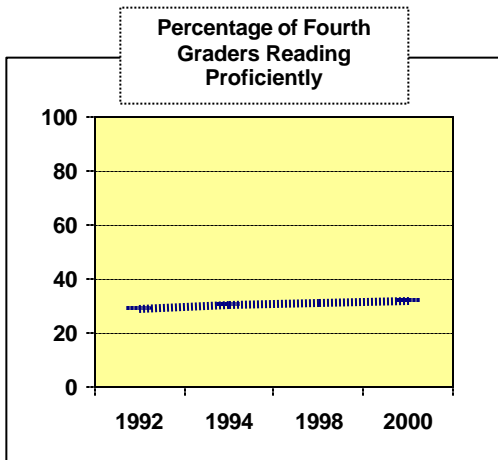


THE FACTS ABOUT...

READING FIRST

What is Reading First? Reading First is one of the most important components of President Bush's *No Child Left Behind Act*—the bipartisan law to improve American education. It sets aside \$900 million this year to ensure that schools use only scientifically based instruction and teaching methods.



Why are scientifically based programs important?

When it comes to our children we can't afford to use fads or fashions.

- The Food and Drug Administration never lets a new drug onto the market until it has gone through strict safety tests and scientific study because the risks are just too high. So, too, in education we cannot let teaching methods be tried out on children without scientific evaluation.
- Reading First doesn't just protect young minds, it encourages schools to use the reading instruction already proven by science.

Why do we need Reading First? For two decades reading achievement has been flat. Less than one in three fourth-graders is deemed "proficient" in reading at grade level. By 12th grade only 40 percent of seniors are proficient in reading for their grade. *America can do better.*

HOW READING FIRST WILL HELP CHILDREN LEARN TO READ:

Every Reading First grant will do four things in each state:

- Encourage comprehensive reforms based on science.
- Ensure early and ongoing assessment of every child's progress using the best analytical tools.
- Provide professional development and support for teachers.
- Help monitor reading achievement gains in grades K-3.

Reading First doesn't just spend more for reading. It spends more money, *more wisely.*

- Reading First requires that every state evaluate how resources are being used in its reading initiatives, where there are gaps in current instruction, how money can be spent to better teach children, and whether teachers are getting the support they need to teach reading better.
- When teachers use curricula and methods that are based on sound scientific evidence, they cannot reach children effectively.

Reading First ensures federal grants will go only to those programs that will help teachers teach and help students excel.

- The *No Child Left Behind Act* created a Reading First Expert Review Panel made up of more than 70 researchers, experienced reading specialists and other professionals who understand the need for scientifically based reading and the importance of early reading skills. Early reading translates into better learning and more opportunities for our youth.

Reading First prevents federal money from financing unproven fads and untested ideas.

The Reading First Expert Review Panel also knows the destructive impact of reading fads—and how to avoid them. Every Reading First grant application must pass 25 specific criteria to ensure that instruction features:

- *Phonemic Awareness*: The ability to hear and identify individual sounds in spoken words.
- *Phonics*: The relationship between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language.
- *Fluency*: The capacity to read text accurately and quickly.
- *Vocabulary*: The words students must know to communicate effectively.
- *Comprehension*: The ability to understand and gain meaning from what has been read.

Reading First is not a top-down Washington mandate. Reading First unites every part of the education establishment in the crusade to teach every child to read.

- Reading First rewards states that work closely with local schools to make sure that teachers, principals, and local officials understand *how* to teach reading, not just what ought to be taught.
- The Reading First Expert Review Panel praised **Colorado** for encouraging local districts seeking awards to develop plans that exceed program requirements.
- The Reading First Expert Review Panel praised **Alabama** for setting up reading academies to reach and support *every* K-3 teacher in the state through professional development and better training.
- The Reading First Expert Review Panel praised **Florida** for creating the “Reading Leadership Triangle”—an alliance between the Florida Department of Education and two leading institutions of higher education experienced in training teachers in scientifically based reading instruction.

Reading First highlights success so schools can see how scientifically based teaching methods and curricula can transform our schools.

- By testing children and monitoring state scores, Reading First puts schools on an upward path by focusing attention on what works in education and by showing the dramatic progress reached when scientifically based methods are embraced.

Thanks to Reading First, schools and teachers will finally have the technical knowledge and the practical training to ensure every child gets the help he or she needs to excel in reading.