

# READING FIRST IN...

# FLORIDA

**Florida will receive \$45.6 million in funding for the first year of its Reading First grant.** And the Sunshine State will receive approximately **\$300 million over the next six years**, subject to demonstration of success and Congress' appropriations.

- This award will help districts and schools improve student achievement in reading through the application of scientifically based reading research.
- Reading First helps states, districts and schools apply scientifically based research—and the proven instructional and assessment tools consistent with this research—to ensure that every third grader reads at grade level.

**Florida will use about \$36.5 million of the grant to make sub-grant awards to schools in eligible districts. Florida plans to begin making sub-grant awards in March 2003.**

- These sub-grants will allow schools to implement research-based reading programs for students in kindergarten through third grade and to provide professional development to ensure that all teachers have the skills they need to teach these programs effectively.
- In addition, the program will support the use of instructional assessments so that teachers can effectively screen and identify the reading barriers facing their students, as well as monitor their progress.

**The Florida Department of Education will use Reading First as the foundation for its statewide infrastructure for improvement of early literacy.**

- The governor, in consultation with the state educational agency, has convened a Reading Leadership Team to ensure an integrated approach to improving K-3 reading instruction and raising K-3 reading achievement statewide.

**As part of its State professional development plan, the state will provide training for teachers and administrators that allows them to observe and practice research-based instructional strategies for reading.**

- Their professional development model emphasizes the development of teams of educators who will work together to implement scientifically based programs of instruction. The state will closely monitor the progress of schools and districts participating in Reading First, and will conduct a longitudinal evaluation of its program.
- The Reading First Expert Review Panel praised the Sunshine State 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.

**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 curricula and teaching methods.

**Why are scientifically based programs important?** When it comes to our children we can't afford to use untested methods or psychological fads.

- 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 12<sup>th</sup> grade just 40 percent of seniors are proficient in reading for their grade. *America can do better.*