up to 6,000 participants. Each participant receives a $1,000 stipend. Appro-

priates $6 million to the University of California to administer this program and $6 million to the Superintendent of Public Instruction to fund the stipends.

Colorado

HB 1139; Colorado Basic Literacy Act; enacted 5/96

A kindergarten reading readiness level is established by State Board. State Board will identify and approve instruments for assessing kindergarten reading readiness and the literacy and reading comprehension level of each pupil in first, second, or third grade. No later than the 1998-99 school year, each district must assess on an annual basis the reading readiness or literacy and reading comprehension level of each pupil enrolled in kindergarten or first, second, or third grade using the state assessment. The bill also outlines an individual literacy plan for each student if literacy falls below the level established by the state. The General Assembly declares that reading is the most important skill to learn in school.

HB 1296; enacted 1998

Creates the *Early Education and School Readiness Program* to provide funding for programs that advance coordination of early education and school readiness programs at the local level, to help achieve school readiness goals for at-risk children. Grants under the program may be used for the following activities: age-appropriate reading readiness tutoring, which may include parental education programs to further family involvement in reading activities; the purchase of age-appropriate reading readiness materials to serve early childhood programs; grants for nonprofit and for-profit early childhood and education care centers, and family child care homes to become accredited; and grants for early childhood teacher or caregiver professional development.

Connecticut

HB 5657; enacted 5/98

Requires each local or regional board of education to develop and implement a three-year plan to improve the reading skills of students in kindergarten through third grade. The plan must be designed to allow all students to attain the standard of reading competency developed by the Connecticut State Board of Education. Requires the Department of Education to provide technical assistance to local boards.

Idaho

HB 176aa; enacted 3/99
Identifies the *Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Plan*, adopted in January 1999, as the standard for student achievement in reading for grades kindergarten through third grade. Requires a kindergarten through third-grade reading assessment at least twice annually, with follow-up intervention for students with special needs. Charges the State Department of Education with publicizing the results of the assessments by school and district. States the Legislature's intent that textbooks align with the *Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Plan*.

HB 177aa; enacted 3/99
Establishes an extended-year reading intervention program for students in kindergarten through third grade who are below grade-level in reading. Provides that the costs of the program, including a transportation allowance, will be reimbursed to the district by the state (subject to an appropriation.)

HB 178aa; enacted 3/99
Establishes a performance-based exam, consistent with the *Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Plan,* which new teachers must pass to be certified to teach in the state. Requires that kindergarten through eighth grade, special education, and Title I teachers and administrators must complete three credits, or the equivalent, in state-approved reading instruction to be recertified every five years. Creates opportunities for exemptions and "testing out" of the instruction.

Illinois

HB 2887; Reading Improvement Block Grant Program; enacted 2/98
Amends the School Code on the *Reading Improvement Block Grant Program* (105 ILCS 5/2-3.51). Permits school districts participating in the *Reading Improvement Block Program* to use assessment methods other than the reading portion of the IGAP tests to measure student reading skills; provides that districts not demonstrating performance progress using an approved assessment method shall not be eligible for subsequent funding until such progress is established.

Indiana

SB 006; Budget Bill; enacted 5/97

Among other provisions, this bill appropriates money for early intervention programs for reading in kindergarten through third grade. Also provides for improving school libraries' printed material for kindergarten through eighth grade. Part of a two-year budget that extends through FY 1998-99.

Iowa

HB 743; enacted 4/99

Provides school districts with resources for kindergarten through third grade early intervention efforts in basic skills instruction, especially reading. Earmarks funding for school districts to reduce class size in kindergarten through third grade to 17 students for every one teacher in basic skills instruction. Allows school districts the flexibility to use the funding to support reading programs. Requires school districts to notify parents at least twice each school year of the reading progress of individual students. Parents will also be notified of steps taken to improve students' reading ability. Appropriates $100 million over four years for the initiative ($10 million in FY 2000.)

Kentucky

SB 186; enacted 4/98

Establishes the *Early Literacy Incentive Fund*; provides grants to schools to implement reading models, including phonics instruction; requires the State Board to establish an application process and the criteria for funding grants; requires applicants to allocate matching funds; creates *The Collaborative Center for Literacy Development* of the University of Kentucky to promote literacy development, including training educators.

Louisiana

HB 2444; Implementation of Reading Programs; enacted 6/97

Requires implementation of reading programs at each public elementary school to teach students to read at grade-level by the end of the first grade and provides for certain reports.

Mississippi

SB 2944; Reading Sufficiency Program; enacted 1998
Directs the State Board of Education to develop and implement a comprehensive *Reading Sufficiency Program of Instruction*—specifically designed to enable each student to reach the appropriate grade level of reading skills. Likewise, local school districts will be instructed to devise reading plans, including the following elements: additional in-school instruction time; readiness intervention programs; utilization of research-based training methodologies; and professional development for teachers and administrators.

New Hampshire

HB 229; Reading Recovery Training Program; enacted 4/97
Establishes a *Reading Recovery Training Program* in the Department of Education to provide training to all eligible first-grade teachers.

Ohio

SB 055; Fourth-Grade Guarantee; enacted 8/97
Establishes what has become known as the *Fourth-Grade Guarantee* to ensure students are reading at least at grade-level before going on to the more demanding rigors of middle school and then high school. Among other requirements, the *Fourth-Grade Guarantee* includes: assessing each student at the end of first, second, and third grade to identify those reading below their grade-level; and providing intervention services following third grade, including intensive summer reading programs, to those students who need them.

HB 1; enacted 3/99
Involves recruiting, training, and organizing 20,000 tutors to work one-on-one with students to enhance their reading and comprehension skills. Creates an 11 member *OhioReads Council*, whose duties include awarding *OhioReads* grants, evaluating the progress of the initiative, and developing a strategic plan to recruit and train volunteers. Five members are appointed by the governor, one of whom must be a reading specialist and one of whom must represent an Ohio college of education. H.B. 1 abolishes the Council on July 1, 2004.

Establishes the *OhioReads Classroom Reading Grants Program* and the *Ohio Reads Community Reading Grants Program*. Establishes the *OhioReads Office*, within the State Department of Education, as the fiscal agent for the classroom and community reading grants. Permits recipients of *OhioReads* grants to request criminal record checks (including fingerprinting) on individuals applying to provide services directly to children. Requires the *OhioReads Council*, in collaboration with the State Department of Education and the Ohio Board of Regents, to review each university and college approved by the State Board to train teachers. Appropriates $25 million for the initiative.

Oklahoma

HB 2017; Common Education-Literacy Act; enacted 6/97

Beginning with the 1998-99 school year, schools are required to assess all students enrolled in the first and second grades by multiple ongoing assessments for the acquisition of reading skills at that grade-level. Any student who is found not reading at grade-level will be given a reading assessment plan designed to enable the student to acquire the appropriate reading skill. Students who are on an individual education plan, have limited English proficiency, or for whom English is a second language are exempted.

HB 2878; The Reading Sufficiency Act; enacted 6/98

Requires each district to adopt and annually update a district reading plan that outlines how each site will comply with the *Reading Sufficiency Act*. Its modifications clarify that after-school tutoring does not count toward the 180-school-day-per-year requirement, specify the elements of reading instruction to be included in assessment plans, and call for a Reading Report Card for each elementary site.

South Carolina

HB 3696; enacted 6/99

Appropriates $3 million in initial funding for the *Governor's Institute of Reading*, which will focus on the reading skills of students in kindergarten through third grade. The Institute will aim to strengthen reading programs statewide by providing expertise in research and techniques, grants to local schools, and professional development for teachers.

HB 3620; enacted 6/99
Provides $20 million for the Governor's First Steps initiative for improving early childhood development. First Steps would prepare children up to age five for kindergarten by providing subsidies to make child care better and more affordable. It would also provide grants to involve parents in their children's education

Texas

HB 001; General Appropriations Act; enacted 1997
The budget includes $32 million ($7 milion in 1998 and $25 million in 1999) for reading academies—"schools-within-schools" that focus on reading. Also created was the *Read to Succeed* program for early diagnosis of reading problems in kindergarten through second grade. *Read to Succeed* will be funded through the sale of special automobile license plates.

HB 107; enacted 6/97
Establishes Texas Education Code 28.006 for reading diagnosis. Among other requirements, the commissioner shall develop recommendations for school districts for administering reading instruments to diagnose student reading proficiency; for training educators in administering the reading instruments; and for applying the results of the instruments to the instructional program. Also, the commissioner is required to adopt a list of diagnostic student reading instruments for which schools may use state funds. Each school district shall administer, at the kindergarten through second-grade-levels, one of these reading instruments.

Utah

HB 067: Student Assessments of Reading Proficiency; enacted 3/97
Provides for an assessment of emerging and early reading skills of children entering kindergarten and the first grade; provides that school districts make available material to parents to assist in helping their children to master emerging reading skills and early reading skills.

HB 8; enacted 3/99
Appropriates $250,000 to community-based literacy efforts, $150,000 to volunteer training, and $100,000 to the *Read to Me* education campaign. Governor Leavitt had proposed $10 million for his literacy initiative, including a plan for mandatory extra class-

room time for children not reading up to grade-level. Lawmakers passed a revised package.

HB 312; enacted 3/99
Commits $5.2 million to local school districts to develop personalized instruction plans for readers in first through third grades.

Vermont

HB 527; enacted 6/97
Requires the State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Agency of Human Services, to develop a plan for services for early education to ensure that all children will read by the end of third grade and directs public schools to offer early reading instruction as well as intervention when necessary.

Virginia

HB 4001; Appropriations for Virginia Reading Recovery Program; enacted 1998
Appropriates $141,581 to the Virginia Reading Recovery Program. The Virginia Reading Recovery Program was enacted in 1994 for those students identified at risk for reading failure in elementary schools. The purpose is to develop strategies that promote reading and independent learning skills, and better equip teachers to provide reading instruction. The funding is for the 1998-2000 biennium.

HB 1859; Remedial Instructional Programs; enacted 4/97
Requires students who do not pass the literacy tests to obtain the *Literacy Passport* to participate in summer school or after-school remediation programs; requires School Boards to establish remediation program standards committees, consisting of administrators, teachers, parents, and the community at large.

SB 558; Reading Incentive Grants; enacted 3/98
Establishes the *Reading Incentive Grants Program and Fund*, to be administered by the Board of Education; incentive grants would be awarded on a competitive basis to public schools demonstrating low pupil academic performance and be used to support successful reading programs, including but not limited to, the *Virginia Reading Recovery Program.*

HB 426; enacted 5/98
Allows school boards to employ reading specialists for each elementary school; provides that funding for such programs will be apportioned as given in the appropriation act.

Washington

HB 2909; Effective Reading Programs for Elementary Students; enacted 3/96
Directs the *Ccenter for the Improvement of Student Learning*, or its designee, to develop and implement a process for identifying programs that have been proven to be effective using scientifically valid research in teaching elementary students to read.

SB 2849; enacted in 1998
Focuses on raising reading scores by requiring school boards to set three-year improvement goals for kindergarten through third grade reading. Plans are mandated by 12/15/98, with frequent reports to parents and the media.

SB 6509; Reading Instruction Training Act; enacted in 1998
Provides funds for additional reading instruction opportunities that use tutors in the summer, during breaks, and during school hours. Provides funds for professional development and instructional material for beginning (kindergarten through second-grade) reading programs. Allows schools to apply for staff development, instructional material, and tutoring funds, with priority given to schools with low-scoring students.

SB 5180; enacted 5/99
Appropriates $8,000,000 in FY 2000 and $8,000,000 in FY 2001 for the existing *Washington Reading Corps*, a volunteer tutoring program.

West Virginia

HB 4306; WV Reads; enacted in 1998
Based on the recommendations of the State Commission on Educational Quality and Equity, establishes a new reading grant program: *WV READS (Reading Excellence Accelerates Deserving Students)*. *WV READS* specifically targets kindergarten through fourth-grade students who do not perform at a grade-level by prioritizing schools with low test scores. County boards, or a community partner with the county board, are responsible for submitting the grant application, which will be used to fund both summer schools and intensive reading instruction during the regular school year.

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