

READING FIRST IN...

ALABAMA

Alabama will receive \$15.5 million in funding for the first year of its Reading First grant. And the Yellowhammer State will receive **\$102 million over the next six years**, subject to demonstration of success and Congress' appropriations.

- 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.

Alabama's funding will be used to establish academic success in a large-scale pilot program, which will be used to spur even wider statewide reform efforts.

- Alabama will use about \$12.5 million of the grant to make sub-grant awards to approximately 60 schools in eligible districts. Alabama plans to begin making sub-grant awards in December 2002.
- 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 Governor, in consultation with the State Superintendent of Education, has convened a Reading Leadership Team.

- The team will ensure an integrated approach to improving K-3 reading instruction and raising K-3 reading achievement statewide. In addition, the Alabama Department of Education will integrate Reading First with its statewide infrastructure for improvement of early literacy.

Alabama's Reading First will focus on building and supporting a better teaching corp.

- As part of its state professional development plan, the state will hold Reading Academies.
- These Reading Academies will provide training in scientifically based reading instruction to train *all* K-3 classroom and special education teachers throughout the State. The State will closely monitor the progress of schools and districts participating in Reading First, and will conduct a longitudinal evaluation of its program.

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