

Changes: None.

Comments Related to the Role of Word Recognition Instruction in Early Reading Programs

Comments: One commenter argued that the role of word recognition instruction in early reading programs should be included. This commenter felt that this issue is schools' largest area of concern, noting that there is very little solid research documenting how to structure a quality school reading program that contains quality literature and instruction in word recognition, including phonics.

Discussion: The Secretary agrees that the role of word recognition instruction in early reading programs is important and believes that it is included under paragraphs (f)(2) and (3) of the priority.

Changes: None.

Comments Related to Programs for Struggling Readers

Comments: One commenter advocated the inclusion of programs for struggling readers. This commenter argued that most pull-out programs have not been effective in bridging the gap in achievement, hence programs that might work better need to be studied, along with methods of organizing classrooms to accommodate diversity.

Discussion: The Secretary agrees that programs for struggling readers (e.g., Reading Recovery, among others) require study and believes that they are included under multiple paragraphs in the priority "most specifically (f)(2), where the social sciences will bear on organizing for instruction, and (f)(3).

Changes: None.

Comments Related to Challenges Facing High-Poverty, Low-Achieving Schools

Comments: One commenter, citing preliminary evidence, which suggests that reading instruction has a larger effect on low-achieving populations in high poverty schools than it does on other students, recommends that research on low-achieving, high-poverty students be included in addition to research on bilingualism and multiculturalism.

Discussion: The Secretary agrees that the challenges facing high-poverty, low-achieving schools are important and believes that they are included under multiple paragraphs in the priority "most particularly (f)(2-3) and (5-6).

Changes: None.

Comments Related to Second Language Learners

Comments: One commenter recommended that the topic of second language learners be included. This

commenter pointed out that improving early reading in California necessitates the inclusion of the Second Language Learner's primary language, given the state's demographic landscape.

Discussion: The Secretary agrees that the topic of second language learners is important and believes that it is included under paragraph (f)(2) in the priority.

Changes: None.

Comments Related to Enhanced Learning in Different Subjects/Skills

Comments: One commenter asserted that early math, for example, is much more wanting than early reading and recommended that enhanced learning in many different subjects/skills be included.

Discussion: The Secretary agrees that enhanced learning in different subjects/skills is important and believes that it is appropriately included in this center under paragraph (f)(6) in the priority.

Changes: None.

Comments Related to Brain Development

Comments: One commenter asserted that the central study area for early learning should be brain development. This commenter stated that reading is but one function of brain development and should be studied accordingly.

Discussion: The Secretary agrees that brain development is important and believes that it is included under paragraph (f)(2) in the priority. The Secretary has also added language to clarify that, as the topic of study, "early reading" may include this work.

Changes: None.

Comments Related to Motivational and Affective Factors

Comments: One commenter observed that (f)(5) (to conduct research in the areas of motivation and affective factors) seemed more narrow and limiting when compared to the other items under (f). This commenter argued that the relative importance of this factor is diminished next to issues that address knowledge about the reading process, about how reading instruction might best occur, about reading teachers' knowledge, practice, and change, and about the global nature and influences (classroom and community) on reading.

Discussion: The Secretary agrees that the topics subsumed under (f)(1-3) may appear to be quite comprehensive and that (f)(4-6) may be viewed as less so. The Secretary has not assigned weights to the elements under (f)(1-7), and thus expects that applicants will submit applications that reflect their own views

on the relative importance of these elements.

Changes: None.

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

[CFDA Number: 84.305R]

Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)—Education Research and Development Centers Program; Notice Inviting Applications for a New Award for Fiscal Year (FY) 1997

Purpose of Program: To support a national research and development center to carry out sustained research that will lead to improvements in early reading instruction and related practices.

Eligible Applicants: Institutions of higher education, institutions of higher education in consort with public agencies or private nonprofit organizations, and interstate agencies established by compact that operate subsidiary bodies established to conduct postsecondary educational research and development.

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: May 28, 1997.

Applications Available: March 28, 1997.

Estimated Available Funds: The estimated funding level over the five-year project period for the national research center on early reading is \$2,500,000 each year. Actual funding will depend upon the availability of funds and needs as reflected in the approved application.

Estimated Number of Awards: 1.

Note: The Department is not bound by any estimates in this notice.

Project Period: Up to 60 months.

Applicable Regulations: (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR Parts 74, 75, 77, 80, 81, 82, 85, and 86; and (b) The regulations in 34 CFR Part 700.

Priority: The absolute priority in the notice of final priority and post-award requirements for this program, as published elsewhere in this issue of the **Federal Register** apply to this competition.

Selection Criteria

(a)(1)(A) The Secretary uses the selection criteria in 20 U.S.C. 6031(c)(3)(E)(i)-(vi) and 34 CFR 700.30(e) to evaluate applications for new grants under this program.

(b) The Secretary has incorporated the statutory selection criteria into the criteria established under 34 CFR 700.30. The statutory criteria are: (3)(ii)(C); (4)(ii)(D); (4)(ii)(E); (5)(ii)(C); (5)(ii)(D); and, (5)(ii)(H).

(2) The maximum score for all of these criteria is 100 points.

(3) The maximum score for each criterion is indicated in parentheses (34 CFR 700.30(c)).

(c) *The criteria.*

(1) *National Significance.* (30 points)

(i) The Secretary considers the national significance of the proposed project.

(ii) In determining the national significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(A) The importance of the problem or issue to be addressed.

(B) The potential contribution of the project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

(C) The potential contribution of the project to the development and advancement of theory and knowledge in the field of study.

(D) The nature of the products (such as information, materials, processes, or techniques) likely to result from the project and the potential for their effective use in a variety of other settings.

(2) *Quality of the Project Design.* (30 points)

(i) The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project.

(ii) In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(A) Whether there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed activities and the quality of that framework.

(B) Whether the proposed activities constitute a coherent, sustained program of research and development in the field, including a substantial addition to an ongoing line of inquiry.

(C) The extent to which the research design includes a thorough, high-quality review of the relevant literature, a high-quality plan for research activities, and use of appropriate theoretical and methodological tools, including those of a variety of disciplines, where appropriate.

(D) The quality of the plan for evaluating the functioning and impact

of the project, including the objectivity of the evaluation and the extent to which the methods of evaluation are appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the project.

(3) *Quality and Potential Contributions of Personnel.* (20 points)

(i) The Secretary considers the quality and potential contributions of personnel for the proposed project.

(ii) In determining the quality and potential contributions of personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(A) The qualifications, including training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator.

(B) The qualifications, including training and experience, of key project personnel.

(C) Whether the applicant has assembled a group of high quality researchers sufficient to achieve the mission of the center.

(4) *Adequacy of Resources.* (10 points)

(i) The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources for the proposed project.

(ii) In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(A) The adequacy of support from the lead applicant organization.

(B) The relevance and commitment of each partner in the project to the implementation and success of the project.

(C) Whether the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the project.

(D) Whether the proposed organizational structure and arrangements will facilitate achievement of the mission of the center.

(E) Whether the directors and support staff will devote a majority of their time to the activities of the center.

(5) *Quality of the Management Plan.* (10 points)

(i) The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan of the proposed project.

(ii) In determining the quality of the management plan of a proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(A) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the project, including the specification of staff responsibility, timelines, and benchmarks for accomplishing project tasks.

(B) The adequacy of plans for ensuring high-quality products and services.

(C) The contributions of primary researchers (other than researchers at the proposed center) and the appropriateness of such researchers' experiences and expertise in the context of the proposed center activities, and the adequacy of such primary researchers' time and commitment to achievement of the mission of the center.

(D) Whether there is a substantial staff commitment to the work of the center.

(E) How the applicant will ensure that a diversity of perspectives are brought to bear in the operation of the project, including those of parents and teachers, where appropriate.

(F) The manner in which the results of education research will be disseminated for further use, including how the center will work with the Office of Reform Assistance and Dissemination (an organizational unit within the Office of Educational Research and Improvement).

For Applications or Information Contact: Dr. Anne P. Sweet, U.S. Department of Education, 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20208-5521. Telephone: (202) 219-2079. Internet address: (anne—sweet@ed.gov). Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

Information about the Department's funding opportunities, including copies of application notices or discretionary grant competitions, can be viewed on the Department's electronic bulletin board (ED Board), telephone (202) 260-9950; on the Internet Gopher Server (at gopher://gcs.ed.gov); or on the World Wide Web (at http://gcs.ed.gov). However, the official application notice for a discretionary grant competition is the notice published in the **Federal Register**.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 6031(c)(1)(B)(i).

Dated: March 20, 1997.

Marshall Smith,

Acting Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement.

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