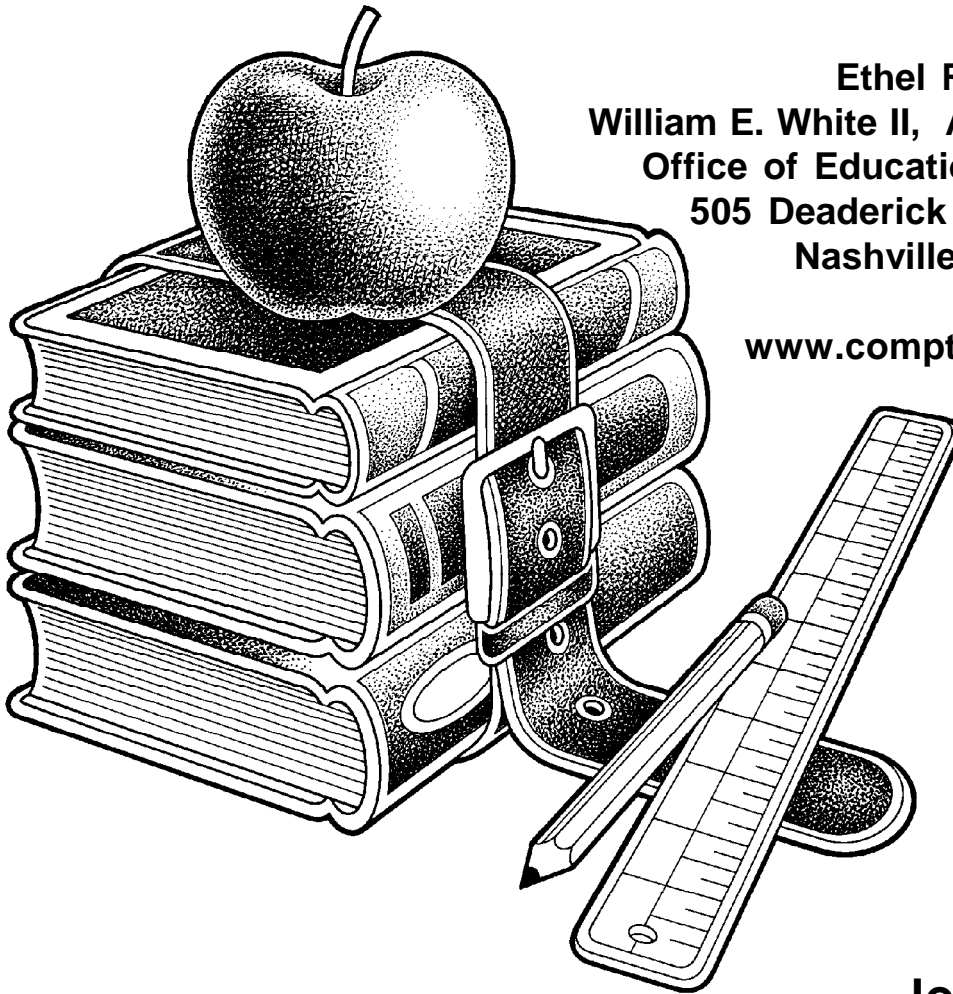


Teaching Kids to Read:

Is Tennessee Doing Enough?

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Executive Summary

Literacy is a nationwide concern. Research indicates that students who cannot read at grade level by the end of the 3rd grade have continuing difficulties in school, perform poorly in other subjects, and may never graduate. In addition, the alternatives to reading achievement—grade retention, special education assignment, and long-term remedial programs—are costly and ineffective for most students.

Because of such concerns, the Tennessee General Assembly passed Public Chapter 130 (1999) requiring the Office of Education Accountability, with assistance from the Tennessee Department of Education and the State Board of Education, to:

- Evaluate the reading proficiency of Tennessee’s elementary schoolchildren.
- Make recommendations to ensure that each child can read at an appropriate level before leaving the 3rd grade.
- Include any relevant test data from Tennessee.
- Include a listing of all pilot projects and grants administered by the Department of Education that promote literacy in Tennessee’s K-12 public schools.
- Include information on other states’ efforts to increase reading proficiency in grades K-6.

Convincing arguments for ensuring that all children learn to read are found in the 1996 publication *What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future*:

- Low levels of literacy are powerful predictors of welfare dependency and incarceration—and their high costs.
- More than half the adult prison population has literacy levels below those required by the labor market.
- Nearly 40 percent of adjudicated juvenile delinquents have treatable learning disabilities that were overlooked and went untreated in school.
- By the year 2010 there will be only three workers for every retiree on Social Security, as compared with 16 in 1950. If all these future workers are not capable and productive, our social compact will be in grave danger.¹

Data specific to Tennessee add compelling reasons to learn to read at a young age. The *Longitudinal Study of Adult Literacy Participants in Tennessee: Year One Report* provides the following description of a sample of students in Tennessee’s adult basic education programs.² As of 1993:

- 92 percent had not graduated from high school
- average hourly pay was \$6.07
- 43 percent reported annual household incomes of less than \$5,000
- 63 percent received some type of government assistance
- 28 percent had a significant health or physical problem

¹ The National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future, Summary Report*, New York: National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future, September 1996, p. 8.

² Juliet Merrifield, Michael K. Smith, Kathryn Rea, Thomas Shriver, *Longitudinal Study of Adult Literacy Participants in Tennessee: Year One Report*, Knoxville: Center for Literacy Studies, 1993.

- 22 percent had no medical coverage at all
- 67 percent were unemployed
- 43 percent had a child under five in their home; 53 percent had a child age 5-11
- 78 percent had children who were or had been involved with Head Start

Related issues also make literacy a primary national concern. These include the increasing and unprecedented number of students in schools throughout the United States whose first language is not English. According to the Tennessee Department of Education's Office of Adult Basic Education, the number of K-12 students participating in limited English proficiency (LEP) programs increased more than two and one-half times between 1993 and 1999 (from 3,430 to 9,191).³ In addition, the largest disability categories for students who receive special education services continue to include specific learning disabilities (often related to reading) and speech or language impairments.⁴ While reading problems can be found among every group and in every primary classroom, children with these characteristics are among those who are at greater risk of reading difficulties than others.

The report concludes:

Two separate assessments indicate that most Tennessee students are not successful in the area of reading. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading report showed that in 1992, 1994, and 1998, at least 42 percent of Tennessee's 4th graders performed below the basic level; another 31 percent performed at the basic level. The 1999 Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) data indicated that seventy percent of the state's 5th graders were below proficient, and sixty percent of 8th graders failed to achieve proficiency. (See pages 21-23.)

States that have maintained good reading scores or raised their reading scores over time have established reading as a funding and/or policy priority. Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Texas are important to this study because each of these states has demonstrated significant progress over three years of NAEP testing in 1992, 1994, and 1998. Each has increased its number of students performing at a basic level, and each has demonstrated growth in its average score. Although Tennessee outscores both Alabama and Mississippi in the NAEP reading tests, its growth has been static in comparison.

In slight contrast, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin students have performed consistently well on the 1992, 1994, and 1998 NAEP tests. Connecticut students have both performed consistently well and improved significantly over time. (See pages 23-24.)

³ Tennessee Department of Education, *A Summary of Tennessee's Public School Systems Report Card: 21st Century Schools Program, School Year 1998-99*, "Participation in English Language Learner Programs," November 1999.

⁴ U.S. Department of Education, *Twentieth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, Washington, D.C.: Office of Special Education Programs, 1998, Executive Summary. See www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/OSEP98AnlRpt.

Tennessee is the only Southeastern state without a state-funded reading initiative.

Although the Department of Education launched its *Tennessee Come Read With Me* initiative in 1998, the effort is unfunded. As part of the program, the department created a new reading curriculum for all elementary students, appointed reading volunteer coordinators for participating school systems, and began book donation and volunteer programs.⁵ Education Edge coordinates the program by encouraging members of its community partnerships to volunteer to read to students and donate money and books to schools. In addition, Education Edge has provided brochures and posters that have been distributed to local education agencies. Some school system officials interviewed indicate that they have had little interaction with the department regarding the program, other than receiving the Education Edge materials. (See page 25.)

Tennessee lacks a reading infrastructure. Departmental attempts toward improving reading in Tennessee's schools have depended largely on volunteer efforts, such as the *Tennessee Come Read With Me* initiative, and on federal money, such as Title I funds or grant money. The Tennessee Department of Education lacks adequate staff in the area of reading. In fact, no staff are devoted full-time to reading. At least one staff person is extremely knowledgeable in the field, but also serves as the Director of Elementary and Middle Grades. In addition, the department has no language arts coordinator and no media specialist. As a result, there is no coordinated reading effort in the state, which ultimately affects how children learn. With a more coordinated effort, for example, the department could assist local education agencies with meaningful professional development opportunities and could act as a source of information about the latest research regarding reading. (See page 25.)

Three prominent sources have rated Tennessee's standards for language arts as very low. *Education Week's* annual "Quality Counts" report for 1998 gave Tennessee a 'D+' in overall standards, and indicated that the state's language arts standards lacked clarity and specificity.⁶ Similarly, the Fordham Foundation issued a national report card in 1998 for all states and graded Tennessee with an 'F' for its English standards.⁷ Some of the report's criticisms included that the standards are vague, are written for educators and not the general public, contain some jargon, are largely unmeasurable, and do not clearly address the reading, interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature.⁸ Finally, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) found Tennessee's English standards to contain "vague content."⁹ According to the AFT, most states have difficulty setting clear

⁵Tennessee Department of Education, Press Release: "Reading Initiative Gets Education Edge Support," March 10, 1999. See <http://www.state.tn.us/education/edmal541.htm>. Note: Volunteer coordinators have been designated in all but 10 school systems.

⁶ *Education Week*, "Quality Counts," January 11, 1999. See www.edweek.org/sreports/qc99.

⁷ Chester E. Finn, Michael J. Petrilli, and Greg Vanourek, "The State of State Standards," *Fordham Report*, Vol. 2. No. 5., July 1998. See <http://www.edexcellence.net>. Note: The 1999 Fordham report on state standards again gave Tennessee a failing grade for its English standards.

⁸ Sandra Stotsky, "State English Standards," *Fordham Report*, Volume 1, Number 1, July 1997. See <http://www.edexcellence.net>.

⁹ American Federation of Teachers, *Making Standards Matter 1998: State-by-State Analysis, Tennessee*. See <http://www.aft.org/edissues/standards98/states/tennessee.htm>.

and specific standards in English. Department staff indicate that they are working to add performance indicators to Tennessee's current standards to increase their specificity.¹⁰

It is, however, important to note that opinions vary about the ideal content of standards, and reviewers' judgments about them are subjective. According to the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA), "[m]any national and state standards documents, including the NCTE/IRA Standards for English Language Arts, have been criticized for lack of specificity. But there is no consensus on what the optimum level of specificity is."¹¹ (See page 26.)

Currently, the state sponsors no professional development workshop or class that deals with reading assessment strategies for the developmental grades. The professional development training that the Tennessee Department of Education now provides addresses assessment only in relation to TCAP (TerraNova) and Gateway testing. Teachers must determine whether students in the developmental grades have any reading difficulties that require intervention. Although the current professional development offerings do not provide assessment training for the early grades, beginning with the three-year period between 2000 and 2002, Tennessee's teachers will be evaluated in part on their use of assessment strategies to evaluate students. In April 1997, the State Board of Education adopted a Framework for Evaluation and Professional Development to become effective statewide by 2000. The General Education Performance Standards adopted include a component that addresses teachers' methods for assessing and evaluating students. As part of the framework, teachers will be evaluated in part using criteria that include the use of multiple sources of assessment: "Solicits and uses information from a variety of sources about students' experiences, learning behaviors, needs, attitudes, and progress to make initial and ongoing instructional decisions... Uses a variety of assessment techniques to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented curriculum and the instructional strategies." (See pages 26-27.)

Many Tennessee teachers may lack the expertise needed to assess or assist children with reading difficulties. As in many states, future teachers educated in Tennessee's state universities are often required to take only one course in reading methodology. Researchers indicate that this amount of preservice training is inadequate. Some states choose to mandate specific coursework for teacher candidates, while others do not prescribe a list of required courses or number of semester hours to receive a particular license.¹² Each institution must provide teacher candidates the opportunity to acquire a set of competencies or "knowledge and skill" in each subject area. The list of Tennessee's language arts and reading competencies include general statements such as:

- understand how young children learn spoken and written language; and
- use the knowledge that reading, writing, speaking, and listening are interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

¹⁰ Interview with Claudette Williams, May 26, 1999.

¹¹ Karen K. Wixson and Elizabeth Dutro, *Standards for Primary-Grade Reading: An Analysis of State Frameworks*, Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement, CIERA Report #3-001, October 1, 1998, p. 2. See <http://www.ciera.org>.

¹² Louisa C. Moats, "Teaching Reading Is Rocket Science," American Federation of Teachers, June 1999, pp. 10-11.

The list also includes more specific statements such as:

- explore a wide range of literature from many periods and cultures and in many genres and relate that knowledge to class reading and class writing; and
- use a variety of approaches – phonics based and literature based – to teach various word recognition and word analysis techniques and continue to develop vocabulary.¹³

Researchers assert that quality classroom instruction is the single most important factor in teaching children to read. Putting new elementary teachers in the classroom without adequate preservice training does not further the state's goal that all students should be able to read by the end of the 3rd grade. (See page 27.)

Some LEAs may lack the knowledge base to select reading programs and appropriate assessments that are supported by the latest research. The Reading Excellence Act, a 1998 federal law that awards grants to states to improve reading, encourages the use of research-based methods to improve teachers' instructional practices. Authors of *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* synthesized hundreds of studies to arrive at their conclusions about teaching children to read. But because teacher candidates in Tennessee usually are required to take only one or two courses in reading instruction and because teachers' professional development opportunities are limited, teachers and other staff may lack information about recent research in the field. As a result, local education agencies may not be choosing reading programs appropriate to their students' needs. (See page 27.)

Tennessee's teachers may not have access to sufficient professional development opportunities to bring them "up to speed" regarding the latest reading methodology research. While the department requires that each Local Education Agency (LEA) provide at least five days of professional development each school year, a local committee determines professional needs within that district. The LEAs also maintain the resulting professional development plans. The department serves primarily as a facilitator by providing various institutes and training based on summaries of TCAP scores as well as the Framework for Professional Growth and the school improvement plans.¹⁴ Particularly since some preservice training may be lacking, teachers need a means to increase their knowledge base regarding reading instruction. Without good professional development, children with reading difficulties may not receive the assistance they need to become good readers. (See pages 27-28.)

Tennessee lacks an adequate number of English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. Approximately three-fourths of the state's counties currently have ESL students. Federal law requires schools districts to provide equal educational opportunity to students with limited English proficiency. Failure to do so may constitute a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Federal law states that schools cannot exclude students from effective participation in school because of the inability to speak and understand English or misassign students to special education classes because of their lack of English language skills. Schools must provide programs for ESL students that are

¹³ Teacher licensure standards, Tennessee State Board of Education.

¹⁴ Telephone interview with Susan Hudson, Executive Director of Professional Development, Tennessee Department of Education, October 26, 1999.

designed to teach them in a timely manner, allowing students to move into regular classes within a reasonable period of time.

However, according to department estimates, at present only 203 teachers throughout Tennessee are certified ESL instructors. (Department staff indicate that this number, which was collected from system reports early in 1999, is an estimate. Some teachers have been certified since the count. However, some certified ESL teachers have also moved out of Tennessee.) For the past few years, the department has granted several waivers for teachers who are teaching ESL students without certification. At present only six higher education programs are available to provide the instruction necessary for teachers to achieve certification for teaching second-language students, limiting the ability of teachers to be certified in this area. Once a waiver is granted, the teacher in that position has only two years to obtain certification—a difficult achievement with the limited number of available programs. As a result, Tennessee’s ESL students may have difficulty learning to speak and read English at a level that will allow them to progress in school. (See page 28.)

Tennessee schools employ few reading specialists. According to department staff, although many teachers and supervisors throughout the state may qualify as reading specialists, few of them use the skills on a daily basis. Because reading specialists are not funded through the BEP, few systems are inclined to utilize such specialists solely in that capacity. As a result, many schools are lacking expertise that could improve students’ reading abilities. (See page 28.)

Based on the report’s conclusions, the Office of Education Accountability makes the following legislative and administrative recommendations. Responses from the Department of Education, the State Board of Education, and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission are included.

Legislative Recommendations

- **The General Assembly may wish to consider making reading a state priority by passing and funding a comprehensive reading initiative.**

Department comment: As the Department moves to hold schools accountable for their reading performance measures established by the Education Improvement Act and the State Board of Education, additional funding will be needed to target specific areas of low performance at the school level.

State Board of Education comment: The State Board concurs with the need for a state-funded reading initiative to include an infrastructure within the Department of Education to develop, support, and monitor the initiative.

- **The General Assembly may wish to consider fully funding the State Board of Education’s Early Childhood Education Plan. Most researchers agree that language and literacy experiences provide a solid foundation for early reading instruction.**

Department comment: The fiscal year 2000-2001 budget request before the legislature includes a \$12 million improvement item for the Department of Education to serve an additional 2,400 at risk children in three and four year old preschool programs.

State Board of Education comment: The State Board concurs with the need to address the unmet needs of preschool youth and to develop a plan to assure that all students become good readers.

Administrative Recommendations

- **The department should inform teachers about current strategies and methods for reading instruction and assessment.**

Department response: The Department agrees that the Internet is a low cost option for sharing information with teachers about current strategies and methods for reading instruction and assessment. As part of the Governor's *Come Read with Me* initiative, the department plans a *Focus on Reading* website. The site will include reading accomplishments, links for teachers and parents, current research and strategies, and a reading contact for each Tennessee system.

- **The department should expand teachers' professional development opportunities to address assessment strategies other than standardized testing that are appropriate for students in grades K-3.**

Department response: A statewide committee of department staff and teachers is currently meeting to establish a set of reading accomplishments for grade K-2. This will aid in defining reading expectations for students in the developmental grades and matching various assessment options with the accomplishments. Regional reading conferences are planned for May to share this information with teachers.

- **The department should make certain that the needs of poor readers in middle and high schools are addressed.**

Department response: The Department agrees that reading is fundamental to success for students in middle and high schools. As the Department identifies and works with low performing schools, reading will be a priority as we focus on improvement by targeting the limited resources available.

- **The State Board of Education and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission should address specifically whether teacher candidates in Tennessee receive adequate training to teach all children to read.**

Tennessee Higher Education Commission response: THEC plans to discuss curriculum requirements for teacher education programs with the Deans of Education at a meeting scheduled in March 2000. Relevant and systematic professional development opportunities for teachers are essential but are limited due to the lack of funding. Joint committees involving staff members of the Higher Education Commission, the State Department of Education, and the State Board of Education have highlighted professional development as a major issue to be addressed. Support for this area would be welcomed.

State Board of Education response: The State Board concurs with the need for professional development activities and more specific pre-service courses in teacher preparation programs. The state also needs to train and employ a larger number of reading specialists. The results from the TVAAS model indicate the need for more of an emphasis on reading in the middle grades.

- **The State Board of Education and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission should consider developing an information center at a state university for research and information on reading for preschool through 12th grade teachers.**

Tennessee Higher Education Commission response: The Center for Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is an ideal place for a research center in reading as suggested by the Kentucky model. However, regional locations could also be valuable in disseminating information. THEC could request that each School of Education develop an informational center and maintain ongoing contact with the Center for Literacy Studies in order to assure that the research on best practices reaches the campuses in a timely manner.

- **The department may want to consider requiring LEAs with consistently low scores to develop reading plans that would detail such elements as reading programs, methods of assessment, and planned professional development activities for perhaps a three-year period.**

Department response: The department agrees and is currently reading school improvement plans mandated by the State Board. Schools exhibiting consistently low scores in any subject area over a three-year period are receiving close scrutiny. Plans are required to include student-focused goals and specific measures (such as professional development) to address problem areas identified through student assessment.

- **The department should encourage districts to develop programs and prevention services that increase parents' involvement in teaching their children to read.**

Department response: As part of the Governor's *Come Read with Me* initiative, the department has kicked off two reading programs to increase parent involvement. *Parents as Reading Partners* is focused at the parents of K-5 children. It is designed to get a commitment from the parent to read to or with the student for thirty minutes per day. *Smart from the Start* is a collaborative program between the departments of Education, Health, and Human Services to provide information to the parents of children age birth through five on the importance of developmentally appropriate activities to stimulate the brain. These activities include but are not limited to reading to the child.

(See pages 29-31. See also Appendix I for letters of response from the Department, the State Board, and THEC.)

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Introduction

Literacy is a nationwide concern. Research indicates that students who cannot read at grade level by the end of the 3rd grade have continuing difficulties in school, perform poorly in other subjects, and may never graduate. In addition, the alternatives to reading achievement—grade retention, special education assignment, and long-term remedial programs—are costly and ineffective for most students.

Because of such concerns, the Tennessee General Assembly passed Public Chapter 130 (1999) requiring the Office of Education Accountability, with assistance from the Tennessee Department of Education and the State Board of Education, to:

- Evaluate the reading proficiency of Tennessee’s elementary schoolchildren.
- Make recommendations to ensure that each child can read at an appropriate level before leaving the 3rd grade.
- Include any relevant test data from Tennessee.
- Include a listing of all pilot projects and grants administered by the Department of Education that promote literacy in Tennessee’s K-12 public schools.
- Include information on other states’ efforts to increase reading proficiency in grades K-6.

This report provides that information.

Methodology

The conclusions reached and recommendations made in this report are based on the following:

- Interviews with staff of the Tennessee Department of Education and the State Board of Education.
- An extensive literature review of research concerning literacy.
- A review of national test data for Tennessee and other states.
- A review of Tennessee’s state test data.
- Interviews with staff of adult literacy projects, such as Nashville READ.
- Interviews with educators at selected school systems.
- A review of Tennessee’s curriculum frameworks for reading, writing, and language arts.
- A review of other states’ approaches to reading.

Background

Why Literacy is Important

Reading is arguably the most important skill that children learn—it is the gateway to all other knowledge. Without the ability to read, children simply cannot progress in most other subjects. Furthermore, research indicates that a person who is not at least a moderately skilled reader by the end of the 3rd grade is unlikely to graduate from high school. A few decades ago, such a person could still expect to make an adequate living. But the demands of the workplace today have changed, requiring that all workers are able

“to read challenging material, to perform sophisticated calculations, and to solve problems independently.”¹

In addition, the definition of literacy itself has shifted. In the 1991 National Literacy Act, Congress defined literacy as:

...an individual’s ability to read, write, and speak in English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one’s goals, and develop one’s knowledge and potential.

In the past, according to the National Institute for Literacy, literacy meant the ability to read and use printed materials at a very basic level. In recent years, literacy has been defined “more broadly to include problem-solving and higher level reasoning skills. Literacy is a range of tools that help people help themselves—and their children. It is not an end in itself, but a means to a better quality of life.”²

In 1988, Congress directed the U.S. Department of Education to assess the literacy skills of adults, which resulted in the 1993 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS). Rather than classifying individuals as literate or illiterate, the NALS placed them on a literacy continuum divided into five levels, with level five indicating the highest skills and level one, the lowest. The survey concluded that between 21 and 23 percent of the adult American population (age 16 or older) were at level one, the lowest level. Further results showed that:

- Forty-three percent of adults at level one were living in poverty, compared to four percent of those at level five.
- The likelihood of being on welfare goes up as literacy levels go down. Three out of four food stamp recipients performed in the two lowest literacy levels.
- Adults at level one earned a median income of \$240 per week, compared to \$581 for those at level five.
- Adults at level one worked an average of 19 weeks per year, compared to 44 weeks per year for those at level five.
- Seven in 10 prisoners performed at the lowest two literacy levels.³

Convincing arguments for ensuring that all children learn to read are also found in the 1996 publication *What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future*:

- Low levels of literacy are powerful predictors of welfare dependency and incarceration—and their high costs.
- More than half the adult prison population has literacy levels below those required by the labor market.
- Nearly 40 percent of adjudicated juvenile delinquents have treatable learning disabilities that were overlooked and went untreated in school.
- By the year 2010 there will be only three workers for every retiree on Social Security, as compared with 16 in 1950. If all these future workers are not capable and productive, our social compact will be in grave danger.⁴

¹ Catherine E. Snow, M. Susan Burns, and Peg Griffin, Eds., *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children, National Research Council, Introduction, page 3. Available at books.nap.edu/html/prdyc.

² National Institute for Literacy, *The State of Literacy in America: Estimates at the Local, State, and National Levels*, Washington, D.C.: National Institute for Literacy, 1998, p. 3.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Data specific to Tennessee add compelling reasons to learn to read at an early age. The *Longitudinal Study of Adult Literacy Participants in Tennessee: Year One Report* provides the following description of a sample of students in Tennessee's adult basic education programs.⁵ As of 1993:

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- 78 percent had children who were or had been involved with Head Start

Related issues also make literacy a primary national concern. These include the increasing and unprecedented number of students in schools throughout the United States whose first language is not English. According to the Tennessee Department of Education's Office of Adult Basic Education, the number of K-12 students participating in limited English proficiency (LEP) programs increased more than 2½ times between 1993 and 1999 (from 3,430 to 9,191).⁶ In addition, the largest disability categories for students who receive special education services continue to include specific learning disabilities (often related to reading) and speech or language impairments.⁷ While reading problems can be found among every group and in every primary classroom, children with these characteristics are among those who are at greater risk of reading difficulties than others.

In response to these concerns, President Clinton in 1997 called for a national campaign to help all children learn to read by the end of the 3rd grade, including those with disabilities and limited English proficiency. Accordingly, Tennessee's State Board of Education and the Department of Education have iterated their commitment to ensuring that each child in Tennessee reaches the goal.

Literacy Research

Literacy has been the subject of hundreds of research studies spanning several decades. Yet education-related groups sometimes have varied ideas about how reading should be taught. The most well-known debate centers around whether "phonics" (which focuses on letter-sound relationships and the combination of different letter sounds) or "whole language" (based on the belief that children learn to read by absorbing and imitating

⁴ The National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future, Summary Report*, New York: National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, September 1996, p. 8.

⁵ Juliet Merrifield, Michael K. Smith, Kathryn Rea, Thomas Shriver, *Longitudinal Study of Adult Literacy Participants in Tennessee: Year One Report*, Knoxville: Center for Literacy Studies, 1993.

⁶ Tennessee Department of Education, *A Summary of Tennessee's Public School Systems Report Card: 21st Century Schools Program, School Year 1998-99*, "Participation in English Language Learner Programs," November 1999.

⁷ U.S. Department of Education, *Twentieth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, Washington, D.C.: Office of Special Education Programs, 1998, Executive Summary. See www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/OSEP98AnlRpt.

language through the use of literature and reading for meaning) should guide instruction. In recent years, some states have passed legislation mandating the teaching of phonics. Recent research efforts, however, indicate that “the two aspects of skilled reading should be going on at the same time, in the context of the same activities, and that the choice of instructional activities should be part of an overall, coherent approach to supporting literacy development.”⁸ In short, researchers conclude that both approaches are necessary and teachers should not be restricted to using only one or the other.

Federal legislation reflects a recent emphasis on using the latest and best literacy research available in making decisions about reading instruction and policy. In addition, several organizations and coalitions, such as the International Reading Association and the Learning Alliance, have adopted formal positions regarding reading, and all support the use of research-based teaching materials.

Two major committees have been formed in the last few years, both to sift through current literacy research and make practical recommendations for policy makers and teachers regarding reading instruction. In March 1998, at the request of the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, a special study committee formed by the National Research Council (NRC) released its report *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, which establishes recommendations on reading instruction for students in kindergarten and the primary grades. The 17-member committee—made up of professional educators, psychologists, linguists, medical doctors, reading specialists, special educators, and others—interpreted a vast and diverse research base into a set of well-documented guidelines for helping all children become successful readers.

In 1997, at the request of Congress, the director of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), in consultation with the U.S. Department of Education, established a National Reading Panel, to determine from existing research the most effective approaches for teaching children how to read. The 14-member panel includes reading researchers, leaders in elementary and higher education, teachers, parents, and child development experts. Originally, the panel was to release its results by December 1998, but after conducting several regional public meetings, members requested and received approval to extend the deadline to December 1999.⁹

Both groups identified similar criteria in selecting studies that they believed were supported by valid research. The National Reading Panel is primarily analyzing the results of experimental or quasi-experimental studies, and is using descriptive or correlational research only under certain conditions. The committee formed by the National Research Council also placed an emphasis on studies using experimental designs, but noted the value of using non-experimental studies as complementary evidence.

In addition, findings from literacy research guided the efforts of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the National Council on Education and the Economy (NCEE) in developing national content and performance standards in English language arts. NCTE and the International Reading Association developed the content standards,

⁸ Snow, et al., Preface, Addition to Third Printing.

⁹ As of the printing of this report, the panel’s results have not been released.

which specify what students should know and be able to do, in 1995. The NCEE released performance standards in reading and writing, which include performance descriptions, work samples, and commentaries on the work samples, in September 1999. According to NCEE, the performance standards were derived from NCTE's work and were informed by and are closely aligned with the National Research Council's work. Five of the panelists who designed the performance standards also contributed to the NRC document.

The NRC's *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* is widely regarded among many educators and others. This report relies heavily on its findings, and below attempts to condense some of its many conclusions.¹⁰ In addition, references to other sources, including the International Reading Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children, are included.

Important Findings From Literacy Research

How do children learn to read?

Children begin to develop the skills necessary for learning to read long before they enter the school doors to receive a formal education. Some activities that look like “play” actually facilitate the development of awareness about language and books. “When an infant shows excitement over pictures in a storybook, when a two-year-old scribbles with a crayon, when a four-year-old points out letters in a street sign—all of these actions signal a child’s growing literacy development.”¹¹

Because children begin to develop these skills from infancy, experts emphasize the importance of ensuring that all preschool and kindergarten children are exposed to rich language and literacy environments. Children most at risk for reading problems often lack such experiences. According to one long-term research study, students who had received a well-developed kindergarten curriculum focused on “word study and decoding skills, along with sets of stories so that children would be able to practice these skills in meaningful contexts,” did better than other students on reading achievement, attitude toward schools, grades, and attendance.¹²

Children learn about reading by watching other people read and write, and by making their own attempts to read and write. According to the authors of *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, adequate initial reading instruction requires that children:

- use reading to obtain meaning from print
- have frequent and intensive opportunities to read
- be exposed to frequent, regular spelling-sound relationships
- learn about the nature of the alphabetic writing system, and
- understand the structure of spoken words¹³

¹⁰ The report was requested from the National Academy of Sciences by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The resulting committee was charged with conducting a study of the effectiveness of interventions for young children who are at risk of having problems learning to read.

¹¹ M. Susan Burns, Peg Griffin, and Catherine E. Snow, Editors, *Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children’s Reading Success*, Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1999, p. 15. See www.nap.edu.

¹² *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, adopted 1998. Summary available at www.reading.org/advocacy/policies.

¹³ Snow, et al., Executive Summary, p. 2.

Learning to read beyond the initial level requires that the student has:

- a working understanding of how sounds are represented alphabetically,
- sufficient practice in reading to achieve fluency with different kinds of texts,
- sufficient background knowledge and vocabulary to render written texts meaningful and interesting,
- control over procedures for monitoring comprehension and repairing misunderstandings, and
- continued interest and motivation to read for a variety of purposes.¹⁴

The International Reading Association (IRA) lists five specific developmental phases that children experience in learning to read, but also points out that children in different grades can be at various stages:¹⁵

- awareness and exploration—preschool
- experimental reading and writing—kindergarten
- early reading and writing—1st grade
- transitional reading and writing—2nd grade
- conventional reading and writing—3rd grade

Based on extensive research, the Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children devised lists of accomplishments that successful learners may achieve in kindergarten through 3rd grade.¹⁶ Readers should note that in an addition to the preface of the third printing, the committee cautioned that the lists were “neither exhaustive nor incontestable” and that “the timing of these accomplishments will to some extent depend on maturational and experiential differences between children.”¹⁷ For complete lists of these, see Appendix H.

Who is at risk of having difficulty learning to read?

Although reading problems are not limited to any particular group of students, research indicates that certain groups of children are more at risk for reading difficulties than others. These are:

- Children who attend chronically low-achieving schools;
- Children with low English proficiency;
- Children who speak a dialect of English that differs greatly from the one used in school; and
- Children living in communities in poverty.

In addition, individual children, whether or not they fall into the categories listed above, may be more at risk for reading difficulties than other children for any of these reasons:

- They are children of parents with reading difficulties;
- They have acquired less knowledge and skill pertaining to literacy during the preschool years, either through lack of appropriate home literacy experiences and/or as a result of some inherent cognitive limitations;

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

¹⁵ *Learning to Read and Write*. Summary available at www.reading.org/advocacy/policies.

¹⁶ However, the Committee does not indicate that all children will exhibit these accomplishments at precisely the grade level noted.

¹⁷ Snow, et al., Preface, Addition to the Third Printing.

- They lack age-appropriate skills in literacy-related cognitive-linguistic processing, especially phonological awareness, confrontational naming, sentence/story recall, and general language ability;
- They have been diagnosed as having specific early language impairment;
- They have a hearing impairment; and
- They have a primary medical diagnosis with which reading problems tend to occur as a secondary symptom.¹⁸

According to the most recent U.S. data available, in 1996-97, 2,676,299 school-age children ages 6-21 with specific learning disabilities received special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B.¹⁹ It is a generally accepted estimate that reading disabilities account for about 80 percent of all learning disabilities. Some researchers are concerned that this number may be lower than the actual number of students with reading difficulties. The number of Tennessee students categorized as learning disabled in 1997-98 was 70,824.²⁰

Researchers have emphasized reading success for children in the early grades because it is easier to prevent reading difficulties than to use remedial strategies. However, some advocates, notably the International Reading Association and the Learning First Alliance, warn against ignoring the needs of students with reading problems at the upper elementary, middle, and high school levels.²¹

How can we ensure that all children learn to read?

Researchers emphasize that most adults' and adolescents' reading problems could have been prevented in their early childhood years. Although most children learn to read with good instruction, others require more assistance. Many agree that certain elements help ensure that all children learn to read:

- **Children need excellent instruction.** Most teacher colleges require undergraduates majoring in elementary education to take only one or two courses in reading instruction. Those preparing to teach middle and high schools often are not required to take any courses in reading instruction. Researchers view this as inadequate preparation, particularly for teaching children with reading difficulties. Teachers must be appropriately trained in reading instruction for all children. Research indicates that quality classroom instruction is the *most important factor* in ensuring that children learn to read.
- **Children at risk of potential reading difficulties need effective prevention programs as early as possible.** Intervention should occur well before the 3rd grade if needed. Appropriate assessment strategies should be used to determine students' progress and needs. Teachers should not rely only on standardized testing, particularly for children in the early grades, but should employ multiple

¹⁸ Snow, et al., Chapter 4: Predictors of Success and Failure in Reading.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of Education, *20th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1998*, Executive Summary.

²⁰ Tennessee Department of Education, *1997-98 Annual Statistical Report*.

²¹ The Learning First Alliance is composed of the following organizations: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, American Association of School Administrators, American Federation of Teachers, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Council of Chief State School Officers, Education Commission of the States, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of State Boards of Education, National Education Association, National PTA, and National School Boards Association.

- indicators, such as observation of children’s oral language, evaluation of children’s work, and other methods.
- **Teachers need ample and ongoing professional development opportunities in reading instruction.** Because undergraduates majoring in elementary education frequently are not adequately trained in reading instruction methodology, many new teachers are not prepared to teach reading to students with reading difficulties. Learning to teach requires more than obtaining a degree—teachers should be afforded continuing and substantive opportunities to learn new teaching strategies and to learn the latest findings in reading research.
 - **Schools should employ qualified reading specialists.** “Every school should have access to specialists, including speech and language clinicians, English as a second language teachers, resource room teachers, and reading specialists who have specialized training related to addressing reading difficulties and who can give guidance to classroom teachers.”²²
 - **English as a Second Language (ESL) students who are already speaking their native language should, if possible, be taught to read in that language before learning to speak and read in English. If that is not possible, ESL students should first learn to speak English before learning to read in English.** To the extent possible, non-English-speaking children should have opportunities to develop literacy skills in their home language as well as in English. The authors of *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* recommend that language-minority children with no proficiency in English but who are speaking their native language should, if possible, be taught to read in their native language while learning to speak English. If instructional guides are not available to allow teachers to teach in these children’s native languages, instructional priority should be given to teaching them first to speak English before teaching them to read.
 - **Schools should seek to increase parental involvement.** Researchers link children’s literacy development with parents’ attitudes toward reading. Effective ways of increasing parental involvement with regard to reading include family literacy programs as well as programs that teach parents to teach their children.
 - **Early childhood educators should be trained to teach preschoolers skills that will prepare them for learning to read.** Although most researchers agree that language and literacy experiences provide a solid foundation for early reading instruction, many preschool programs do not provide them. Preschool teachers should also know how to identify problems that may precede reading difficulties in young children.
 - **Although focusing on children in the early grades to prevent reading problems is effective, educators also need to respond to middle and high school students with reading difficulties.** Middle and high school teachers should receive training in the best strategies to help their students.

The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) indicates that schools with successful reading programs share these common elements: the involvement of all staff members, clearly-stated goals for reading achievement, high expectations that are shared with all participants, instructional means selected with the goals in mind, a range of materials and technology, a school-wide focus on reading and writing, parental

²² Snow, et al., Chapter 10: Recommendations for Practice and Research.

involvement in children's reading and homework, and community partnerships, including volunteer tutoring programs.²³

Because of the high correlation between poverty and illiteracy, researchers have also examined the commonalities among schools with high poverty rates that are high-performing, particularly in reading and math. Education Trust conducted a survey in the fall of 1998 among 1,200 schools that were states' top scoring and/or most improving schools with poverty levels greater than 50 percent. The strategies used by these schools included the use of standards to design the curriculum, assess student work, and evaluate teachers. The schools increased instructional time in reading and spent more on teachers' professional development. They sought parental involvement, regularly monitored student progress, and provided extra help for students having difficulties.²⁴

Tennessee's Approach to Reading for Elementary Students

In the following sections, the report examines Tennessee's general approach to reading at the elementary level, particularly in light of the most recent research about quality literacy instruction. The report briefly describes federal and state grants related to literacy currently in place in Tennessee. In addition, it reviews Tennessee's standards and curriculum frameworks, use of reading programs, student assessment, as well as teacher education and professional development, all as they relate to literacy.

Grants and Programs Targeting Literacy in Tennessee

The State of Tennessee has not set aside funds for the sole purpose of promoting literacy, although it administers several federal programs that target literacy either directly or indirectly. In addition, the state provides matching funds for some federal programs that directly and/or indirectly contribute to the development of literacy. Because of limited funding, the state has not been in a position to test the effectiveness or conduct a pilot study of a particular literacy program. The state contributes to literacy largely through indirect measures, such as the Department of Education's extended contract program, which provides additional one-on-one instruction to students in need.²⁵

In 1999 the Tennessee Department of Education applied for a two-year \$21 million Reading Excellence Program grant through the U.S. Department of Education, but was not successful.²⁶ Funds granted through the Reading Excellence Act target the nation's neediest districts and schools, and primarily support professional development, transition programs for kindergartners, family literacy, and tutoring.²⁷ Staff of the Tennessee Department of Education indicate that they will reapply for a Reading Excellence grant in 2000.

²³ Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA), *Improving the Reading Achievement of America's Children: 10 Research-Based Principles*. See www.ciera.org/ciera/information/principles/index.html.

²⁴ U.S. Department of Education, *Start Early, Finish Strong: How to Help Every Child Become a Reader*, July 1, 1999. See <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/startearly>. Also, Education Trust in cooperation with the Council of Chief State School Officers and the U.S. Department of Education, *Dispelling the Myth: High Poverty Schools Exceeding Expectations*, 1999. See <http://www.edtrust.org>.

²⁵ TCA 49-5-5209 (b)(1).

²⁶ Interview with Claudette Williams, Director of Elementary and Middle Grades & K-12 Curriculum Instructor, Tennessee Department of Education, May 26, 1999.

²⁷ U.S. Department of Education. See <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/REA/>.

The U.S. Department of Education identified both strengths and weaknesses in Tennessee's application, which staff will be able to use in the reapplication process. Strengths included identification of children clearly in need, strong foundation and structure, reasonable costs, and solid technology link. Weaknesses included limited specificity regarding reading research and evaluation of student outcomes, insufficient explanation of what will be done to improve literacy, insufficient in-school support, a weak evaluation plan, and insufficient identification of professional development needs.²⁸

The following represents federal and state initiatives that have contributed to the development of literacy in Tennessee through direct or indirect measures.

Federal Initiatives

America Reads

Tenets: In 1996 the Clinton Administration sparked this initiative with the goal to ensure that children can read by the 3rd grade through the use of tutors and mentors.²⁹ The Tennessee Come Volunteer With Me program currently provides 35 volunteers to the America Reads programs. 'Tennessee Come Volunteer With Me' is the name of the AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) program in Tennessee.³⁰

This coalition focuses on building capacity in local communities to continue volunteer efforts after Vista volunteers leave. The program matches volunteers from the community with preschool to 3rd grade students and their parents to improve their ability to read.

Funding: The federal funding for AmeriCorps*VISTA grants is disbursed through the Corporation for National Service (CNS). The Tennessee Department of Education received these funds because the AmeriCorps*VISTA (Tennessee Come Volunteer With Me) program works in conjunction with the department's Office of Family Literacy.³¹ CNS funded the program in Tennessee at \$539,689 for the year 1999-2000. The non-federal share of the budget for this project totaled \$293,289.³²

Provided resources: This grant pays the living expenses of volunteers who go into communities to build capacity and create a network of volunteers.

Target population: These volunteer efforts target reluctant preschool through 3rd grade students and their undereducated parents, where applicable.³³

Even Start

Tenets: Even Start attempts to break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving the educational opportunities of the nation's low-income families. The program integrates early childhood education, adult literacy, and parenting education into a unified family literacy program.³⁴ Local education agencies in

²⁸ Information provided by the Tennessee Department of Education, Summary of U.S. Department of Education responses to the Reading Excellence Act of 1998-99 State Proposal.

²⁹ Corporation for National Service, America Reads. See <http://www.cns.gov/areads/about/intro.html>.

³⁰ Tennessee Department of Education, Family Literacy Office, AmeriCorps*VISTA Program and Corporation for National and Community Service, VISTA Fact Sheet, November 17, 1999.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Corporation for National Service, Notice of Grant Award, p. 1.

³³ Telephone Interview with Susan Doughty, Family Literacy Programs, and Jim Herman, Education Consultant for Family Literacy Programs, September 30, 1999.

³⁴ Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, Title I Part B-Even Start Family Literacy Programs, with Reading Excellence Act 1999 Amendments.

conjunction with nonprofit community-based organizations, private agencies other than local education agencies, institutions of higher education, or public or private nonprofit organizations qualify as eligible applicants. These entities implement Even Start by building upon existing community resources.

Funding: The U.S. Department of Education awarded the State of Tennessee approximately \$2 million³⁵ (\$75,000-\$110,000 at each project site) for FY1999-2000.³⁶ Federal funds are allocated to states, based on their relative shares of Title I, Part A funds.³⁷ The federal share of a subgrant decreases annually in 10 percent increments from 90 percent of the total cost of the first year to 50 percent in the fifth year. The local recipient funds the remaining percentage each year in cash or in kind through any source including other federal funds.

Provided resources: This program provides social services such as transportation and child care to allow for participation, instructional services, and instructional development for all staff.

Target population: Parents who qualify for basic education under the federal Adult Education Act and their children from birth through age seven qualify for this initiative. Other family members of eligible participants may participate in activities and services if they live with the participant family and/or are directly involved in the care of the children.³⁸

Head Start

Tenets: This program aims to impact low-income children in the developmental phases. It also works with families as a whole, to provide developmental skills that transition children into schools. The Head Start program attempts to deliver comprehensive services designed to foster healthy development in low-income children. Head Start grantee and delegate agencies provide a range of individualized services in the areas of education and early childhood development; medical, dental, and mental health; nutrition; and parent involvement.

Funding: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services administers HeadStart. Program legislation states that the federal grant to operate a local Head Start program shall not exceed 80 percent of the approved cost of the program, with the local community contributing 20 percent. The non-federal share may be in cash or contributed services.³⁹ In 1997 the Head Start Bureau allocated approximately \$69 million to agencies in the State of Tennessee.⁴⁰

Provided resources: This program provides a number of resources that contribute to the development of the whole child. Children have access to health care, including dental services, mental health services, and nutritional services, social services, and educational tools.⁴¹

Target population: Children between the ages of three and five from families that meet the federal poverty guidelines are eligible for Head Start services. Ten percent of the enrollment opportunities in each program may be filled by children

³⁵Information provided by the Tennessee Department of Education. U.S. Department of Education, Grant Award Notification, July 29, 1999.

³⁶ Tennessee Department of Education, Even Start Family Literacy Program Summary, 1999-2000, p. 3.

³⁷ See <http://web99.ed.gov>

³⁸ Even Start Summary.

³⁹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Head Start: A Child Development Program."

⁴⁰ Head Start Bureau, Head Start Fact Sheet, Washington, D.C., February 1998.

⁴¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "Head Start: A Child Development Program."

that exceed the low-income guidelines. There is also a requirement that ten percent of enrollments should be offered to children with disabilities. The guidelines closely resemble those of the federal free-lunch program.⁴²

Title I

Tenets: Congress created Title I in 1965 to ameliorate the effects of poverty on students' academic achievement. The federal government has given schools flexibility in determining how to spend Title I funds.⁴³

Funding: Tennessee received \$125 million for FY1998-99 under Title I.⁴⁴

Provided resources: School systems can use funds to pay for computer programs, books, equipment, and teachers.

Target population: Funds are targeted at schools with the highest percentage of children from low-income families. Schools enrolling at least 50 percent of students from poor families are eligible to use Title I funds for school-wide programs that serve all children in the school.⁴⁵

Workforce Investment Act of 1998

Tenets: This Act synthesizes programs such as the National Literacy Act, Adult Education Act, and Job Training Partnership Act into three block grants to the states. These block grants provide funds for adult education and family literacy, disadvantaged youth, and adult employment and training. The list of eligible agencies includes local education agencies and other public or private nonprofit agencies, such as libraries, that provide literacy services.

Funding: The Adult Education State Grant provides most of the funding for this program. The State of Tennessee received \$8,224,866 through this grant program in 1997-98.⁴⁶

Provided resources: In Tennessee, 36 family resource centers provide family literacy programs. More specifically, the funds purchase adult education and literacy services, family literacy services, and English literary programs.⁴⁷

Target population: This program targets adults who are illiterate, adults who are parents, and adults who have not completed a secondary education.

State Initiative

Tennessee Come Read with Me

Tenets: This is a collaborative effort among the Governor's Office, the Department of Education,⁴⁸ the private sector, and other service-oriented state

⁴² Telephone interview with Jan Bushing, Director of School Based Support Service, Tennessee Department of Education, November 5, 1999.

⁴³ Tennessee Department of Education, Division of Curriculum and Instruction. Fact Sheet: Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), Title I, Migrant and Neglected/Delinquent.

⁴⁴ Telephone interview with Barbara Adkisson, Director of Federal Programs, Department of Education, November 8, 1999.

⁴⁵ U.S. Department of Education, Guide to Education Programs and Resources. See <http://web99.ed.gov>.

⁴⁶ National Institute for Literacy, Policy Update, "Workforce Investment Act Offers Opportunities for Adult and Family Literacy." See www.nifl.gov/policy/98-9-23.htm.

⁴⁷ Tennessee Department of Education, Office of Adult and Community Education, *Proposed Tennessee State Plan, Adult Education and Family Literacy*, April 1, 1999. See <http://cls.coe.utk.edu/stateplan>.

⁴⁸ AmeriCorps VISTA Program Fact Sheet. Tennessee Department of Education, Family Literacy Office.

agencies provide reading resources. This program works to ensure that every child develops reading skills by the 3rd grade.⁴⁹

Funding: \$0

Provided resources: These resources can include but are not limited to books, spaces in drop-in programs, and volunteers. Resources are provided largely through donations from private sector businesses that “adopt” classrooms.

Target population: The program targets students in Tennessee from kindergarten through the 3rd grade.

Standards and Curriculum Frameworks

In recent years, much emphasis has been placed on the importance of clearly defined state standards for all subjects, including language arts. “The characteristics of a state’s content standards in this area are likely to influence the translation of these standards into state and local curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. Ultimately, they will affect what students in a particular state learn.”⁵⁰

A group of professional organizations—including the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Education Goals Panel, the American Federation of Teachers, the Council for Basic Education, the National Alliance of Business, and the Council of Great City Schools—established a set of six criteria for judging standards documents:⁵¹

- Standards should expect and support all students achieving to high levels.
- Content standards should reflect the strengths of the relevant academic disciplines.
- Standards should be specific enough to clearly convey the important academic knowledge and skills that all students should learn, but broad enough to allow for multiple approaches to curriculum, instruction, course design, and assessment.
- A plan should be in place to implement the content standards.
- The standards should be world class.
- The standards must be convincing and understandable to the lay public.

Tennessee’s standards for language arts are embedded within its curriculum frameworks, adopted by the State Board of Education in 1996. Language arts encompasses reading, writing, viewing and representing, and speaking and listening. Within each of these areas, the frameworks contain a content standard, goal statement, and learning expectations for grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. For example, the reading framework for grades K-2 includes the following:

⁴⁹ Telephone interview with Jan Bushing, Director of School Based Support Service, Tennessee Department of Education, September 30, 1999.

⁵⁰ Karen K. Wixson and Elizabeth Dutro, *Standards for Primary-Grade Reading: An Analysis of State Frameworks*, Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement, CIERA Report #3-001, October 1, 1998, p. 2. See <http://www.ciera.org>.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Content standard: The student will develop the reading skills necessary for word recognition, comprehension, interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and appreciation of the written text.

Goal statement: Reading is a lifelong process which builds on language development. Students must apply a wide range of strategies to enhance the reading process. They improve their comprehension of printed information and gain knowledge of themselves as world citizens through varied experiences with literature. As students respond to texts individually and share in literary communities, they become critical readers and experience increased comprehension and personal satisfaction.

Learning expectations:

- Develop language through gross motor, sensory motor, and perceptual skills.
- Develop an interest in literature which includes multicultural, gender, and ethnic diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects.
- Demonstrate knowledge of concepts of print, including print directionality.
- Use a variety of reading strategies: picture and context clues, substitutions, phonetic rules and exceptions, word recognition, and rhyming words.
- Develop a reading vocabulary utilizing sight words, phonetic and structural analysis, and context.
- Use comprehension strategies to enhance understanding, to relate ideas, to organize information, to make predictions, and to distinguish fact from fantasy during the reading process.
- Read orally to develop fluency, expression, accuracy, and confidence.
- Read independently for pleasure and information.
- Learn to locate and recognize sources of information including technological tools.

The content standards and goal statements are the same for each grade level, but learning expectations, which are more specific, differ. Using the frameworks, local education agencies define their own objectives and determine more specifically how language arts will be taught in their schools. This flexibility allows, for example, Metro-Davidson County Schools to adopt and use the Core Knowledge program and allows Memphis City Schools to use a variety of school reform approaches, including Roots and Wings, Modern Red Schoolhouse, and Widening Horizons Through Literacy.⁵²

Reading Programs

In Tennessee, local education agencies are responsible for selecting and designing their own reading programs, with guidance from the curriculum frameworks and with some help from the Textbook Commission. Local boards of education can choose from a list of materials, including books and software, adopted by the state. They receive state funds for the purchases. In addition, local systems may purchase other materials using state funds with permission or they may use local funds.

Experts generally agree that no one method or program for teaching reading can be successful for all students, and that teachers require knowledge and the flexibility to determine appropriate methods for individual students. Most importantly, methods and materials that teachers select or design in teaching children to read should be supported by research.⁵³ The term “research-based” has become a sometimes confusing catchphrase in describing the basis on which reading programs should be selected. For example, many commercially produced programs make impressive claims about their effectiveness in

⁵² Memphis City Schools website. See www.memphis-schools.k12.tn.us.

⁵³ International Reading Association, *Using Multiple Methods of Beginning Reading Instruction: A Position Statement of the International Reading Association*, January 1999. See <http://www.reading.org>.

improving students' reading achievement. But some have been criticized for an apparent lack of independent research to support those claims.⁵⁴

According to the Learning First Alliance, which is composed of 12 national education associations:

...without research, professionals cannot do their jobs well. Still, even relying on the best research available to make difficult decisions, it is important to keep two caveats in mind. First, the applications of research findings must be tempered by wisdom, experience, and sensitivity to the needs of a particular child or group of children. Second, research develops over time. What seems well established today may be challenged or modified by new findings tomorrow. Keeping these limitations in mind, however, it is the responsibility of educators and policy makers to take advantage of the best available research, and to use it as the basis for decisions about reading instruction and policy.⁵⁵

The Texas Center for Educational Research (TCER), in its publication *Reading Programs for Students in the Lower Elementary Grades: What Does the Research Say?*, lists items that educators should note when selecting reading programs and materials:⁵⁶

- A program that may be appropriate for one classroom or school may be inadequate for another. This understanding can be developed through teacher knowledge of students' skills and abilities and by analyzing test and other performance data for students.
- Teachers and students can and have created good reading materials. Not everything used to teach reading needs to be a commercially-prepared product.
- No one reading program will be sufficient for all reading instruction needs. Any published or self-created program, no matter how comprehensive, should be supported by other reading materials for children. Exposure to different kinds of reading materials helps children understand the use of print and expands their own understanding of reading and written language.
- The findings from research and evaluation should guide, not dictate, program selection.

TCER researchers, after summarizing existing research about various reading programs, identified essential elements related to classroom instruction and features of classrooms and schools that support instruction. Well-designed research-based programs should provide children with opportunities to:⁵⁷

- Expand their use and appreciation of both oral and printed language
- Hear good stories and books read aloud daily
- Understand and manipulate the building blocks of both spoken and written language

⁵⁴ Herbert J. Walberg and Rebecca C. Greenberg, "The Diogenes Factor," *Education Week*, April 8, 1998. See <http://www.edweek.org>.

⁵⁵ Learning First Alliance, "Every Child Reading: An Action Plan of the Learning First Alliance," June 1998. See footnote 19 on page 7 for a list of the organizations that comprise the Learning First Alliance.

⁵⁶ Kerri L. Briggs, Ph.D., and Catherine Clark, Ph.D., *Reading Programs for Students in the Lower Elementary Grades: What Does the Research Say?*, Texas Center for Educational Research, August 1997. See <http://www.tasb.org/tcer/reading.html>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

- Learn the relationship between the sounds of spoken language and the letters of written language
- Learn decoding strategies
- Write and relate their writing to spelling and reading
- Practice accurate and fluent reading in decodable stories
- Develop new vocabulary through wide reading and direct vocabulary instruction
- Read and comprehend a wide assortment of books and other texts
- Learn and apply comprehension strategies as they reflect upon and think critically about what they read

(See Appendix B for brief summaries of several commercially-developed reading programs.)

Assessment

Like most states, Tennessee administers a standardized achievement test to 3rd graders in reading and language arts. The state has not designated a standard approach to assessing students in kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade. As part of the Tennessee Comprehensive Achievement Program (TCAP), school systems administer the TerraNova achievement test to students in grades 3-8.⁵⁸ In 1997, the General Assembly passed a law prohibiting the use of state-mandated tests earlier than grade 3. Prior to 1997, 2nd grade students were assessed. Since that time, 3rd grade has been used as the baseline to determine, among other things, whether students are reading at grade level.

Simultaneously, the State Board and the Department of Education were charged with recommending to the joint oversight committee on education a diagnostic method for evaluating reading and other basic skills in the 1st and 2nd grades by January 1, 1998.⁵⁹ The Board's 1999 Master Plan lists as a strategy under the Accountability and Assessment section: "Implement a plan for diagnostic assessment of students in grades kindergarten through two."

Ultimately, the department proposed that, instead of designating one diagnostic method, each school system should develop "a comprehensive diagnostic method for the early grades that includes a variety of techniques and instruments that are age-appropriate and that support the instructional program used in that system." The department's presentation to the Select Oversight Committee on Education indicated that "[t]here is not one test that will do the things that a diagnostic approach requires. School systems will be given flexibility to develop a diagnostic method in accordance with state guidelines."⁶⁰ The committee approved the department's recommendation and agreed that it would annually collect from LEAs the number and percent of 2nd graders reading at or above grade level by the end of the school year.

⁵⁸ The test provides norm-referenced data for national comparisons as well as criterion-referenced information for use in determining whether students have mastered specific instructional objectives. The test reports information in five levels of performance: Step 1, Progressing, Nearing Proficiency, Proficient, and Advanced.

⁵⁹ T.C.A. 49-6-6002; Public Acts 1997, Chapter 434, section 7.

⁶⁰ Tennessee Department of Education, Handout to the Select Oversight Committee on Education, "Diagnostic Method for Primary Grades," presented November 13, 1997.

The information, which appears for the first time in the 1999 Report Card, indicates that the majority of systems assess 2nd graders using the 2nd grade TerraNova test. This causes some concern for departmental staff, who cite current research indicating the need for a variety of methods to assess students' progress and instructional needs in these critical, developmental stages. Information derived from multiple sources is likely to provide more useful information about students' progress than a single diagnostic method for all systems. Claudette Williams, the department's Elementary and Middle Schools Coordinator, recommends combinations of individual assessment, teacher observation, program evaluation, and computerized data. (See Appendix C for the 1998-99 information collected by the department.)

Several high achieving states allow schools flexibility in their choice of assessment tools for the developmental grades. For example, North Carolina and Texas require K-2 students to be assessed. North Carolina allows schools to use an assessment developed by its Department of Public Instruction, a modified form, or a unique assessment adopted by local school boards. The Texas Education Association has a list of approved assessments from which schools may select to assess children's reading levels and to diagnose problems in K-2. (See Appendix A for more assessment information in selected states.)

Early childhood educators warn against certain kinds of testing for students in the developmental grades.⁶¹ The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) asserts that "[t]he younger the child, the more difficult it is to obtain valid and reliable indices of his or her development and learning using one-time test administrations. Standardized testing has a legitimate function, but on its own tends to lead to standardized teaching—one approach fits all—the opposite of the kind of individualized diagnosis and teaching that is needed to help young children continue to progress in reading and writing."⁶²

Although early childhood educators warn against testing in the developmental grades, teachers must have a means to determine students' progress and problems. Because research indicates that young children's reading difficulties should be determined as soon as possible to allow appropriate intervention, and since the public policy consensus is that children should read before the end of the 3rd grade, some type of assessment is obviously necessary. The NAEYC urges educators to use multiple indicators of children's progress, rather than relying solely on "a set of narrowly-defined skills on standardized tests."⁶³ Other ways of assessing students include observing their use of oral language and evaluating their performance of reading and writing tasks in class. These forms of assessment allow teachers to observe children over a period of time rather than relying on a test taken one day. The NAEYC lists sources of information that may be used in various combinations to assess children:

- Systematic observations, by teachers and other professionals, that are objective, carefully recorded, reliable (produce similar results over time and among different

⁶¹ Deborah Viadero and Steven Drummon, "Annual Conference Spotlights Trends, Key Issues in Research," *Education Week*, April 29, 1998. See <http://www.edweek.org>.

⁶² National Association for the Education of Young Children, *Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children, Part 1*, A joint position paper of the International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Adopted May 1998. See <http://www.naeyc.org>.

⁶³ Ibid.

observers), and valid (produce accurate measures of carefully defined, mutually exclusive categories of observable behavior).

- Samples of children’s work, such as drawings, paintings, dictated stories, writing samples, projects, and other activities (not limited to worksheets).
- Observations and anecdotes related by parents and other family members; and test scores, if and only if appropriate, reliable, valid tests have been used.⁶⁴

According to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), several southeastern states have developed assessments for kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade students.

- **Alabama** contracted with a publisher to develop assessments for K-2 students, which are administered in the fall of every school year. The assessments are used for instructional purposes and to collect statewide information on children’s readiness for school. Each school also uses a parallel “classroom form” for ongoing assessment throughout the year.
- **Arkansas** requires that all schools conduct ongoing, informal assessments in kindergarten through 4th grade. The state Department of Education has contracted with an outside agency to develop performance assessments aligned with the state’s curriculum.
- **Georgia** has developed the Basic Literacy Test (BLT) for ongoing assessment of early grades. To be eligible for state funding under Georgia’s Reading First Program, schools must agree to provide at least three hours of reading instruction per day. The BLT assessment begins in kindergarten and is administered at the beginning of 1st grade to determine the appropriate method of instruction for each child. The assessment is used on an ongoing basis throughout the developmental grades until the score totals 100, the approximate equivalent of a 5th grade reading level.
- **Louisiana** uses the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), a commercially produced program, for assessing grades 1, 2, and 3. Every Louisiana school is required to administer the DRA at the end of the 1st grade and at the beginning of the 2nd and 3rd grades. The assessment is not part of the state’s accountability plan, but is intended primarily for instructional purposes.
- **North Carolina** has developed the “Grades 1 and 2 Assessment in English Language Arts and Mathematics,” to be used for instructional purposes. The state Board of Education also adopted a comprehensive reading plan and revised the North Carolina Standard Course of Study for English Language Arts, providing grade-level benchmarks as a basis for assessing individual children’s needs. The benchmarks were linked directly to the curriculum changes and the reading portion of the 1st and 2nd grade assessment was revised accordingly. To ensure that teachers have the ability to assess children accurately and design programs based on the assessments, state lawmakers provided over \$5 million for professional development. In addition, undergraduate teacher education programs began to modify their curricula to include those skills.
- The **Texas** legislature in 1997 directed the commissioner of education to adopt a list of reading assessments from which schools could select to assess reading levels and diagnose reading problems in kindergarten, 1st grade, and 2nd grade. The resulting list was published in May 1998 and lists 10 approved assessments, one of which was

⁶⁴ National Association for the Education of Young Children, *Standardized Testing of Young Children 3 Through 8 Years of Age*, A position statement of the NAEYC, Adopted November 1987. See <http://www.naeyc.org>.

specifically developed by the Texas Education Agency. The list will be updated regularly.

Teacher Education and Professional Development

Teacher preparation is fundamental to preventing reading difficulties in young children. Teachers must possess a deep understanding of the nuances of language and literacy. They must also “acquire an understanding of the nature of language that is firmly based in linguistic research about phonological, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, rhetorical structures, as well as the social and linguistic diversity of these.” Research indicates that college and university faculty spend very little time demonstrating to future teachers how to teach reading in the typical preservice course of study.⁶⁵

According to recent studies, researchers believe that 95 percent of all children can learn to read. This estimate takes high-risk populations into account. Each child comes to school with specific needs, and it is the teacher’s responsibility to make the appropriate conceptual and practical assessments, associations, and responses to this variation. This statement suggests that teachers’ ability to teach reading accounts for the lapse between the number of children who can learn to read and those who actually learn to read. Teachers cannot bridge this lapse with the limited preservice and haphazard in-service efforts that are prevalent across the nation.⁶⁶ Therefore, researchers also believe that educators must view teacher education as a career-long continuum of development ranging from intense preservice to intense in-service development.⁶⁷

All teacher education programs in the state of Tennessee must undergo the licensure program approval process. First, each teacher-training unit must meet the National Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards.⁶⁸ Another condition is that institutions maintain high levels of collaboration between the education unit and other units within the institution, such as the liberal arts and science departments. The state Department of Education also encourages and requires that institutions develop relationships with pre-K-12 educators.

Tennessee requires that candidates seeking admission to a teacher education program must either pass the Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST), earn a score of 22/36 on the Enhanced ACT, or earn a score of 1020/1600 on the recentered⁶⁹ SAT. The candidates must have also maintained a 2.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale on their previous college course work. In addition, teacher candidates must have acquired early, varied, and well-sequenced field experiences. Students must acquire a 15-week, full-time student experience or a one-year, full-time internship. The state considers the full-year internship as the candidate’s first year of teaching. Finally, the candidate must also pass the Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) exam of the Praxis Series and a specialty area test to qualify for licensure.

⁶⁵ Snow, et al., Chapter 9: The Agents of Change.

⁶⁶ Louisa C. Moats, “Teaching Reading Is Rocket Science,” American Federation of Teachers, June 1999, pp. 10-11.

⁶⁷ Snow, et al., Chapter 9: The Agents of Change.

⁶⁸ See www.ncate.org.

⁶⁹ “The recentered SAT realigns the SAT verbal and math scores so that the average score on both scales falls near the same point. In the past students relied on percentile scores to measure their performance on this test.” Information provided by the Educational Testing Service, “The Benefits of Recentering the SAT Scales,” Princeton, NJ.

Although the State of Tennessee allows institutions flexibility in designing their programs, they must design curriculum based on the following broad areas of study:

- General education core 50 percent
- Academic major 30 percent
- Professional education core 20 percent

The general education core consists of classes that contribute to a typical liberal arts education. Thirty percent of the curriculum must consist of academic major classes because future teachers can no longer major in elementary or secondary education. In addition, the professional education core consists of classes that are fundamental to teaching children. Reading methods classes fall in this category.⁷⁰

In response to a critical 1996 report on the academic training of teachers, universities in at least two states created higher standards for their education graduates in 1998. Both Georgia and Maryland approved new requirements demanding more expertise in academic subjects taught at elementary and secondary levels. Georgia is taking a comprehensive approach by guaranteeing schools that the state's newest teachers will be competent in the specific academic subject they teach. However, Maryland's state board of education is primarily focusing on improving the reading instruction of potential teachers and teachers seeking recertification by increasing the requirements from one reading class to up to 12 credits.⁷¹

In addition, teachers who are already licensed must have opportunities to keep up with the changes in the knowledge base and to develop improved instructional strategies.⁷² Tennessee addresses this need in its recently adopted Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth.⁷³ Although this framework and the school improvement process contain professional growth components, professional growth remains largely a local decision.

Researchers believe that for professional development to be useful, it must be consistent, relevant, and easily translated to classroom work. This type of professional development also provides teachers the opportunity to interact with their peers on perplexing issues, including, for example, the sharing of teaching strategies for students who have reading difficulties.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Tennessee Department of Education, Teacher Education Fact Sheet. See <http://www.state.tn.us/education/factw2.htm>.

⁷¹ Ann Singer, American Legislative Exchange Council, "Improving Student Achievement One Teacher At a Time." See www.alec.org.

⁷² Snow, et al., Chapter 9: The Agents of Change.

⁷³ State Department of Education, "Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth," pp. 7-9.

⁷⁴ Moats, p. 25.

Analysis and Conclusions

Two separate assessments indicate that most Tennessee students are not successful in the area of reading. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading report showed that in 1992, 1994, and 1998, at least 42 percent of Tennessee's 4th graders performed below the basic level; another 31 percent performed at the basic level. The 1999 Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) data indicated that seventy percent of the state's 5th graders were below proficient, and sixty percent of 8th graders failed to achieve proficiency.

The NAEP achievement levels—below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced—are performance standards that NAEP researchers collectively based on their expectations of what children should know and be able to do.⁷⁵ As defined by NAEP, the definitions for basic, proficient, and advanced are:

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

Proficient: Solid academic performance for each grade assessed. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.

Advanced: Superior performance.

NAEP assessments are directed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and are administered to representative samples of students.⁷⁶ NAEP has administered the reading assessment at the state level three times: in public schools at grade 4 in 1992, in public and non-public schools at grade 4 in 1994, and in public and non-public schools at grades 4 and 8 in 1998. This analysis considers only the 4th grade data for 1992, 1994, and 1998.⁷⁷

Tennessee's performance in terms of average scale scores does not differ significantly from the Southeast region and the nation. However, considering the definitions NAEP uses for the basic category and the numbers of students in both the basic and below basic categories, neither the nation, Tennessee, nor the other Southeastern states are excelling in teaching students to read. The table below illustrates the percentage of Tennessee 4th grade students in each performance category for 1992, 1994, and 1998.

⁷⁵ The Commissioner of the U.S. Department of Education Statistics cautions that these scores should be considered developmental and used with care. As with all NAEP charts, the changes between two particular years show differences in performance between two distinct points in time and do not indicate a general trend through the intervening years. United States Department of Education Office of Education Research and Improvement, *Reading State Report for Tennessee*, 1998, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁶ For more information on NAEP, see <http://nces.ed.gov/naep>.

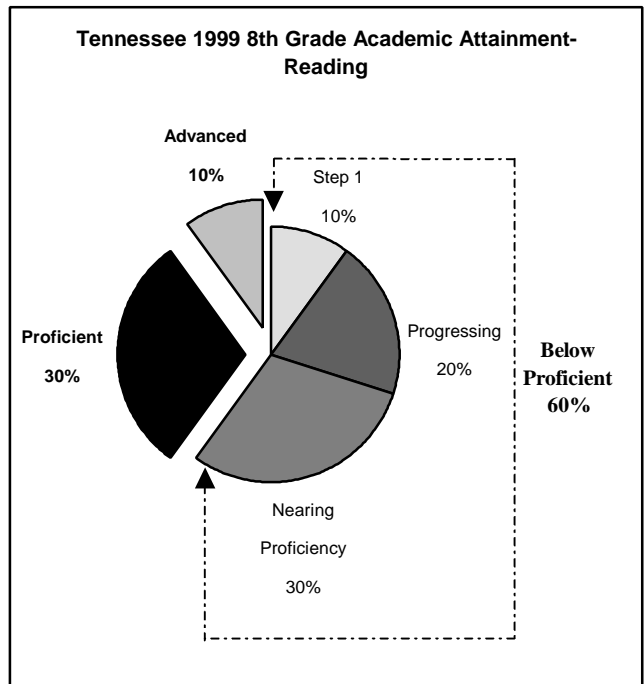
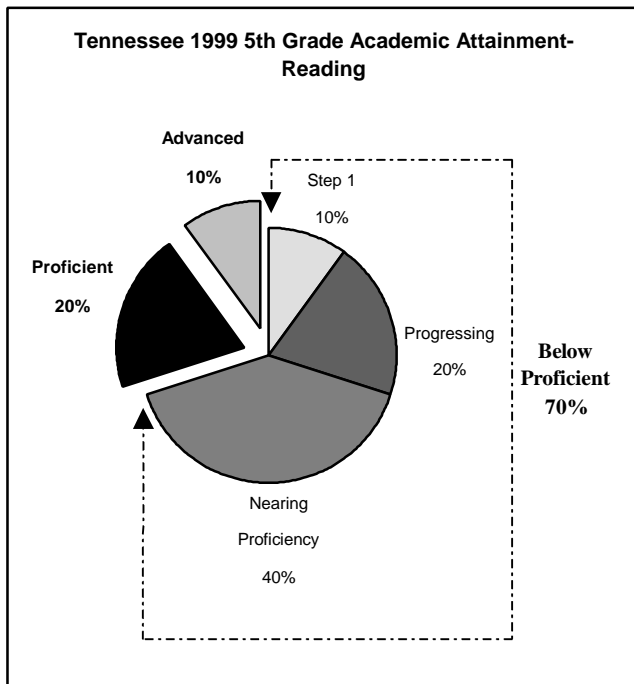
⁷⁷ United States Department of Education Office of Education Research and Improvement, *Reading State Report for Tennessee*, 1998, p. 1.

Year of NAEP Test	Percent of Tennessee students in each NAEP category			
	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
1992	43%	34%	19%	4%
1994	42%	31%	21%	6%
1998	42%	33%	20%	5%

In contrast to the NAEP, TerraNova, the Tennessee statewide assessment, uses five classifications to gauge student performance in reading: advanced, proficient, nearing proficiency, progressing, and step 1. (See Appendix F.)

Performance levels, such as [these], provide a description of what students can do in terms of the content and skills measured by a particular test.... Students who have attained proficient and advanced placement for a particular content area have met or exceeded appropriate curricular goals for the exiting grade of the grade group. Students who have obtained partially proficient placement (nearing proficiency, progressing, or step 1) are on the path to proficiency, but need to continue progressing toward proficient and advanced.⁷⁸

The definition of proficiency in this case suggests similarity to NAEP's proficiency level. The 1999 Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) data reveal that a number of Tennessee students failed to meet a basic level of achievement or a level of proficiency. Seventy percent of Tennessee's 5th grade students failed to achieve proficiency on the TerraNova in 1999. Sixty percent of Tennessee's 8th grade students failed to achieve proficiency on the TerraNova in the same year.



⁷⁸ CTB McGraw-Hill, Performance Level Handbook: *TerraNova*, pp. 2, 9.

The University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center used the TerraNova data to conduct a trend analysis. This analysis speaks to the performance of Tennessee school districts in mathematics, science, language, reading, and social studies over time and among varying grade levels. While progress is evident for a large number of systems in math, language arts, and science, “[t]he most disappointing result emanating from these studies was the failure of most districts to make a positive change in 8th grade reading achievement levels.”⁷⁹ The following table presents the district performance trends in reading and shows the lack of progress in the middle school grades:

Number and Percentage of Tennessee School Districts with Increase, Decrease, or No Change in Mean Student Reading Achievement By Grade 1991-1999				
Grade		Decrease	No Change	Increase
3	No. of Districts	7	58	72
	Percent	5.1%	42.3%	52.6%
4	No. of Districts	18	96	23
	Percent	13.1%	70.1%	16.8%
5	No. of Districts	4	75	58
	Percent	2.9%	54.7%	42.3%
6	No. of Districts	29	100	8
	Percent	21.2%	73.0%	5.8%
7	No. of Districts	22	102	10
	Percent	16.4%	76.1%	7.5%
8	No. of Districts	58	72	4
	Percent	43.3%	53.7%	3.0%

Source: University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center, William L. Sanders, Ph.D. and June C. Rivers, Ed.D., “Tennessee Elementary Student Achievement Trend Analyses 1991-1999,” January 2000.

The school districts demonstrate progress in reading until grade 6. At that point, the number of school districts that show a downward turn in their mean student achievement level increases significantly. This is balanced by a reduction in the number of school districts that show an upward turn in their mean student achievement level. Grades 7 and 8 performed similarly.⁸⁰

States that have maintained good reading scores or raised their reading scores over time have established reading as a funding and/or policy priority. Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Texas are important to this study because each of these states has demonstrated significant progress over three years of NAEP

⁷⁹ William L. Sanders, Ph.D. and June C. Rivers, Ed.D., *Tennessee Elementary Student Achievement Trend Analyses 1991-1999*, University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center, January 2000.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

testing in 1992, 1994, and 1998. Each has increased its number of students performing at a basic level, and each has demonstrated growth in its average score. Although Tennessee outcores both Alabama and Mississippi in the NAEP reading tests, its growth has been static in comparison. (See Appendix G for a ranking of states' performances on the NAEP reading tests.)

State	Total % Growth in the Number of Students Achieving Basic Competency 1992, 1994, 1998	% Growth in the Average Scale Score 1992, 1994, 1998
Alabama	9.07	1.90
Connecticut	11.35	4.31
Kentucky	7.54	2.28
Mississippi	15.14	2.47
North Carolina	9.92	2.32
Tennessee	1.72	0.00
Texas	9.66	1.83

Source: Calculations based on NAEP 1998, 1994, and 1992 national and state reading data tables for grade 4 student data showing percentage of students at or above achievement level. Scores in the reading data tables range from 0-500.

In slight contrast, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin students have performed consistently well on the 1992, 1994, and 1998 NAEP tests. Connecticut students have both performed consistently well and improved significantly over time.

State	Average % of Students Achieving Basic Competency 1992, 1994, 1998	Average Scale Score 1992, 1994, 1998
Connecticut	71.67	225.33
Maine	74.33	226.67
Massachusetts	72.00	224.67
New Hampshire	73.67	225.67
Tennessee	57.67	212.33
Wisconsin	71.33	224.00

Source: Calculations based on NAEP 1998, 1994, and 1992 national and state reading data tables for grade 4 student data showing percentage of students at or above achievement level. Scores in the reading data tables range from 0-500.

Particular achievement levels on the NAEP reading assessment provide some indication of the success of literacy in these states. Many factors contribute to these high or increasing achievement scores. States like Alabama, New Hampshire, and Connecticut have closely aligned their language arts assessments with their language arts curriculum. Alabama, Connecticut, and Mississippi use aggressive approaches to professional development. Of the entire list of states, nearly all boast of a research-based approach to literacy in general. While "research-based" is a loosely fitting term, each state asserts that it employs a quantitative approach to literacy.

Although similarities run through these states' approaches to literacy, attempting to attribute their success to a specific technique may result in a speculative analysis. The fact that New Hampshire, Wisconsin, and Maine subscribe to a system of local control, for example, may offset or enhance the impact of specific techniques. The entire list of states' approaches to literacy reveals a general cause and effect relationship. Regardless of other elements, clearly, one common thread runs through these states' approaches to literacy: each has identified literacy as a funding and/or public policy priority, which has

been followed by improved or sustained reading scores. (For more specific information about these states' reading programs, see Appendix A.)

Tennessee is the only Southeastern state without a state-funded reading initiative. Although the Department of Education launched its *Tennessee Come Read With Me* initiative in 1998, the effort is unfunded. As part of the program, the department created a new reading curriculum for all elementary students, appointed reading volunteer coordinators for participating school systems, and began book donation and volunteer programs.⁸¹ Education Edge participates in the program by encouraging members of its community partnerships to volunteer to read to students and donate money and books to schools. In addition, Education Edge has provided brochures and posters that have been distributed to local education agencies. Some school system officials interviewed indicate that they have had little interaction with the department regarding the program, other than receiving the Education Edge materials.

Southeastern States	1999-2000 Funding for Reading Initiatives
Alabama	\$6,000,000
Arkansas	\$8,600,000
Florida	\$15,000,000
Georgia	\$13,900,000
Kentucky	\$1,800,000
Louisiana	\$20,000,000
Mississippi*	\$30,000,000
North Carolina	\$5,000,000
South Carolina	\$4,600,000
Tennessee	0
Texas	\$60,000,000
Virginia	\$8,300,000
West Virginia	\$300,000

*Mississippi's information is for 1998-99
 Source: Southern Regional Education Board

Tennessee lacks a reading infrastructure. Departmental attempts toward improving reading in Tennessee's schools have depended largely on volunteer efforts, such as the *Tennessee Come Read With Me* initiative, and on federal money, such as Title I funds or grant money. The Tennessee Department of Education lacks adequate staff in the area of reading. In fact, no staff are devoted full-time to reading. At least one staff person is extremely knowledgeable in the field, but also serves as the Director of Elementary and Middle Grades. In addition, the department has no language arts coordinator and no media specialist. As a result, there is no coordinated reading effort in the state, which ultimately affects how children learn. With a more coordinated effort, for example, the department could assist local education agencies with meaningful professional development opportunities and could act as a source of information about the latest research regarding reading.

⁸¹Tennessee Department of Education, Press Release: "Reading Initiative Gets Education Edge Support," March 10, 1999. See <http://www.state.tn.us/education/edmal541.htm>. Note: Volunteer coordinators have been designated in all but 10 school systems.

Three prominent sources have rated Tennessee's standards for language arts as very low. *Education Week's* annual "Quality Counts" report for 1998 gave Tennessee a 'D+' in overall standards, and indicated that the state's language arts standards lacked clarity and specificity.⁸² Similarly, the Fordham Foundation issued a national report card in 1998 for all states and graded Tennessee with an 'F' for its English standards.⁸³ Some of the report's criticisms included that the standards are vague, are written for educators and not the general public, contain some jargon, are largely unmeasurable, and do not clearly address the reading, interpretation, and critical evaluation of literature.⁸⁴ Finally, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) found Tennessee's English standards to contain "vague content."⁸⁵ According to the AFT, most states have difficulty setting clear and specific standards in English. Department staff indicate that they are working to add performance indicators to Tennessee's current standards to increase their specificity.⁸⁶

It is, however, important to note that opinions vary about the ideal content of standards, and reviewers' judgments about them are subjective. This disagreement and other differences have resulted in some states' standards receiving widely different scores from the above sources. In 1996, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association (IRA) released a set of national content standards for the English Language Arts. According to the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA), "[m]any national and state standards documents, including the NCTE/IRA Standards for English Language Arts, have been criticized for lack of specificity. But there is no consensus on what the optimum level of specificity is."⁸⁷ (See Appendix E for a copy of the NCTE/IRA Standards.)

Currently, the state sponsors no professional development workshop or class that deals with reading assessment strategies for the developmental grades. The professional development training that the Tennessee Department of Education now provides addresses assessment only in relation to TCAP (TerraNova) and Gateway testing. Teachers must determine whether students in the developmental grades have any reading difficulties that require intervention. Although the current professional development offerings do not provide assessment training for the early grades, beginning with the three-year period between 2000 and 2002, Tennessee's teachers will be evaluated in part on their use of assessment strategies to evaluate students. In April 1997, the State Board of Education adopted a Framework for Evaluation and Professional Development to become effective statewide by 2000. The General Education Performance Standards adopted include a component that addresses teachers' methods for assessing and evaluating students. As part of the framework, teachers will be evaluated in part using criteria that include the use of multiple sources of assessment: "Solicits and uses information from a variety of sources about students' experiences,

⁸² *Education Week*, "Quality Counts," January 11, 1999. See www.edweek.org/sreports/qc99.

⁸³ Chester E. Finn, Michael J. Petrilli, and Greg Vanourek, "The State of State Standards," *Fordham Report*, Vol. 2. No. 5., July 1998. See <http://www.edexcellence.net>. Note: The 1999 Fordham report on state standards again gave Tennessee a failing grade for its English standards.

⁸⁴ Sandra Stotsky, "State English Standards," *Fordham Report*, Volume 1, Number 1, July 1997. See <http://www.edexcellence.net>.

⁸⁵ American Federation of Teachers, *Making Standards Matter 1998: State-by-State Analysis, Tennessee*. See <http://www.aft.org/edissues/standards98/states/tennessee.htm>.

⁸⁶ Interview with Claudette Williams, May 26, 1999.

⁸⁷ Wixson and Dutro, CIERA Report #3-001, p. 2. See www.ciera.org.

learning behaviors, needs, attitudes, and progress to make initial and ongoing instructional decisions... Uses a variety of assessment techniques to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented curriculum and the instructional strategies.”

Many Tennessee teachers may lack the expertise needed to assess or assist children with reading difficulties. As in many states, future teachers educated in Tennessee’s state universities are often required to take only one course in reading methodology. Researchers indicate that this amount of preservice training is inadequate. Some

states choose to mandate specific coursework for teacher candidates, while others do not prescribe a list of required courses or number of semester hours to receive a particular license.⁸⁸ Each institution must provide teacher candidates the opportunity to acquire a set of competencies or “knowledge and skill” in each subject area. The list of

Tennessee’s language arts and reading competencies include general statements such as:

- understand how young children learn spoken and written language; and
- use the knowledge that reading, writing, speaking, and listening are interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

The list also includes more specific statements such as:

- explore a wide range of literature from many periods and cultures and in many genres and relate that knowledge to class reading and class writing; and
- use a variety of approaches – phonics based and literature based – to teach various word recognition and word analysis techniques and continue to develop vocabulary.⁸⁹

Researchers assert that quality classroom instruction is the single most important factor in teaching children to read. Putting new elementary teachers in the classroom without adequate preservice training does not further the state’s goal that all students should be able to read by the end of the 3rd grade.

Some LEAs may lack the knowledge base to select reading programs and appropriate assessments that are supported by the latest research. The Reading Excellence Act, a 1998 federal law that awards grants to states to improve reading, encourages the use of research-based methods to improve teachers’ instructional practices. Authors of *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* synthesized hundreds of studies to arrive at their conclusions about teaching children to read. But because teacher candidates in Tennessee usually are required to take only one or two courses in reading instruction and because teachers’ professional development opportunities are limited, teachers and other staff may lack information about recent research in the field. As a result, local education agencies may not be choosing reading programs appropriate to their students’ needs.

Tennessee’s teachers may not have access to sufficient professional development opportunities to bring them “up to speed” regarding the latest reading methodology research. While the department requires that each Local Education Agency (LEA) provide at least five days of professional development each school year, a local committee determines professional needs within that district. The LEAs also maintain the resulting professional development plans. The department serves primarily as a facilitator by providing various institutes and training based on summaries of TCAP scores as well

⁸⁸ Moats, pp. 11-12.

⁸⁹ Teacher licensure standards, Tennessee State Board of Education.

as the Framework for Professional Growth and the school improvement plans.⁹⁰ Particularly since some preservice training may be lacking, teachers need a means to increase their knowledge base regarding reading instruction. Without good professional development, children with reading difficulties may not receive the assistance they need to become good readers.

Tennessee lacks an adequate number of English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. Approximately three-fourths of the state's counties currently have ESL students. Federal law requires schools to provide equal educational opportunity to students with limited English proficiency. Failure to do so may constitute a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Federal law states that schools cannot exclude students from effective participation in school because of the inability to speak and understand English or misassign students to special education classes because of their lack of English language skills. Schools must provide programs for ESL students that are designed to teach them in a timely manner, allowing students to move into regular classes within a reasonable period of time.

However, according to department estimates, at present only 203 teachers throughout Tennessee are certified ESL instructors. (Department staff indicate that this number, which was collected from system reports early in 1999, is only an estimate. Some teachers have been certified since the count. However, some certified ESL teachers have also moved out of Tennessee.) For the past few years, the department has granted several waivers for teachers who are teaching ESL students without certification. At present only six higher education programs are available to provide the instruction necessary for teachers to achieve certification for teaching second-language students, limiting the ability of teachers to be certified in this area. Once a waiver is granted, the teacher in that position has only two years to obtain certification—a difficult achievement with the limited number of available programs.⁹¹ As a result, Tennessee's ESL students may have difficulty learning to speak and read English at a level that will allow them to progress in school.

Tennessee schools employ few reading specialists. According to department staff, although many teachers and supervisors throughout the state may qualify as reading specialists, few of them use the skills on a daily basis. Because reading specialists are not funded through the BEP, few systems are inclined to utilize such specialists solely in that capacity. As a result, many schools are lacking expertise that could improve students' reading abilities.

⁹⁰ Telephone interview with Susan Hudson, Executive Director of Professional Development, Tennessee Department of Education, October 26, 1999.

⁹¹ Telephone interview with Bobbie Jackson, ESL/Migrant Consultant, Tennessee Department of Education, January 7, 2000.

Recommendations

Legislative Recommendations

The General Assembly may wish to consider making reading a state priority by passing and funding a comprehensive reading initiative. This could allow the Department of Education to add staff whose primary responsibility would be to coordinate reading efforts statewide. It could allow more and better professional development opportunities targeted at providing teachers throughout the state with the latest information about teaching and assessment strategies. It could assist the department's current efforts to plan a statewide reading conference. In addition, funding could be targeted at the hiring of reading specialists to coordinate reading efforts in school systems and at efforts to decrease the shortage of English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. Having access to both reading specialists and ESL teachers could provide LEAs with much needed expertise in teaching reading to all kinds of children, including those with reading difficulties.

Department comment: As the Department moves to hold schools accountable for their reading performance measures established by the Education Improvement Act and the State Board of Education, additional funding will be needed to target specific areas of low performance at the school level.

State Board of Education comment: The State Board concurs with the need for a state-funded reading initiative to include an infrastructure within the Department of Education to develop, support, and monitor the initiative.

The General Assembly may wish to consider fully funding the State Board of Education's Early Childhood Education Plan. The State Board estimates that approximately 12,000 of the 45,000 at-risk three- and four-year-olds in Tennessee do not have the opportunity to participate in any early childhood education program. Providing programs for children at this young age, particularly those at risk, would ensure their readiness for kindergarten and 1st grade, greatly improving their chances of learning to read. Research indicates a link between the number of months that children spend in preschool and achievement test scores in 2nd grade, behavior problems in 3rd grade, and school retention in kindergarten through 3rd grade. Students with more preschool experience had higher achievement scores and fewer behavior problems and were less likely to be required to repeat a grade.⁹²

Department response: The fiscal year 2000-2001 budget request before the legislature includes a \$12 million improvement item for the Department of Education to serve an additional 2,400 at risk children in three and four year old preschool programs.

State Board of Education comment: The State Board concurs with the need to address the unmet needs of preschool youth and to develop a plan to assure that all students become good readers.

Administrative Recommendations

The department should inform teachers about current strategies and methods for reading instruction and assessment. The Internet is a useful resource for this purpose. For example, the books *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* and *Starting Out Right* are both available on the Internet, as are many other useful publications and sites devoted to literacy. In addition, the department could create a special website devoted to the teaching of reading that teachers could access easily.

⁹² Snow, et al., Chapter 5: Preventing Reading Difficulties Before Kindergarten.

Department response: The Department agrees that the Internet is a low cost option for sharing information with teachers about current strategies and methods for reading instruction and assessment. As part of the Governor's *Come Read with Me* initiative, the department plans a *Focus on Reading* website. The site will include the reading accomplishments, links for teachers and parents, current research and strategies, and a reading contact for each Tennessee system.

The department should expand teachers' professional development opportunities to address assessment strategies other than standardized testing that are appropriate for students in grades K-3. Currently, the department's professional development division offers no assessment training other than instruction about the TerraNova and Gateway tests. According to SREB, "many teachers lack the knowledge and ability either to assess children's reading abilities or to design instructional programs that respond effectively to their needs."⁹³ Because intervention should occur as early as possible when a child is having difficulty learning to read, it is important that teachers have the skills to assess children's progress.

Department response: A statewide committee of department staff and teachers is currently meeting to establish a set of reading accomplishments for grade K-2. This will aid in defining reading expectations for students in the developmental grades and matching various assessment options with the accomplishments. Regional reading conferences are planned for May to share this information with teachers.

The department should make certain that the needs of poor readers in middle and high schools are addressed. Although it is easier to prevent reading problems in young children than to correct them in later years, schools need to provide services to assist older students who have reading difficulties. The department should provide professional development opportunities that address reading strategies for students in higher grades.

Department response: The Department agrees that reading is fundamental to success for students in middle and high schools. As the Department identifies and works with low performing schools, reading will be a priority as we focus on improvement by targeting the limited resources available.

The State Board of Education and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission should address specifically whether teacher candidates in Tennessee receive adequate training to teach all children to read. This issue has been raised nationally and applies in Tennessee as well. Although many other factors are involved, researchers point to teacher quality as the single greatest determinant of a child's success in school. Teacher candidates must be prepared to teach all children to read. Tennessee state law makes the State Board and THEC responsible for determining the "ways and means of improving teacher, student and school performances" and for setting policies to accomplish such improvements.⁹⁴

Tennessee Higher Education Commission response: THEC plans to discuss curriculum requirements for teacher education programs with the Deans of Education at a meeting scheduled in March 2000. Relevant and systematic professional development opportunities for teachers are essential but are limited due to the lack of funding. Joint committees involving staff members of the Higher Education Commission, the State

⁹³ David R. Denton, *Reading Reform in the SREB States: Early Assessment*, Southern Regional Education Board, September 1999, p. 1.

⁹⁴ T.C.A. 49-1-302(a)(13).

Department of Education, and the State Board of Education have highlighted professional development as a major issue to be addressed. Support for this area would be welcomed. *State Board of Education response:* The State Board concurs with the need for professional development activities and more specific pre-service courses in teacher preparation programs. The state also needs to train and employ a larger number of reading specialists. The results from the TVAAS model indicate the need for more of an emphasis on reading in the middle grades.

The State Board of Education and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission should consider developing an information center at a state university for research and information on reading for preschool through 12th grade teachers. Kentucky has developed this approach to disseminating the latest research information to teachers and the public about reading. Such a clearinghouse could also supply information about various reading programs, student assessments that are accurate and cost-efficient, and effective uses of technology for reading instruction and assessment. In Tennessee, the Center for Literacy Studies, housed at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, was founded in 1988 and works with practitioners to meet the needs of adult learners. It acts to “bridge theory and practice in adult literacy and lifelong learning.” Possibly its mission could be extended to include pre-K through 12. If that isn’t possible, a similar center could be developed to provide information and resources to preK-12 teachers across Tennessee.

Tennessee Higher Education Commission response: The Center for Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is an ideal place for a research center in reading as suggested by the Kentucky model. However, regional locations could also be valuable in disseminating information. THEC could request that each School of Education develop an informational center and maintain ongoing contact with the Center for Literacy Studies in order to assure that the research on best practices reaches the campuses in a timely manner.

The department may want to consider requiring LEAs with consistently low scores to develop reading plans that would detail such elements as reading programs, methods of assessment, and planned professional development activities for perhaps a three-year period. The state of Connecticut began in 1999 to require that every school district develop and implement such plans. In Tennessee, reading plans could be linked to the school improvement plans, which every LEA is already required to develop.

Department response: The department agrees and is currently reading school improvement plans mandated by the State Board. Schools exhibiting consistently low scores in any subject area over a three-year period are receiving close scrutiny. Plans are required to include student-focused goals and specific measures (such as professional development) to address problem areas identified through student assessment.

The department should encourage districts to develop programs and prevention services that increase parents’ involvement in teaching their children to read. Research indicates that parental attitude toward reading is critical to children’s success in learning to read. The greater parental involvement in a school, the more likely its students will become successful readers.

Department response: As part of the Governor’s *Come Read with Me* initiative, the department has kicked off two reading programs to increase parent involvement. *Parents as Reading Partners* is focused at the parents of K-5 children. It is designed to get a commitment from the parent to read to or with the student for thirty minutes per day.

Smart from the Start is a collaborative program between the departments of Education, Health, and Human Services to provide information to the parents of children age birth through five on the importance of developmentally appropriate activities to stimulate the brain. These activities include but are not limited to reading to the child.

Appendix A

Selected States' Reading Programs

The following states (Alabama, Connecticut, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Texas) were selected because they have each demonstrated significant progress over three years of NAEP testing in 1992, 1994, and 1998. Each has increased its number of students performing at a basic level, and each has demonstrated growth in its average score.

Alabama

Assessment: The State of Alabama administers the Alabama Diagnostic Reading Assessments in grades K-2. The state has keyed the course of study in English and language arts to this assessment.

Professional Development: Alabama provides faculty training for all teacher education programs. Instructors from education programs help provide Literacy Demonstration Site (LDS) training.⁹⁵ The Alabama Department of Education selects these sites based on the following criteria:

- The school demonstrates a deep commitment to achieving a 100 percent literacy rate.
- The school staff and faculty demonstrate a serious financial and spiritual commitment to become an LDS.
- The school exhibits strength and balance of its curriculum elements. The Alabama Reading Panel developed materials to measure the qualifications.
- The administrative staff at the school demonstrates a commitment to literacy.
- The school succeeds in eliciting the support of all stakeholders appropriately. These include teachers, administrators, central office staff, community, parents, and students.
- The faculty demonstrates a willingness and openness to self-improvement and the improvement of the LDS.⁹⁶

Funding: In 1999-2000 the state appropriated \$6 million for reading specialists in each of the 80 LDS schools.⁹⁷

In 1999, the U.S. Department of Education awarded the Alabama Department of Education \$7.5 million from the Reading Excellence Act to support its Reading Excellence Program. The state's Department of Education has notified 30 eligible school systems that they can submit proposals for funding to improve local capacity and to provide tutoring before or after school, on weekends, or during the summer.⁹⁸

Tenets: The \$6 million state appropriation has supported two weeks of summer training for faculty and administrators of the LDS sites. The LDS staff works with struggling students half a day and coaches teachers half a day. The state plans to expand the number of LDS sites to 160 by 2000-2001.⁹⁹

A program entitled Reading Alabama also contributes to the development of literacy in that state. Reading Alabama, Incorporated is a not-for-profit coalition of

⁹⁵ Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) compilation of state data on literacy.

⁹⁶ Alabama Department of Education, Reading Initiative Office, Criteria for Selecting Literacy Development Sites, provided November 29, 1999.

⁹⁷ Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), "Reading Reform in the SREB States: Early Assessment," September 1999.

⁹⁸ Alabama Department of Education, Press Release: "Reading Grant Money Available to 30 Local School Systems," October 14, 1999.

⁹⁹ SREB compilation.

business and community leaders, government, and educators. Reading Alabama encouraged, through a matching grant process, the implementation of Writing to Read 2000, a computer-assisted reading and writing program. Reading Alabama requires that teachers implementing the program attend a thorough training session covering hardware and software applications, technology integration, and classroom management. This program sparked the Alabama Reading Initiative.¹⁰⁰

“The Alabama Reading Initiative is a statewide movement anchored by educational leaders from across the state dedicated to...ultimately achieving 100 percent literacy among public school students. This program defines students as ‘literate’ when they can read fluently and with comprehension materials typically encountered in their classrooms.”¹⁰¹ The program begins with teacher development and radiates outwardly. Through extensive research, the developers of this program created a list of elements labeled as “Knowledge and Skills Teachers Need to Deliver Effective Reading Instruction,” which targets three fronts: beginning reading, expansion of reading power, and effective intervention.¹⁰²

Connecticut

Assessment: The Connecticut Mastery Tests cover 4th, 6th, and 8th grade reading, writing, and mathematics.¹⁰³ These tests closely align the NAEP assessment.

Professional Development: Connecticut established the Early Literacy Academies in 1998. The Connecticut Department of Education based the academies on the trainers-trainer model. Kate England, the department’s the Language Arts Consultant, trained 40 teachers who in turn trained 400 teachers in 1998. In 1999 this network built up to between 600-800 teachers. The trainers taught teachers how to use assessment in the classroom to help plan instruction, and provided both observation training and training on guided reading.¹⁰⁴

Funding: In 1997 Connecticut stipulated that local school districts use at least 20 percent of the \$19 million that the state provides annually to priority districts (high-risk) specifically for reading-intervention programs. In 1998, the state began allocating another \$20 million a year for an urban schools grant program to finance literacy improvement efforts in the early grades. The grant program has contributed to initiatives such as summer academies and teacher-training centers.¹⁰⁵ The state required that all grantees prepare three-year plans for raising their students’ reading performance.¹⁰⁶

Tenets: Connecticut passed Public Act 98-243 in May 1998, requiring each local or regional board of education to develop and implement a three-year plan by September 1, 1999, to improve reading skills of students in kindergarten through 3rd grade, and requiring the Department of Education to provide technical assistance to regional and local boards.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ Alabama Department of Education, “A Note from the Executive Director, Heather Coleman.” See <http://157.149.1.31/50/ExecutiveDirector.htm>.

¹⁰¹ Katherine Mitchell, Alabama Department of Education, “Translating Research Into Practice: The Alabama Reading Initiative,” *Teaching and Change*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Winter 1992, pp. 220-237.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Jeff Archer, David J. Hoff, Kathleen Kennedy Manzo, “A Glimpse at the State with Big NAEP Gains,” *Education Week on the Web*, March 10, 1999. Available: www.edweek.org.

¹⁰⁴ Telephone interview with Kate England, Language Arts Consultant, Connecticut Department of Education.

¹⁰⁵ Archer, et al., March 10, 1999.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Education Commission of the States (ECS), A compilation of state legislation on literacy, June 14, 1999.

Kentucky

Assessment: The State of Kentucky does not require a reading assessment in K-2. The state administers the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) at the end of grade 3 and has recently developed the first component of an integrated testing and accountability program called the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). It is different from the old test (KIRIS) in several important ways:

- Reliable and valid scores will be used for school *and student* accountability.
- Teachers will be extensively involved in designing and scoring the test.
- Results of a nationally normed test might be used in accountability.
- The format will reduce testing times for schools and students.
- A way to measure the progress of individual students over time will be solicited.
- Test results will be reported to schools and districts in a more timely fashion.

Many schools use the Kentucky Elementary Learning Profile (KELP) to report student progress and inform instructional decisions in grades K-3.¹⁰⁸

Professional Development: The University of Kentucky has formed a network of collaborative centers with all state universities. The university acts as a clearinghouse for research and information on reading.

Kentucky's Department of Education maintains eight regional service centers. Language arts specialists provide professional development to local school districts from the satellite centers. The Eisenhower Fund, which primarily targets math and science, provides funds for schools to establish reading leaders, which are optional positions. In 1998 the reading leaders focused training on design and delivery. In 1999 the reading leaders will focus training on reading to learn (content focus) as opposed to learning to read.¹⁰⁹

Funding: The State of Kentucky provided \$2.3 million in competitive grants for 1998-99 and is providing \$1.8 million in 1999-2000.

In 1999 the U.S. Department of Education awarded the Kentucky Department of Education \$7.5 million under the Reading Excellence Act to support professional development in comprehensive and scientifically based researched instruction for all elementary school teachers, other instructional staff, and parents. The grants will target children experiencing difficulty with early literacy skills and family literacy in general.¹¹⁰

Tenets: Kentucky enacted legislation in April 1998 establishing the Early Literacy Fund. The fund provides grants to schools to implement reading models, including phonics instruction. The legislation creating the grant requires the state board to establish an application process and the criteria for dispersing funds. It also requires applicants to promote literacy development, including training educators.¹¹¹

Mississippi

Assessment: Mississippi gathers standardized information from its students through the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and informal assessment.¹¹²

Because of lagging scores on the ITBS, the Mississippi Student Achievement Act of 1997¹¹³ formed the Ad Hoc Committee on Assessment and Accreditation in the

¹⁰⁸ SREB compilation.

¹⁰⁹ Telephone interview with Star Lewis, Manager of Humanities, Kentucky Department of Education. September 29, 1999.

¹¹⁰ U.S. Department of Education, Reading Excellence Program. See www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/REA/.

¹¹¹ ECS compilation.

¹¹² "Student Achievement," Mississippi Department of Education. See www.mde.k12.ms.us/photo3.htm.

¹¹³ SREB compilation.

summer of 1998. In January 1999 the state board endorsed the committee's recommendation that a new system shift the accreditation emphasis from the district to the school level. Each system would be assigned a "student growth goal" each school year. The purpose of this accreditation plan is to provide accountability to and remediation for those students who have not demonstrated mastery of the benchmarks established by the *K-3 Reading Instructional Intervention Supplement*. This supplement provides examples of informal assessments and instructional intervention strategies.¹¹⁴

Professional Development: The Education Alliance, which consists of the Department of Education, Community Colleges, and the Public Education Forum, is looking at teacher preparation and working with institutions of higher education. The University of Mississippi has developed a MENTOR (Molding Excellent New Teachers of Reading) Institute aimed at increasing the skills and knowledge of reading/writing for teachers of grades 2-5 who have completed their first year of teacher training. The program should help new teachers with frustrations and questions that have arisen during the year.¹¹⁵

The Mississippi Department of Education offers a variety of informative publications to early childhood educators, which include: *Reading Assessment and Intervention Strategies Exploration for Pre-K (RAISE)*, *Early Childhood Teaching Strategies: Brain-based research*, and *Awesome Beginnings for Children (ABC): Transition from home to school*.¹¹⁶

Funding: Senate Bill 2944, passed in 1998, earmarked \$1.5 million per year for the next two years for reading.¹¹⁷

Tenets: Mississippi enacted legislation in January 1999 requiring the State Department of Education to adopt pilot programs for the testing of dyslexia in the public schools and extending the repealer on the dyslexia testing pilot program.¹¹⁸

Also, each district must submit a Reading Sufficiency Plan. Mississippi uses a ranking system that ranges from levels 1-5, with 1 being the lowest ranking, to gauge the progress of its schools. In addition to a Reading Sufficiency Plan, level 1 and 2 schools must also submit a Corrective Action Plan to the Department of Education. The Department of Education will provide technical assistance to these lower ranking schools.¹¹⁹

That state also authorized the state board to provide extended day and extended school year programs for kindergarten and compulsory school age students.¹²⁰

North Carolina

Assessment: A 1999 state board policy requires all schools to administer reading and math assessments in K-2. Schools must document ongoing assessments throughout the year and evaluations at the end. This assessment informs instructional decisions, provides information for parents, and helps schools track student progress. Schools may use the assessment developed by the Department of Public Instruction, a modified form, or a "unique" assessment adopted by local school boards.

Professional Development: University faculty developed an academic concentration in reading/language arts for elementary education majors.

¹¹⁴ Mississippi Department of Education. See www.mde.k12.ms.us/photo3.htm.

¹¹⁵ SREB compilation.

¹¹⁶ Mississippi Department of Education. See www.mde.k12.ms.us/photo3.htm.

¹¹⁷ Mississippi Legislature, 1998 Regular Session, Appropriation for Senate Bill 2944. See <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us>.

¹¹⁸ ECS compilation.

¹¹⁹ Mississippi Legislature, 1998 Regular Session, Senate Bill 2944. See <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us>.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Funding: In 1997 the North Carolina legislature appropriated approximately \$6 million to the State Board of Education for staff development in reading as required under the Accountability and High Standards, Basics, and Maximum Local Control (ABCs) program.¹²¹

Tenets: Legislation passed in 1996 authorized the State Board of Education to develop a comprehensive plan, allowing local flexibility and efficiency, to improve reading achievement in the public schools.¹²²

Texas

Assessment: The Texas Education Association (TEA) *Reading Instruments Guide for Texas Public School Districts* identifies reading assessment instruments approved for use by schools to assess children's reading levels and to diagnose problems in K-2. TEA developed one such assessment, the Texas Primary Reading Inventory.¹²³

Professional Development: The State Board of Education is revising certification requirements and exams in all areas to allow for accountability of teacher education programs. The board is also reviewing the certification in reading. In addition, the department has redesigned exams to allow for isolation of teacher applicants' performance in reading and other areas.

The State of Texas has instituted Texas Reading Academies, which are interactive, participatory four-day training sessions addressing early reading and designed specifically for kindergarten teachers. The academies cover research-based practices developed around oral language development, phonological understanding, and book knowledge and listening comprehension. Upon completion of the four-day academy, teachers receive a \$600 stipend.¹²⁴

The Governor's Business Council has organized Reading Summits around the state. The purpose of the summits is to bring together business, community, and education leaders to address the needs of local school districts. The summits also serve as opportunities to disseminate information about current research in beginning reading instruction.¹²⁵

Funding: The State of Texas has appropriated \$32 million for literacy (\$7 million in 1998 and \$25 million in 1999).¹²⁶

In 1999 the U.S. Department of Education awarded the Texas Department of Education approximately \$35 million under the Reading Excellence Act Program to support the state's development of research-based reading programs and development of a comprehensive reading model. The Center for Academic and Reading Skills (CARS), the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts (TCLRA), and the Texas Family Literacy Center (TFLC) will provide support in developing the comprehensive model.¹²⁷

Tenets: In 1996 Governor George W. Bush established the Texas Reading initiative. This comprehensive plan to improve reading instruction relies upon parents, educators, school board trustees, administrators, legislators, and business and community leaders to provide

¹²¹ SREB Compilation; North Carolina Board of Education, *The ABCs of Public Education*, Updated Fall 1997.

¹²² North Carolina General Assembly, Senate Bill 1139 (Chapter 716), 1996 Session of 1995 General Assembly.

¹²³ Texas Education Agency, *1999 Reading Instruments Guide for Texas Public Schools and Charter Schools*, November 1999. See www.tea.state.tx.us/reading/resources.html.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ ECS Compilation.

¹²⁷ U.S. Department of Education, Reading Excellence Program. See www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/REA/.

momentum. The initiative has spawned myriad approaches to reading instruction, including the *Reading Instruments Guide*, the Texas Reading Academies, and the Reading Summits.¹²⁸

The states below (Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin) were selected because their students have performed consistently well on the 1992, 1994, and 1998 NAEP tests. In addition, Connecticut students (in the previous group also) have both performed consistently well and improved significantly over time.

Maine

Assessment: Maine uses the 4th grade, 8th grade, and 11th grade results of the Maine Education Assessment (MEA) to measure student achievement. Officials began using the 4th grade and the 8th grade MEA to measure achievement at the beginning of the 1998-99 school year. Local school administrative units may develop additional assessments to measure student achievement.¹²⁹

In March 1996 the Maine State legislature adopted the Learning Results to establish education standards that apply to all Maine students educated at public expense. The legislation, An Act to Initiate Education Reform in Maine, requires that schools develop a system for assessing student work.¹³⁰

Professional Development: The State of Maine is in the process of redesigning requirements for teacher certification.¹³¹

The Department of Education works with local school districts to fulfill their requests for certain kinds of professional development or to provide training specifically related to assessment.¹³²

Funding: In the 1999 session the legislature authorized \$1.5 million for professional development in support of Maine's Learning Results. The Department bases the individual allotments on the number of students in each district. However, the local school districts can use this money to address a range of subjects.¹³³

In 1999 the U.S. Department of Education awarded the Maine \$4 million through the Reading Excellence Act state competitive grants. Maine's Department of Education requires school districts receiving Reading Excellence funds to develop school management teams to oversee the grant at the LEA level. The state's Department of Education will also coordinate with the University of Maine to conduct the evaluation for the Reading Excellence grant.¹³⁴

Tenets: Like many states, Maine has a history of local control. Therefore, Maine officials do not issue state level mandates regarding reading, but instead provide state-level support. The State Department of Education funded Reading Recovery and teacher-development programs. "This has been the consistent style of Maine literacy reform: few

¹²⁸ Texas Education Agency. See <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/reading/resources.html>.

¹²⁹ Maine Department of Education website. See <http://janus.state.me.us/education/mea/mea.htm>.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ U.S. Department of Education, Reading Excellence Program. See www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/REA/.

¹³² Maine Department of Education, Regional Education Services, Telephone interview with Karen Rumery, December 3, 1999.

¹³³ Maine Department of Education, Regional Education Services, Professional development payment schedule.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

firm mandates, but financial support that encourages innovation, teacher retraining, and proven best practice.”¹³⁵

The state has identified the following best practices among local school districts:

- A movement toward daily instruction in writing and
- The implementation of Reading Recovery through most of the state since 1990.
- The University of Southern Maine has also identified through survey data, a change from the use of reading textbooks to literature-based instruction.¹³⁶

Massachusetts

Assessment: The State of Massachusetts, through the Education Reform Law of 1993, instituted the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System. The state administers this test to all public school students annually in at least grades 4, 8, and 10. The state also administers the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) in reading comprehension, vocabulary, and spelling to students in grade 3.¹³⁷

Professional development: Three current priorities of professional development are the curriculum frameworks and assessment, educational technology, and educational leadership.¹³⁸

In 1994 the Department of Education announced that it would provide substantial support to school districts' implementation of the curriculum frameworks. The department's staff led a comprehensive statewide initiative consisting of summer institutes, intensive training for curriculum specialists, distribution of resource guides, seminars, workshops, in-service events, and other activities. The goal of this work was to prepare all 60,000 teachers in the use of the curriculum frameworks.¹³⁹

To further aid this implementation, in 1994-95 the department developed a process for registering professional development offerings. Teachers and schools use this information to choose providers who best meet their specific needs.¹⁴⁰

Funding: Massachusetts appropriated the following for school year 1999-2000:

Elementary Literacy Program	\$1,000,000
Early Literacy Intervention Program	\$1,500,000
John Silber Literacy Program	\$2,000,000
Reach Out and Read	\$ 500,000
Study of Literacy Teacher Training	\$ 50,000
Parent-Child Home Program	\$3,000,000
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$8,050,000</i> ¹⁴¹

The U.S. Department of Education awarded Massachusetts approximately \$18 million under the Reading Excellence Program. The state will award approximately \$17 million of the funds to the local school districts, and will use the remaining funds to collaborate with other agencies such as higher education institutions and family literacy organizations. The collaborations will yield scientifically based information that agencies can pass on to the eligible school districts.¹⁴²

¹³⁵ Brenda Power, "Reading Reforms: Lessons from Maine," *Education Week on the Web*, January 20, 1999. See <http://www.edweek.org/ew/vol-18/>.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Massachusetts Department of Education website. See <http://www.doe.mass.edu>.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Information Provided by Dot Earle and Linda Martin, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Education. Conference Committee Report.

¹⁴² U.S. Department of Education, Reading Excellence Program. See www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/REA/.

Tenets: Massachusetts does not prescribe a particular literacy program for its local school districts. In July 1994 the State Board of Education adopted the Massachusetts Common Core of Learning, part of the state's comprehensive approach to education reform. The Common Core articulates a statewide consensus of what all students should know and be able to do when they graduate from high school. As a follow-up, the Board of Education developed the Curriculum Frameworks in the seven core academic areas. The Frameworks translates the broad vision of the Common Core into three important products, each of which will form the base for other critical initiatives:

- Content and Learning Standards describe in detail what students are expected to know and be able to do in each subject at the end of the 4th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grades. These standards will form the basis for the new statewide system of student assessment.
- A chapter on recommended Teaching, Learning and Assessment Practices describes state-of-the-art pedagogical approaches that have been proven to be effective in teaching students the higher order thinking skills at the heart of the Learning Standards.
- A chapter on Structuring Schools to Support Learning-Centered Classrooms outlines principles on how a school should be constituted to create the conditions in which effective teaching and learning can flourish. The Department will assist schools in using these principles to develop comprehensive school improvement plans.¹⁴³

New Hampshire

Assessment: In 1993 the State of New Hampshire enacted the New Hampshire Educational Improvement and Assessment Program (NHEIAP). The program determines what students should know and how to assess those requirements to impact the delivery of curriculum at the local level. The state requires schools to assess students at the end of grade 3 in English, language arts, and mathematics, and at the end of grades 6 and 10 in English, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The results from the state tests contribute to individual student proficiency reports as well as diagnostic reports at the school and district.¹⁴⁴

Professional Development: The state provides testing workshops, but districts are responsible for training their teachers. The assessment contractors, in cooperation with the department, run a series of regional workshops each fall that focus on newly released data and a series of regional workshops in late winter that focus on test administration issues.

New Hampshire enacted legislation in April 1997 establishing a Reading Recovery Training Program in the Department of Education to provide training to all eligible 1st grade teachers.¹⁴⁵

Funding: New Hampshire spends about \$200,000 per year specifically for the New Hampshire Educational Improvement and Assessment Program (NHEIAP). The Eisenhower Fund (federal) contributes another \$250,000 to this program. New Hampshire also spends about \$300,000 a year for Reading Recovery training.¹⁴⁶

Tenets: The NHEIAP consists of two components: the first is a challenging K-12 curriculum framework identifying what students should know and be able to do at the

¹⁴³ Massachusetts Department of Education website. See www.doe.mass.edu.

¹⁴⁴ New Hampshire Department of Education website. See <http://www.state.nh.us/doe/nheiap.htm>.

¹⁴⁵ ECS compilation.

¹⁴⁶ Memorandum from Helen Schotanus, New Hampshire Department of Education, September 30, 1999.

completion of different levels of their education. The second component uses state and local assessment tools and improvement plans to increase academic achievement.¹⁴⁷

Wisconsin

Assessment: The State of Wisconsin uses the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examinations (WKCE) to assess its students in grades 4, 8, and 10 in English/language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. Since 1989, the state has administered the Wisconsin Reading Comprehension to 3rd grade students to help school districts identify students who may need additional assistance to improve their reading comprehension skills.¹⁴⁸

Professional Development: The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) employs the Wisconsin Improvement Program (WIP) in its efforts to provide professional development. WIP is a consortium of 29 teacher preparation institutions and the DPI. The purpose of the WIP is to promote and encourage the professional development an educational system of local control. Therefore, the local school districts decide on the topics of professional development.¹⁴⁹

Wisconsin provides workshops for its practicing teachers. In addition to local requests for particular subject matter, these workshops usually coincide with the state's current initiatives. The state's most recent initiative is a new system of academic standards, developed in 1998.¹⁵⁰ The DPI works closely with the Wisconsin State Reading Association, an affiliate of the International Reading Association,¹⁵¹ to provide professional workshops. However, the DPI works singularly to provide workshops on assessment.¹⁵²

The DPI is currently working with higher education institutions to develop additional guidelines for preparing and certifying teachers. The DPI has proposed three major changes. First, teacher preparation will move from a course and credit orientation to a performance and competency orientation. Second, the guidelines will create three career stages of licensing, and license renewal will have a career-long focus of self-directed, planned professional development. Third, these guidelines will make license levels or categories broader and based on students' developmental levels: early childhood, middle childhood, early adolescence, and adolescence.¹⁵³

Funding: For school year 1999-2000 the State of Wisconsin offered \$850,000 through the Reading Research and Demonstration Initiative to local systems to improve reading.¹⁵⁴

Tenets: The DPI employs a "hands-off" approach to literacy and other subject matter. The local school systems determine how they will serve children. The DPI makes best practices information available to them.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁷ New Hampshire Department of Education website. See <http://www.state.nh.us/doe/nheiap.htm>.

¹⁴⁸ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. See <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/>.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Wisconsin State Reading Association website. See <http://www.wsra.org/generalinfo.html>.

¹⁵² Telephone interview with Jacqueline Karbon, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, October 18, 1999.

¹⁵³ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. See <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/>.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Telephone Interview with Jacqueline Karbon, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, October 18, 1999.

Appendix B

Synopsis of Selected Reading Programs and Supplementary Materials

(Note: This list is not exhaustive, and does not constitute a recommendation for any of the programs listed. It is included for informational purposes only.)

Accelerated Reader

Summary: Accelerated Reader is designed to be used as supplemental instruction and does not take the place of a reading program. Its primary goal is to increase literature-based reading practice. AR is a system of computerized testing and record-keeping that supplements the regular classroom reading program. It is designed to help teachers motivate students to increase literature-based reading practice. AR was developed by Advantage Learning Systems in 1986. Approximately 43,000 schools throughout the country use the program. AR has three basic steps: students choose books and read them at their own pace, students take a computerized quiz after reading the books, and teachers are provided with continual data on students' reading practices and literacy skills development.

Effectiveness: Most studies of AR have been conducted by a subsidiary of Advantage Learning. Several of these studies compared schools that purchased AR to schools that did not, and found higher scores in multiple subject areas in most schools using the program.

Costs: AR has three different kits, each of which include reading management software, test disk sets, a comprehensive software manual, a network-wide school site license, and 12 months of toll-free technical support. The Starter Kit costs \$399 (reading practice disks for up to 200 quizzes). The Economy Kit costs \$1,499 (disks for up to 1,000 quizzes). The Super Kit costs \$2,999 (disks for up to 1,000 quizzes and software for a computer-adaptive testing program).¹⁵⁶

Auditory Discrimination in Depth (Lindamood-Bell)

Summary: The ADD program is a highly structured tutoring program for prekindergarten through adult students. One of its goals is to develop phonemic awareness among students and teach students how to apply the awareness to reading and spelling. Each student in the program follows the same basic sequence: students are trained to be aware of consonants and vowels; students learn to identify and name the sound categories using colored blocks to represent sounds; students then apply this knowledge to spelling and reading, beginning with lettered tiles and then moving to print. The program emphasizes student self-correction.

Effectiveness: One study using a control group reported favorable results. At the end of the school year, students instructed with ADD had significantly different scores on several reading measures, such as word identification and word attack. Two other studies did not use control groups and also found favorable results.

¹⁵⁶ Education Commission of the States, "Accelerated Reader, Overview." Available: <http://www.ecs.org>.

Cost: Training for ADD occurs in two five-day seminars at the Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes Center in California. Training is also provided in other areas outside California. Complete materials for ADD cost approximately \$350.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Kerri L. Briggs, Ph.D., and Catherine Clark, Ph.D., *Reading Programs for Students in the Lower Elementary Grades: What Does the Research Say?*, Texas Center for Educational Research, August 1997. Available at <http://www.tasb.org/tcer/reading.html>.

Comprehensive Integrated Reading and Composition

Summary: The CIRC program is a reading, writing, and language arts program for students in grades 2 through 6. The program was designed in the early 1980s and later was incorporated into the Success for All program. It has been updated since that time and is also referred to as Reading Wings. The program has three principal elements: story related activities, direct instruction in reading comprehension, and integrated language arts and writing. Students are placed into small mixed-ability groups during all activities. CIRC was approved by the U.S. Department of Education's Program Effectiveness Panel as a National Diffusion Network effective program. Embedded in Success for All, CIRC is currently in use in more than 750 schools throughout the country.

Effectiveness: Three studies have been completed. Two were associated with Success for All research. One found that CIRC students made significant gains in reading comprehension, reading vocabulary, language expression, and spelling. It also found that CIRC students had significantly higher achievement scores than a similar group of students that had not been exposed to CIRC. The third study examined the use of CIRC with 3rd graders. Using the California Achievement Test, the study found that CIRC students made significant gains on measures of reading comprehension, but not on measures of vocabulary, word analysis, or total reading. However, the bottom third of CIRC students made significantly greater achievement gains than students in the control group on measures of vocabulary, word analysis, and total reading.

Costs: At least two teachers per school must receive two days of training, which costs \$800 a day for each person trained, plus expenses. Additional follow-up training is recommended. Instructional materials cost approximately \$240 per class the first year and \$100 per class in subsequent years.

Direct Instruction

Summary: Direct Instruction is "an intensive instructional method based on the theory that learning can be greatly accelerated if instructional presentations are clear, rule out likely misinterpretations and facilitate generalizations." It emphasizes basic skills and knowledge, which its developers believe must be learned and mastered before students can advance to higher-level skills. Its primary goal is to accelerate at-risk students' learning in the elementary grades and ensure that they can compete with their more advantaged peers. It uses scripted lesson plans that are written, field-tested in classrooms, rewritten, and retested. It also makes use of frequent assessments, and includes ongoing inservice and preservice teacher training. Direct Instruction is reportedly used in hundreds of schools across the nation. It has been in use since 1968, and was first implemented as part of Project Follow-Through, a large-scale education initiative by the U.S. Department of Education.

Effectiveness: Since Direct Instruction has been in use for about 30 years, several evaluations have been conducted, many of which have found significant positive effects on student achievement in reading, language arts, and/or mathematics. However, results for special education students, particularly those with learning disabilities, have been mixed.

Costs: Cost is dependent on whether a schoolwide or single subject-matter approach is used. Comprehensive schoolwide implementation costs between \$50,000-\$65,000 per year for a five-year commitment. The cost covers contracted days for the project director, the implementation manager, the processing of school data submitted weekly, and some materials. For the Reading Mastery program alone, the cost is \$60 per student and \$300

per teacher for core materials. The first-year average cost for Corrective Reading is \$65 per student and \$130 per teacher for core materials. Second-year costs are \$20 per student for Reading Mastery and \$12 per student for Corrective Reading.¹⁵⁸

Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction

Summary: ECRI trains teachers to use specific teaching strategies that can be used along with most books or reading materials. The program was approved by the U.S. Department of Education National Diffusion network as appropriate for 1st through 10th grade teachers. Teachers learn to teach word recognition, vocabulary, comprehension, study skills, spelling, penmanship, proofreading and writing skills, and literature. It also trains teachers to incorporate reading and language arts into other subjects, use instructional strategies that prevent failure, and develop a classroom management system. ECRI trains teachers to focus on students' strengths. Students are assigned to reading groups based on instructional reading levels. ECRI provides detailed and specific instructions for teachers. The program is currently in use in hundreds of schools throughout the country, according to the American Federation of Teachers.

Effectiveness: Achievement data have been reported for several groups of students in districts across the country, including Tennessee during the 1988-89 school year. At the end of the year, ECRI students surpassed those in the comparison group on almost every measure. In Pickens County, Alabama, in 1996, two schools implemented ECRI and a third served as a comparison group. Scores from the Stanford Achievement Test show that ECRI students made positive and sometimes significant gains on measures of reading—students in the comparison group did not make gains in their scores.

Cost: ECRI can be used with district reading materials, but schools must purchase a set of 16 required teacher texts that costs \$197 per teachers. Training and materials for 35 teachers cost approximately \$9,395.¹⁵⁹

Junior Great Books

Summary: JBG is a literature-based program for students in grades 2 through 6, intended for use in up to five class periods of instruction per week for one or two 12-unit semesters. It is appropriate for students in regular and compensatory education programs. A companion program, Junior Great Books Read-Aloud, is designed for kindergarten and 1st grade students. The program is designed to teach students to interpret and think critically about literature. It also improves reading comprehension, critical thinking, speaking and listening skills, and writing skills. In 1993, JBG was approved by the U.S. Department of Education as a National Diffusion Network effective program.

Effectiveness: The Great Books Foundation conducted an evaluation to learn whether adding JGB to the regular curriculum would enhance learning for students of varying skill levels in heterogeneous classrooms. Students using JGB made significantly greater gains in the Iowa Test of Basic Skills reading vocabulary subtest than control-group students. An independent study compared how different questioning techniques effect students ability to recall stories. The study showed that JGB students recalled more information, with significant differences found on how well they recalled information about characters and events. Two weeks later a delayed test showed that students in the JGB group had more stable scores than either of the other two groups.

¹⁵⁸ Education Commission for the States, "Direct Instruction, Overview." Available at <http://www.ecs.org>.

¹⁵⁹ Briggs and Clark.

Cost: The foundation provides three levels of teacher training. One-time start-up costs per class are tuition for the Basic Course (\$99 per teacher) and a Teacher's Edition (\$21.95 per semester). Materials also must be purchased, including anthologies and student activity books.¹⁶⁰

Open Court Collections for Young Scholars

Summary: OC is a reading and writing program for students in kindergarten through 6th grade, which can be used with regular education students, special-needs students, students reading below grade level, low-achieving students, and bilingual and ESL students. There are seven grade levels in OC. At each level, students may be taught in whole class activities, in small groups, or individually. The program is distributed by SRA/McGraw-Hill. OC focuses on alphabetic and phonological awareness, phonics, and reading books that contain a high proportion of phonics elements taught through the program. Instruction is teacher-directed and explicit. The program also involves shared readings of big books, reading stories in anthologies, and writing workshop activities.

Effectiveness: University of Houston researchers in 1996 found that the program brought economically disadvantaged, low-achieving 1st and 2nd grade students close to the national average for reading achievement.

Cost: Pricing information was not available. Training for the program usually consists of a one-day grade-level overview. Follow-up visits are made after a school or district has used the program for six to eight weeks. Additional training resources are available. The core program is packaged in kits that provide classroom resources for teaching phonemic awareness and phonics. Other instructional materials are also available.

Reading Recovery

Summary: Reading Recovery is a one-on-one tutoring program that targets 1st grade students whose reading skills place them in the lowest 10-20 percent at their school. Students receive 30 minutes of daily one-on-one tutoring by a specially trained, certified classroom teacher. The program supplements classroom instruction and lasts an average of 12-20 weeks. Students complete the program when they can read at a level comparable to the average reading level at the school. A diagnostic survey is used to assess students' reading skill level and to monitor their progress throughout the program. The program was first implemented in the United States in 1985. (It originated in New Zealand.) By 1995-96, it was being used by more than 9,000 schools in 2,940 districts. Arkansas adopted the program for statewide use in 1988. In Ohio, it is widely used and is backed by the state legislature and the State Board of Education.

Effectiveness: Research has shown that the program "reduces the incidence of grade retention, remedial programs and special education placement. However, some studies indicate mixed achievement results among Reading Recovery participants."

Costs: The initial cost of a Reading Recovery training site varies according to the number of districts participating. The average is reported to be \$5,000-\$6,000. The fees include teacher training by teacher leader, six hours of university credit, all professional text, assessment materials, and children's books. Continuing contract fees in subsequent years are minimal. "Although the high cost of Reading Recovery is a concern, many educators

¹⁶⁰ Briggs and Clark.

and policymakers believe that the investment is worth the potential savings if fewer students are retained, placed in remedial programs or referred to special education.”¹⁶¹

The Slingerland Approach

Summary: The Slingerland Approach (SA) is designed for whole classes of students, but may also be used with individuals and small groups. It targets beginning readers at risk of reading failure. It is an approach to reading rather than a specific curriculum, and is compatible with any book or basal reading text. The program was designed by Beth Slingerland, an elementary school teacher, for students in kindergarten through grade 6. Its goal is to prevent reading problems, but is also used to remediate them. The program includes screening tests that are used to identify specific language disabilities in kindergarten or 1st grade students. The SA curriculum has three components: learning to write, an auditory approach, and a visual approach. Language arts skills, including oral expression, decoding, reading comprehension, spelling, handwriting, and writing, are taught in an integrated direct instruction approach.

Effectiveness: Research analyzing the Slingerland Approach generally indicate that students who have studied under the program have achieved some of the program’s goals. However, the research does not use standard research techniques that allow firm conclusions to be drawn.

Costs: SA has three levels of training. The introductory level is a four week course consisting of lecture, demonstration, and direct involvement with students and requires a minimum of 12 teachers. Training costs \$688 per teacher plus other expenses. The second training level is for teachers who have used the SA methods; the third-year course is for teachers who want to become Slingerland trainers. Books and materials at each training level cost about \$150 per teacher.

Success for All

Summary: Success for All is a schoolwide program for students in pre-K to 6th grade. Its purpose is to ensure that every student will reach grade 3 with adequate reading and other basic skills. It targets primarily elementary schools in high poverty areas. It uses one-to-one tutoring for students who are falling behind their classmates; research-based reading instruction; preschool and kindergarten programs; cooperative learning; eight-week assessments to determine reading progress; and family support.¹⁶² Success for All was piloted in one Baltimore elementary school in 1987-88. Current use is estimated at approximately 750 schools in 37 states.

Effectiveness: “Success for All has a strong research base. Evaluations, including longitudinal and controlled studies, have been conducted in a number of schools and districts. In addition, the program has been successfully replicated at various sites throughout the country.”

Costs: Success for All indicates that cost is based on the size and location of participating schools, and number of schools collaborating in training. They estimate a range from \$45,000 to \$58,000 for the first year for a 500-student school in the pre-kindergarten through 5th grade range, and \$45,000 to \$52,000 each year for the next two years. The estimates include training, materials, follow-up visits, and other services. Some estimates of costs have been higher than this indicates.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Education Commission of the States, “Reading Recovery, Overview.” Available <http://www.edweek.org>.

¹⁶² *Education Week*, “Organization Listing: Success for All.” Available <http://www.edweek.org>.

¹⁶³ Education Commission of the States, “Success for All, Overview.” Available <http://www.ecs.org>.

Appendix C

Progress in Reading, Grade 2, 1998-99

(Data collected by the Tennessee Department of Education)

System	Grade 2 Enrollment	# at or above grade level / reading	% at or above grade level / reading
Anderson County	602	473	78.6
Clinton City	141	118	83.7
Oak Ridge City	336	206	61.3
Bedford County	492	315	64.0
Benton County	218	140	64.2
Bledsoe County	141	136	96.5
Blount County	891	551	61.8
Alcoa City	124	89	71.8
Maryville City	277	247	89.2
Bradley County	720	608	84.4
Cleveland City	409	319	78.0
Campbell County	526	258	49.0
Cannon County	154	75	48.7
Carroll County	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hollow Roack-Bruceton SSD	82	75	91.5
Huntingdon SSD	111	65	58.6
McKenzie SSD	107	41	38.3
South Carroll SSD	29	19	65.5
West Carroll SSD	92	56	60.9
Carter County	530	310	58.5
Elizabethton City	124	117	94.4
Cheatham County	525	324	61.7
Chester County	213	156	73.2
Claiborne County	430	125	29.1
Clay County	83	48	57.8
Cocke County	347	201	57.9
Newport City	83	65	78.3
Coffee County	312	267	85.6
Manchester City	118	107	90.7
Tullahoma City	260	202	77.7
Crockett County	61	36	59.0
Alamo City	95	59	62.1
Bells City	50	29	58.0
Cumberland County	547	339	62.0
Davidson County	5696	2947	51.7
Decatur County	140	111	79.3
DeKalb County	204	113	55.4
Dickson County	579	359	62.0
Dyer County	291	177	60.8
Dyersburg City	268	194	72.4
Fayette County	363	93	25.6

System	Grade 2 Enrollment	# at or above grade level / reading	% at or above grade level / reading
Fentress County	243	223	91.8
Franklin County	470	281	59.8
Humboldt City	163	52	31.9
Milan SSD	129	72	55.8
Trenton SSD	115	67	58.3
Bradford SSD	62	23	37.1
Gibson County SSD	195	134	68.7
Giles County	374	268	71.7
Grainger County	236	190	80.5
Greene County	558	446	79.9
Greeneville City	203	178	87.7
Grundy County	186	153	82.3
Hamblen County	730	511	70.0
Hamilton County	3449	1622	47.0
Hancock County	77	74	96.1
Hardeman County	385	239	62.1
Hardin County	334	250	74.9
Hawkins County	533	331	62.1
Rogersville City	99	58	84.1
Haywood County	277	104	37.5
Henderson County	252	183	72.6
Lexington City	103	86	83.5
Henry County	211	92	43.6
Paris SSD	149	112	75.2
Hickman County	274	174	63.5
Houston County	111	92	82.9
Humphreys County	249	189	75.9
Jackson County	137	117	85.4
Jefferson County	539	329	61.0
Johnson County	163	122	74.8
Knox County	4145	2641	63.7
Lake County	77	38	49.4
Lauderdale County	366	168	45.9
Lawrence County	544	392	72.1
Lewis County	147	65	44.2
Lincoln County	297	206	69.4
Fayetteville City	119	92	77.3
Loudon County	454	375	82.6
Lenoir City	64	49	76.6
McMinn County	448	265	59.2
Athens City	194	173	89.2
Etowah City	49	35	71.4
McNairy County	338	192	56.8
Macon County	290	213	73.4
Madison County	1116	464	41.6

System	Grade 2 Enrollment	# at or above grade level / reading	% at or above grade level / reading
Marion County	333	250	75.1
Richard City SSD	19	14	73.7
Marshall County	370	292	78.9
Maury County	964	879	91.2
Meigs County	133	87	65.4
Monroe County	360	185	51.4
Sweetwater City	172	134	77.9
Montgomery County	1957	1020	52.1
Moore County	69	46	66.7
Morgan County	270	212	78.5
Obion County	347	287	82.7
Union City	109	81	74.3
Overton County	280	170	60.7
Perry County	78	56	71.8
Pickett County	50	36	72.0
Polk County	187	107	57.2
Putnam County	723	651	90.0
Rhea County	274	248	90.5
Dayton City	82	70	85.4
Roane County	413	350	84.7
Harriman City	110	71	64.5
Robertson County	896	575	64.2
Rutherford County	1704	1211	71.1
Murfreesboro City	782	697	89.1
Scott County	259	165	63.7
Oneida Special	94	71	75.5
Sequatchie County	135	93	68.9
Sevier County	974	811	83.3
Shelby County	3826	2521	65.9
Memphis City	5170	2054	39.7
Smith County	259	207	79.9
Stewart County	174	145	83.3
Sullivan County	962	848	88.1
Bristol City	310	191	61.6
Kingsport City	511	378	74.0
Sumner County	1521	821	54.0
Tipton County	752	603	80.2
Covington City	117	27	23.1
Trousdale County	88	71	80.7
Unicoi County	193	117	60.6
Union County	239	64	26.8
Van Buren County	56	40	71.4
Warren County	516	443	85.9
Washington County	593	404	68.1
Johnson City	558	483	86.6

System	Grade 2 Enrollment	# at or above grade level / reading	% at or above grade level / reading
Wayne County	223	146	65.5
Weakley County	398	304	76.4
White County	302	163	54.0
Williamson County	1456	1249	85.8
Franklin SSD	469	324	69.1
Wilson County	825	734	89.0
Lebanon SSD	364	256	70.3
Statewide	68421	43772	64.0

Appendix D

Websites That Focus on Reading and Related Subjects

Publications / Research

www.nap.edu

Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success, M. Susan Burns, Peg Griffin, and Catherine Snow, Ed., National Research Council, National Academy Press, Washington, D.C. This book targets educators, providing them teaching strategies and lists of appropriate books for K-3 students. It is based on the more technical *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* published by the National Research Council and includes some of the same authors.

books.nap.edu/html/prdyc

This website links to the National Research Council's *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*.

www.aasa.org/reform/index.htm

This website contains "An Educator's Guide to Schoolwide Reform" prepared by the American Institutes of Research. The report reviews 24 approaches to schoolwide reform, highlighting quantitative achievement measures.

www.ed.gov/pubs/CompactforReading

A website from the U.S. Department of Education containing a user-friendly handbook designed to lead teams of parents and school administrators through the steps of building and implementing a Compact for Reading. It provides information, strategies, examples, and checklists to help parents, educators, and community members develop effective, workable compacts that can help improve schools, increase family involvement, and increase student skills and achievement in reading. This website also contains a link to the School-Home Reading Kit, which includes activities for children from kindergarten through the 3rd grade that teachers can provide to families for at-home reinforcement of in-school reading and language arts activities.

www.readbygrade3.com

This website allows access to "Every Child Reading: An Action Plan of the Learning First Alliance," an action paper adopted by the Learning First Alliance. The Learning First Alliance is comprised of 12 national education associations, including the American Federation of Teachers, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Education Association, and the Education Commission of the States. The website also has links to other resources for teacher and parents.

www.accesseric.org:81/

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national information system designed to provide users with ready access to an extensive body of education-related literature. Supported by the National Library of Education, ERIC encompasses the world's largest and most frequently searched education data base and a network of knowledgeable and helpful subject experts.

www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec/

A part of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication, this website contains a reading assessment database with information about over 125 reading

assessment tools that are appropriate for children who have not yet entered 3rd grade. The site does not rate the quality of the tools, but provides information about each assessment tool.

www.ciera.org/

The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading (CIERA) is a national research center funded by the Department of Education. CIERA's mission is to improve the reading achievement of America's children by generating and disseminating theoretical, empirical, and practical solutions to persistent problems in the learning and teaching of beginning reading.

www.tasb.org/tcer

The Texas Center for Educational Research (TCER) is an independent, nonprofit, educational research organization established to study major issues affecting all levels and areas of Texas public education. TCER's objective is to design and produce original research and provide high-quality information resources for those who make, influence, or implement education policy in Texas. The website includes links to the center's reports, including some related to literacy.

www.sreb.org

Created in 1948 by Southern states, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) is the nation's first interstate compact for education. Its mission is to help government and education leaders work cooperatively to advance education and, in doing so, improve the social and economic life of the region. SREB's 16 member states are Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. One of its newest publications, released January 2000 and available on its website, is entitled *Teaching All Children to Read*.

Associations / Initiatives

www.ed.gov/inits/americanreads/

This is the website for the America Reads Challenge, the U.S. Department of Education's grassroots program that challenges every American to help all children learn to read. It includes a page devoted to teacher quality, which links to other websites providing information about becoming a teacher, professional development, and more.

<http://nifl.gov/>

The National Institute for Literacy, an independent federal organization that is "leading the national effort toward a fully literate America."

<http://www.cal.org/NCLE/>

The National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education, at the Center for Applied Linguistics, offers a newsletter of ESL news, an ESL adult literacy e-mail forum sponsored by the National Institute for Literacy, answers to frequently asked questions, a searchable database of ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) articles, and print and multimedia resources.

www.ira.org

The website of the International Reading Association. The IRA "seeks to promote high levels of literacy for all by improving the quality of reading instruction

through studying the reading processes and teaching techniques; serving as a clearinghouse for the dissemination of reading research through conferences, journals, and other publications; and actively encouraging the lifetime reading habit.”

www.naeyc.org

The National Association for the Education of Young (NAEYC) is the nation's largest organization of early childhood professionals and others dedicated to improving the quality of early childhood education programs for children birth through age eight.

www.ecs.org

The website for the Education Commission of the States contains summaries of many reading programs, including each program's background, philosophy, program components, evidence of effectiveness, discussion of evidence, professional development and support, implementation, and costs. In addition, ECS provides information on many other education topics.

<http://www.read2kids.org/>

The Family Literacy Foundation's website offers tips in English and Spanish for reading to children and information about family literacy programs, such as Reading Roots, Uniting Through Reading, and Youth Reading Role Models.

<http://www.familit.org/index.html>

The National Center for Family Literacy's website offers information about family literacy, welfare reform, and training.

U.S. Department of Education

www.wested.org/cc/html/ccnetwork.htm

The U.S. Department of Education funds 15 Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers that help states, school districts, schools, tribes, community-based organizations, and other grant recipients with the administration, integration, and implementation of programs funded under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The centers provide comprehensive training and technical assistance to improve teaching and learning and to meet the needs of children served by ESEA programs.

www.wested.org/cc/html/ccnetwork.htm

The U.S. Department of Education funds 15 Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers that help states, school districts, schools, tribes, community-based organizations, and other grant recipients with the administration, integration, and implementation of programs funded under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The Centers provide comprehensive training and technical assistance to improve teaching and learning and to meet the needs of children served by ESEA.

www.ed.gov/prog_info/Labs/

The U.S. Department of Education's Regional Educational Laboratory Program is a network of 10 regional labs working to ensure that those involved in educational improvement at the local, state, and regional levels have access to the best available research and knowledge from practice. The program is designed to help educators, policymakers, and communities improve schools and help all students attain their full potential.

Appendix E

National Council of Teachers of English and International Reading Association: List of Standards for English Language Arts

(Available at <http://www.ncte.org/standards/thelist.html>.)

The vision guiding these standards is that all students must have the opportunities and resources to develop the language skills they need to pursue life's goals and to participate fully as informed, productive members of society. These standards assume that literacy growth begins before children enter school as they experience and experiment with literacy activities—reading and writing, and association spoken words with their graphic representations. Recognizing this fact, these standards encourage the development of curriculum and instruction that make productive use of the emerging literacy abilities that children bring to school. Furthermore, the standards provide ample room for the innovation and creativity essential to teaching and learning. They are not prescriptions for particular curriculum or instruction.

Although we present these standards as a list, we want to emphasize that they are not distinct and separable; they are, in fact, interrelated and should be considered as a whole.

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

9. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.
10. Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Appendix F

TerraNova

Reading Performance Levels

(Grades 3-5)

Step 1

Students select picture representations of ideas and identify stated details contained in simple texts. In written responses, they can select and transfer information from charts.

Progressing

Students identify synonyms for grade-level words and use context clues to define common words. They make simple inferences and predictions based on the text. They identify characters' feelings. They can transfer information from text to graphic form, or from graphic to text form. In written responses, they can provide limited support for their answers.

Nearing Proficiency

Students use context clues and structural analysis to determine word meaning. They recognize homonyms and antonyms in grade-level text. They identify important details, sequence, cause-and-effect, and lessons embedded in the text. They interpret characters' feelings and apply information to new situations. In written responses, they can express an opinion and support it.

Proficient

Students interpret figures of speech. They recognize paraphrases of text information and retrieve information to complete forms. In more complex texts, they identify themes, main ideas, or author purpose/point of view. They analyze and apply information in graphic and text form, make reasonable generalizations, and draw conclusions. In written responses, they can identify key elements from text.

Advanced

Students use analogies to generalize. They identify a paraphrase of concepts or ideas in texts. They can indicate thought processes that led them to a previous answer. In written responses, they demonstrate understanding of an implied theme, assess intent of passage information, and provide justification as well as support for their answers.

(Grades 6-8)

Step 1

Students recognize the main idea and some important details in straightforward text. They can transfer information from text to graphic form or from graphic to text form.

Progressing

Students identify and describe the motivation of a person or character in text. They make simple comparisons across texts. They recognize major story events or ideas in more complex text, draw conclusions based on accessible information, and identify pictured representations of text ideas.

Nearing Proficiency

Students determine word meaning and the meaning of some idiomatic expressions. They identify author purpose, extract information from simple graphic forms, and paraphrase text information. They can identify relationships within a text (e.g., cause-and-effect) and make some connections across two texts. They can indicate the thought process that led them to an answer on a previous item.

Proficient

Students identify genre and author craft. They recognize consistency in attitudes or viewpoints expressed in text. They synthesize ideas across various parts of text to identify theme or central purpose. They infer connections between characters and events across texts and interpret data in graphic organizers. In written responses, they provide some justification or support for their answers.

Advanced

Students recognize literary concepts such as mood, draw conclusions from more challenging text, and make connections between writers' experiences and perspectives. They understand and use text structure and apply text ideas to new situations. They recognize ways in which their understanding of text can be deepened. In written responses, they provide full justification or support for their answers.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ CTB McGraw-Hill, Performance Level Handbook: *TerraNova*, pp. 51-52.

Appendix G

1998 NAEP Results: State Comparisons

1998 NAEP Results: Reading / Grade 4

States with significantly higher average scale scores than Tennessee	Connecticut
	Montana
	New Hampshire
	Maine
	Massachusetts
	Wisconsin
	Iowa
	Kansas
	Minnesota
	Colorado
	Oklahoma
	Wyoming
	Virginia
	Rhode Island
	Kentucky
Washington	
North Carolina	
States with no statistically significant difference in average scale scores from Tennessee	Texas
	Michigan
	West Virginia
	Missouri
	New York
	Utah
	Maryland
	Oregon
	Tennessee
	Delaware
	Alabama
	South Carolina
	Georgia
Arkansas	
States with significantly lower average scale scores than Tennessee	Nevada
	Florida
	Arizona
	New Mexico
	Mississippi
	Louisiana
	California
	California
	Hawaii
District of Columbia	

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *NAEP 1998 Reading: Report Card for the Nation and the States*, U. S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, NCES 1999-500.

1998 NAEP Results: Reading / Grade 8

States with significantly higher average scale scores than Tennessee

Maine
Connecticut
Montana
Massachusetts
Kansas
Minnesota
Virginia
New York
Wisconsin
Oregon
Oklahoma
Washington
Utah
North Carolina
Colorado
Missouri
Rhode Island
Texas
Kentucky
West Virginia

States with no statistically significant difference in average scale scores from Tennessee

Maryland
Arizona
Tennessee
New Mexico
Georgia
Nevada
Delaware
Arkansas
Alabama
South Carolina
Florida
California

States with significantly lower average scale scores than Tennessee

Louisiana
Mississippi
Hawaii
District of Columbia
Virginia

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *NAEP 1998 Reading: Report Card for the Nation and the States*, U. S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, NCES 1999-500.

1998 NAEP Results: Reading / Grade 4

States with significantly higher percentage of students at or above proficient than Tennessee

Connecticut
New Hampshire
Montana
Massachusetts
Maine
Minnesota
Iowa
Wisconsin
Kansas
Colorado
Rhode Island
Oklahoma

States with no statistically higher percentage of students at or above proficient than Tennessee

Wyoming
Virginia
New York
Washington
Kentucky
Missouri
Maryland
West Virginia
Texas
Oregon
Michigan
North Carolina
Utah
Tennessee
Delaware
Georgia
Alabama
Arkansas
Florida
South Carolina
Arizona
New Mexico
Nevada
California

States with significantly lower percentage of students at or above proficient than Tennessee

Louisiana
Missouri
Hawaii
District of Columbia
Virginia

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *NAEP 1998 Reading: Report Card for the Nation and the States*, U. S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, NCES 1999-500.

1998 NAEP Results: Reading / Grade 8

States with significantly higher percentage of students at or above proficient than Tennessee

Maine
Connecticut
Montana
Minnesota
Massachusetts
Kansas
New York
Oregon
Virginia
Wisconsin
Washington
Maryland
North Carolina
Utah

States with no statistically higher percentage of students at or above proficient than Tennessee

Rhode Island
Colorado
Wyoming
Kentucky
Missouri
Oklahoma
Texas
Arizona
West Virginia
Tennessee
Delaware
Georgia
Nevada
New Mexico
Arkansas
Florida
South Carolina
California
Alabama

States with significantly lower percentage of students at or above proficient than Tennessee

Hawaii
Missouri
Louisiana
District of Columbia
Virginia

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *NAEP 1998 Reading: Report Card for the Nation and the States*, U. S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, NCES 1999-500.

Appendix H

Expected Reading Accomplishments by Age and Grade

Birth to Three-Year-Old Accomplishments

- Recognizes specific books by cover.
- Pretends to read books.
- Understands that books are handled in particular ways.
- Enters into a book-sharing routine with primary caregivers.
- Vocalization play in crib gives way to enjoyment of rhyming language, nonsense word play, etc.
- Labels objects in books.
- Comments on characters in books.
- Looks at picture in book and realizes it is a symbol for real object.
- Listens to stories.
- Requests/commands adult to read and write.
- May begin attending to specific print, such as letters in names.
- Uses increasingly purposeful scribbling.
- Occasionally seems to distinguish between drawing and writing.
- Produces some letter-like forms and scribbles with some features of English writing.

Three- to Four-Year-Old Accomplishments

- Knows that alphabet letters are a special category of visual graphics that can be individually named.
- Recognizes print in the local environment.
- Knows that it is the print that is read in stories.
- Understands that different text forms are used for different functions of print (e.g., a list for groceries is different than the list on the menu).
- Pays attention to separable and repeating sounds in language (e.g., in Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater: Peter Eater).
- Uses new vocabulary and grammatical constructions in own speech.
- Understands and follows oral directions.
- Is sensitive to some sequences of events in stories.
- Shows an interest in books and reading.
- When being read a story, connects information and events to real-life experiences.
- Questions and comments demonstrate understanding of literal meaning of story being told.
- Displays reading and writing attempts, calling attention to self: “Look at my story.”
- Can identify about 10 alphabet letters, especially those from own name.
- Writes (scribbles) message as part of playful activity.
- May begin to attend to beginning or rhyming sounds in salient words.

Kindergarten Accomplishments

- Knows the parts of a book and their functions.
- Begins to track print when listening to a familiar text being read or when rereading own writing.
- “Reads” familiar texts emergently, i.e., not necessarily verbatim from the print alone.
- Recognizes and can name all uppercase and lowercase letters.
- Understands that the sequence of letters in a written word represents the sequence of sounds (phonemes) in a spoken word (alphabetic principle).
- Learns many, though not all, one-to-one letter-sound correspondences.
- Recognizes some words by sight, including a few very common ones (“the”, “I,” “my,” “you,” “is,” “are”).
- Uses new vocabulary and grammatical constructions in own speech.
- Makes appropriate switches from oral to written language styles.
- Notices when simple sentences fail to make sense.
- Connects information and events in texts to life and life experiences to text.
- Retells, reenacts, or dramatizes stories or parts of stories.
- Listens attentively to books the teacher reads to class.

- Can name some book titles and authors.
- Demonstrates familiarity with a number of types or genres of text (e.g., storybooks, expository texts, poems, newspapers, and everyday print such as signs, notices, labels).
- Correctly answers questions about stories read aloud.
- Makes predictions based on illustrations or portions of stories.
- Demonstrates understanding that spoken words consist of sequences of phonemes.
- Given spoken sets like “dan, dan, den,” can identify the first two as the same and the third as different.
- Given spoken sets like “dak, pat, zen,” can identify the first two as sharing one same sound.
- Given spoken segments, can merge them into a meaningful target word.
- Given a spoken word, can produce another word that rhymes with it.
- Independently writes many uppercase and lowercase letters.
- Uses phonemic awareness and letter knowledge to spell independently (invented or creative spelling).
- Writes (unconventionally) to express own meaning.
- Builds a repertoire of some conventionally spelled words.
- Shows awareness of distinction between “kid writing” and conventional orthography.
- Writes own name (first and last) and the first names of some friends or classmates.
- Can write most letters and some words when they are dictated.

First-Grade Accomplishments

- Makes a transition from emergent to “real” reading.
- Reads aloud with accuracy and comprehension any text that is appropriately designed for the first half of grade one.
- Accurately decodes orthographically regular, one-syllable words and nonsense words (e.g., “sit,” “zot”) using print-sound mappings to sound out unknown words.
- Uses letter-sound correspondence knowledge to sound out unknown words when reading text.
- Recognizes common, irregularly spelled words by sight (“have,” “said,” “where,” “two”).
- Has a reading vocabulary of 300 to 500 sight words and easily sounded-out words.
- Monitors own reading and self-corrects when an incorrectly identified word does not fit with cues provided by the letters in the word or the context surrounding the word.
- Reads and comprehends both fiction and nonfiction that is appropriately designed for the grade level.
- Shows evidence of expanding language repertoire, including increasing appropriate use of standard, more formal language.
- Creates own written texts for others to read.
- Notices when difficulties are encountered in understanding text.
- Reads and understands simple written instructions.
- Predicts and justifies what will happen next in stories.
- Discusses prior knowledge of topics in expository texts.
- Uses how, why, and what-if questions to discuss nonfiction texts.
- Describes new information gained from texts in own words.
- Distinguishes whether simple sentences are incomplete or fail to make sense; notices when simple texts fail to make sense.
- Can answer simple written comprehension questions based on the material read.
- Can count the number of syllables in a word.
- Can blend or segment the phonemes in most one-syllable words.
- Spells correctly three- and four-letter short vowel words.
- Composes fairly readable first drafts using appropriate parts of the writing process (some attention to planning, drafting, rereading for meaning, and some self-correction).
- Uses invented spelling or phonics-based knowledge to spell independently, when necessary.
- Shows spelling consciousness or sensitivity to conventional spelling.
- Uses basic punctuation and capitalization.
- Produces a variety of types of compositions (e.g., stories, descriptions, journal entries) showing appropriate relationships between printed text, illustrations, and other graphics.
- Engages in a variety of literacy activities voluntarily (e.g., choosing books and stories to read, writing a note to a friend).

Second-Grade Accomplishments

- Reads and comprehends both fiction and nonfiction that is appropriately designed for grade level.
- Accurately decodes orthographically regular, multisyllable words and nonsense words (e.g., capital, Kalamazoo).
- Uses knowledge of print-sound mappings to sound out unknown words.
- Accurately reads many irregularly spelled words and such spelling patterns as diphthongs, special vowel spellings, and common word endings.
- Reads and comprehends both fiction and nonfiction that is appropriately designed for the grade.
- Shows evidence of expanding language repertory, including increasing use of more formal language registers.
- Reads voluntarily for interest and own purposes.
- Rereads sentences when meaning is not clear.
- Interprets information from diagrams, charts, and graphs.
- Recalls facts and details of texts.
- Reads nonfiction materials for answers to specific questions or for specific purposes.
- Takes part in creative responses to texts such as dramatizations, oral presentations, fantasy play, etc.
- Discusses similarities in characters and events across stories.
- Connects and compares information across nonfiction selections.
- Poses possible answers to how, why, and what-if questions.
- Correctly spells previously studied words and spelling patterns in own writing.
- Represents the complete sound of a word when spelling independently.
- Shows sensitivity to using formal language patterns in place of oral language patterns at appropriate spots in own writing (e.g., de-contextualizing sentences, conventions for quoted speech, literary language forms, proper verb forms).
- Makes reasonable judgments about what to include in written products.
- Productively discusses ways to clarify and refine own writing and that of others.
- With assistance, adds use of conferencing, revision, and editing processes to clarify and refine own writing to the steps of the expected parts of the writing process.
- Given organizational help, writes informative, well-structured reports.
- Attends to spelling, mechanics, and presentation for final products.
- Produces a variety of types of compositions (e.g., stories, reports, correspondence).

Third-Grade Accomplishments

- Reads aloud with fluency and comprehension any text that is appropriately designed for grade level.
- Uses letter-sound correspondence knowledge and structural analysis to decode words.
- Reads and comprehends both fiction and nonfiction that is appropriately designed for grade level.
- Reads longer fictional selections and chapter books independently.
- Takes part in creative responses to texts such as dramatizations, oral presentations, fantasy play, etc.
- Can point to or clearly identify specific words or wordings that are causing comprehension difficulties.
- Summarizes major points from fiction and nonfiction texts.
- In interpreting fiction, discusses underlying theme or message.
- Asks how, why, and what-if questions in interpreting nonfiction texts.
- In interpreting nonfiction, distinguishes cause and effect, fact and opinion, main idea and supporting details.
- Uses information and reasoning to examine bases of hypotheses and opinions.
- Infers word meaning from taught roots, prefixes, and suffixes.
- Correctly spells previously studied words and language patterns in own writing (e.g., elaborates descriptions; uses figurative wordings).
- Begins to incorporate literacy words and language patterns in own writing (e.g., elaborates descriptions; uses figurative wording).

- With some guidance, uses all aspects of the writing process in producing own compositions and reports.
- Combines information from multiple sources in writing reports.
- With assistance, suggests and implements editing and revision to clarify and refine own writing.
- Presents and discusses own writing with other students and responds helpfully to other students' compositions.
- Independently reviews work for spelling, mechanics, and presentation.
- Produces a variety of written work (e.g., literature response, reports, “published” books, semantic maps) in a variety of formats including multimedia forms.

From: *Starting Out Right—A Guide to Promoting Children’s Reading Success* by the National Research Council (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1999).

Appendix I

Letters of Response from the Department of Education, the State Board of Education, and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission




DON SUNDQUIST
GOVERNOR

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
6TH FLOOR, ANDREW JOHNSON TOWER
710 JAMES ROBERTSON PARKWAY
NASHVILLE, TN 37243-0375

E. VERNON COFFEY, Ed.D.
COMMISSIONER

MEMORANDUM

TO: John Morgan
Comptroller of the Treasury

FROM: E. Vernon Coffey 

DATE: February 24, 2000

The Department of Education has reviewed your Reading Report and would like to offer the following responses to the recommendations.

The General Assembly may wish to consider making reading a state priority by passing and funding a comprehensive reading initiative.

As the Department moves to hold schools accountable for their reading performance measures established by the Education Improvement Act and the State Board of Education, additional funding will be needed to target specific areas of low performance at the school level.

The General Assembly should consider fully funding the State Board of Education's Early Childhood Education Plan.

The fiscal year 2000-2001 budget request before the legislature includes a \$12 million improvement item for the Department of Education to serve an additional 2,400 at risk children in three and four year old pre-school programs.

The Department should utilize existing resources to the extent possible to inform teachers about current strategies and methods for reading instruction and assessment.

The Department agrees that the Internet is a low cost option for sharing information with teachers about current strategies and methods for reading instruction and assessment. As part of the Governor's *Come Read with Me* initiative, the department plans a *Focus on Reading* website. The site will include the reading accomplishments, links for teachers and parents, current research and strategies, and a reading contact for each Tennessee system.

Responses to Reading Report
Page Two
February 24, 2000

The Department should expand teachers' professional development opportunities to address assessment strategies other than standardized testing that are appropriate for students in grades K-3.

A statewide committee of department staff and teachers is currently meeting to establish a set of reading accomplishments for grade K-2. This will aid in defining reading expectations for students in the developmental grades and matching various assessment options with the accomplishments. Regional reading conferences are planned for May to share this information with teachers.

The Department should make certain that the needs of poor readers in middle and high schools are addressed.

The Department agrees that reading is fundamental in order for students to succeed in middle and high schools. As the Department identifies and works with low performing schools, reading will be a priority as we focus on improvement by targeting the limited resources available.

The department may want to consider requiring LEAs with consistently low scores to develop reading plans that would detail such elements as reading programs, methods of assessment, and planned professional development activities for perhaps a three-year period.

The department agrees and is currently reading school improvement plans mandated by the State Board. Schools exhibiting consistently low scores in any subject area over a three-year period are receiving close scrutiny. Plans are required to include student-focused goals and specific measures (such as professional development) to address problem areas identified through student assessment.

The Department should encourage districts to develop programs and prevention services that increase parents' involvement in teaching their children to read.

As part of the Governor's *Come Read with Me* initiative, the department has kicked off two reading programs to increase parent involvement. *Parents as Reading Partners* is focused at the parents of K-5 children. It is designed to get a commitment from the parent to read to or with the student for thirty minutes per day. *Smart from the Start* is a collaborative program between the departments of Education, Health, and Human Services to provide information to the parents of children age birth through five on the importance of developmentally appropriate activities to stimulate the brain. These activities include, but are not limited to, reading to the child.

VC/jrm



TENNESSEE
State Board of Education
9th Floor, Andrew Johnson Tower
710 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, TN 37243-1050

Dr. J. V. Sailors, Executive Director

Phone: (615) 741-2966

Fax: (615) 741-0371

February 18, 2000

Ms. Ethel R. Detch
Director, Office of Research and Education Accountability
505 Deaderick Street, Suite 500
Nashville, TN 37243-0268

Dear Ms. Detch:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft copy of your report on reading.

I concur fully with the information in your report relating to the need for a state-funded reading initiative to include an infrastructure within the Department of Education to develop, support and monitor the initiative.

I concur also with the need for professional development activities and more specific pre-service courses in our teacher preparation programs. We need to train and employ a larger number of reading specialists. The results from our TVAAS model indicate the need for more of an emphasis on reading in the middle grades.

The State Board of Education is excited about being a partner with the legislature, the Governor's Office, the Department and THEC in addressing the unmet needs of our pre-school youth and putting a plan in place to assure that all students become good readers.

Sincerely yours,

J. V. Sailors, Ed.D.
Executive Director

JVS/pc



RICHARD G. RHODA
Executive Director

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DON SUNDUQUIST
Governor

MEMORANDUM

DATE RECEIVED

FEB 24 2000

OFFICES OF
RESEARCH & EDUCATION
ACCOUNTABILITY

To: Ethel Detch

From: Richard G. Rhoda

Date: February 24, 2000

I have reviewed with interest the material on improving reading levels in Tennessee. From the data presented, the concerns are valid and the suggestions for improvement appropriate.

I believe that most of our teacher education programs require at least two courses in reading; however, I would like to discuss this point with the Deans of Education to learn more about the curriculum and how much reading methodology is required across the systems. THEC has a meeting scheduled with the Deans of Education on March 10, and we will add this item to the agenda.

Relevant and systematic professional development opportunities for teachers are essential but are limited due to the lack of funding. Joint committees involving staff members of the Higher Education Commission, the State Department of Education, and the State Board of Education have highlighted professional development as a major issue to be addressed. Support for this area would be welcomed.

The Center for Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is an ideal place for a research center in reading as suggested by the Kentucky model. However, I would suggest also that regional locations could be valuable in disseminating information. We could ask each School of Education to develop an informational center and maintain ongoing contact with the Center for Literacy Studies in order to assure that the research on best practices reaches the campuses in a timely manner.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback concerning this issue. If you have specific questions, please do not hesitate to call me.

Appendix J

Persons Interviewed

Marino C. Alvarez
Professor
Tennessee State University
College of Education

Dr. Helen Brown
Assistant Superintendent for K-8 Instruction and Administration
Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

Gary Cowan
Language Arts Coordinator
Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

Fran Hewston
Program Assistant
Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

Susan Hudson
Executive Director for Professional Development
Tennessee Department of Education

Christine Jackson
Director of Family Education
Martha O'Bryan Center

Dana Gay Ramsey
Coordinator, Education Edge
Dickson County Board of Education

Dean B. Roberts
Professor and Acting Head
Tennessee State University
College of Education

Belinda Shafer
Coordinator of Federal Projects
Dickson County Board of Education

Carole Stice
Professor
Tennessee State University
College of Education

Dr. Carol Thigpin
Executive Director
NashvilleREAD

Claudette Williams
Tennessee Department of Education
Elementary and Middle Schools Coordinator