

Archived Information

Objective 2.2: Every child reads well and independently by the end of the third grade.

National Need

National Concerns. Reading is the foundation of all other skills essential for learning, yet the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reports that only 62 percent of fourth-graders read at the basic level or higher. Research shows that students who fail to read well by fourth grade are at greater risk of educational failure. Mastering basic skills such as reading are essential first steps to reaching challenging academic standards in all subjects.

Our Role. The Department of Education's Federal resources are used to help states, local school districts, and schools improve the teaching and learning of reading for high-poverty children in early childhood programs and for at-risk school children in kindergarten through high school; support special populations that experience difficulties in reading; coordinate and promote research-based reading instruction and strategies; and expand community-wide extended learning time programs in reading. This improvement is accomplished through many programs, including Title I, Even Start, and the Reading Excellence Program, and through other programs for special populations such as Special Education.

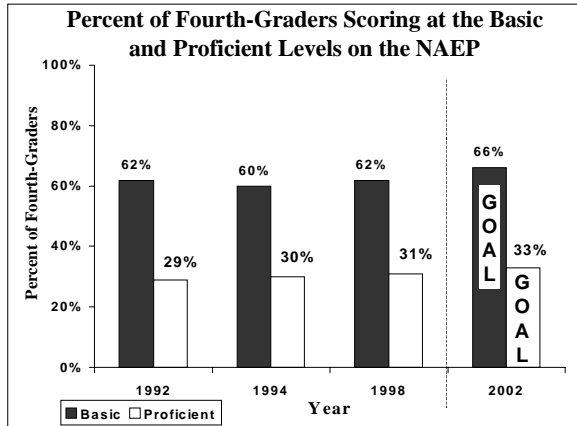
Our Performance

How We Measure. ED measures its progress by focusing on expected outcomes in student achievement in reading, as well as indicators that track the implementation of recent programs to advance these outcomes.

Indicator 2.2.a. Increasing percentages of fourth-grade students will meet basic and proficient levels in reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). By 2002, 66 percent of fourth-grade students will score at or above the basic level in reading on the NAEP, and 32 percent of fourth grade students will score at or above the proficient level in reading on the NAEP.

Assessment of Progress. No overall change, but trend toward target for high-poverty schools. Since the 1970's, NAEP scores for fourth-graders have been relatively flat (around 60 percent at basic or higher levels). These statistics are disturbing because they indicate that around 40 percent of the fourth-grade population continues to have difficulty reading at the basic level of proficiency (see Figure 2.2.a.1). While students in low-poverty schools improved their reading scores from 1988 to 1996, scores of students in high-poverty schools have begun improving only since 1992 (see Figure B.1 in the *End Outcomes* section of this report).

Figure 2.2.a.1

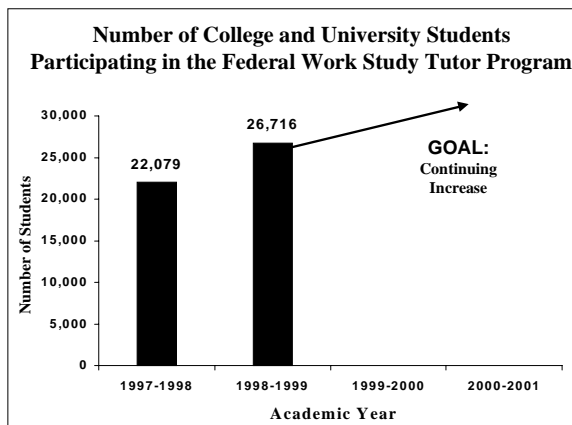


Source: NAEP (1992-present). *Frequency:* Every four years. *Next Update:* 2002. **Validation procedure:** Data are validated by NCES review procedures and *NCES Statistical Standards*. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** NAEP data are not available annually. They are or will be available for 1994, 1998, and 2002.

Indicator 2.2.b. By 2001, increasing numbers of postsecondary students will be employed as America Reads tutors through the Federal Work Study Program.

Assessment of Progress. Progress toward target. On July 1, 1997, the Department of Education encouraged Federal Work Study (FWS) students to serve as reading tutors by waiving the requirement that employers pay part of their wages. In October 1998, the president declared that, starting in the 2000-01 award year, every postsecondary institution with a Federal Work Study program must use at least 7 percent of the sum of its initial and supplemental FWS allocations in an award year to compensate students employed in community service activities. As part of the community service requirement, postsecondary institutions must have a literacy tutoring program. During the 1998-99 academic year, 26,716 postsecondary students were employed as reading tutors through the Federal Work Study program (see Figure 2.2.b.1).

Figure 2.2.b.1

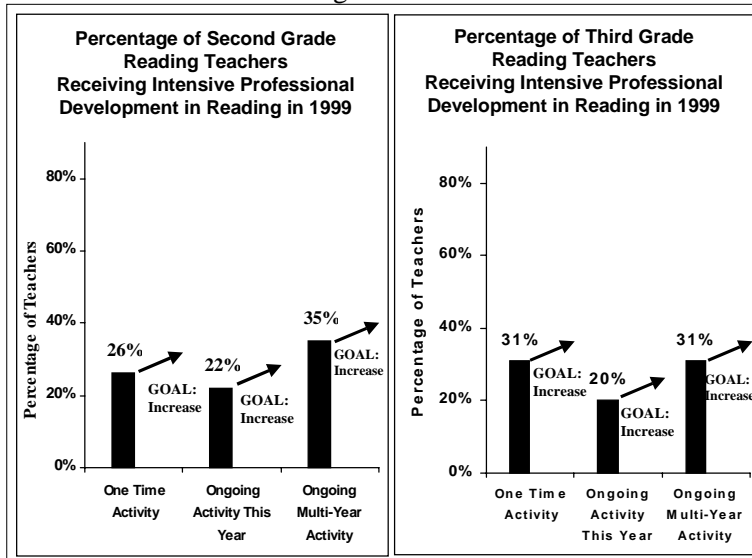


Source: ED Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate, 1998. *Frequency:* Annual. *Next Update:* 1999 data will become available in 2000. **Validation procedure:** Data are reviewed by ED staff. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** No known limitations.

Indicator 2.2.c. Increasing percentages of teachers of students in kindergarten through third grade will receive ongoing, intensive professional development to enable them to successfully teach reading to diverse students, including those who experience difficulties in learning to read and those with disabilities.

Assessment of Progress. Unable to judge progress, as data are available for one year only.

Figure 2.2.c.1



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Schools (NLSS) (1999). *Frequency:* Annual. *Next Update:* 2000. **Validation procedure:** Data are validated by NCES review procedures and *NCES Statistical Standards*. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** NLSS data are currently available for second and third grade teachers only. Data are collected from teachers in schools that include a third grade and who teach each of these grades “most of the time.” Data for kindergarten and first grade teachers have been requested in future years.

Indicator 2.2.d. Increasing numbers of children participating in Head Start, Even Start, and Title I programs will make significant gains on measures of language development and reading readiness so they are well prepared for grade-appropriate reading instruction.

Assessment of Progress. Data from the National Research Council show that preparation for school—at home and in early childhood programs—is essential to the performance of children in reading. This new indicator will track progress in this area.

Source: To be developed. *Frequency:* To be developed. *Next Update:* To be developed. **Validation procedure:** N/A. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** N/A. While some data are available from the National Even Start Evaluation (1995-96) on the performance of children in school readiness and language development, there is currently no comparable assessment that can provide trend data for this indicator. Furthermore, no current data are available on pre-K Title I or Head Start student performance. The Department is discussing an early childhood study that would provide these data in future years.

How We Plan to Achieve Our Objective

How ED's Activities Support the Achievement of This Objective.

- **Support improved in-class instruction in reading using research-based reading strategies.** Multiple Department programs support research-based instruction in reading for high-poverty and at-risk student populations from early childhood through high school, including Title I, Even Start, Reading Excellence, Special Education, and Bilingual Education programs. These programs focus on improving teaching and learning by upgrading curriculum, accelerating instruction, and providing teachers with professional development to teach to high standards.
- **Support public understanding of best practices for early childhood language development and acquisition.** The Department disseminates quality early literacy materials to childcare professionals and is partnering with Even Start and Head Start literacy programs and Ready to Learn Television to increase community efforts to enhance language acquisition and development for all young children. In FY 2000, Congress provided \$150 million to Even Start to support family literacy projects for children from birth through age 7. Additionally, the Department is providing joint funding with the National Academy of Sciences to produce a report on early childhood pedagogy, which is expected to be released in May 2000. During June 2000, the Department will host a summit on early childhood development based on the findings of the study.
- **Support community-wide extended learning time programs dedicated to improving literacy.** The Department continues to expand and strengthen the America Reads Federal Work Study tutor program. Each postsecondary institution that receives Federal financial aid is now required to have an America Reads or America Counts Federal Work Study tutor program component. To date, more than 1,200 postsecondary institutions have joined the America Reads Challenge. In March 2000, the Department is cosponsoring a conference, "Tutoring Programs for Struggling Readers: The America Reads Challenge," with the Rutgers Graduate School of Education, with an expected attendance of 300 participants.
- **Support in-service and preservice teacher development.** The Department's Title I, Reading Excellence, Even Start, and Bilingual programs provide teachers with high-quality professional development to teach to high standards. To meet the needs of an increasing limited English proficient (LEP) student population, America Reads is developing instructional materials on basic knowledge needed by teachers and administrators who work with LEP children.
- **Promote and coordinate research and evaluation pertaining to children's literacy.** The Reading Excellence Program is conducting multiple studies targeted to identify the path of reading skill acquisition and effective practices in teaching reading. Planning and Evaluation Services is conducting an evaluation of the role of family involvement in supporting in-school reading interventions with targeted at-home reading, through the Compact for Reading initiative. The Department, with the National Academy of Sciences, is funding a study on effective practices in the teaching of reading to children in early childhood, followed by a summit on early childhood pedagogy. The Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA) is conducting a two-year study to identify phonemic and comprehension skills that transfer from Spanish to English to help Spanish-speaking LEP students who learned to read in Spanish. OBEMLA is also participating in a National Institute Reading Study, "The Development of English Literacy in Spanish-Speaking Children." The Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) will continue

to provide support for research efforts that investigate the effectiveness of adult education as an approach to reducing welfare dependency and improving children's educational progress.

- **Support community building and collaboration to improve literacy for our Nation's children.** In partnership with the *Los Angeles Times* and Little Planet Learning, the Planning and Evaluation Service produced and is disseminating the *Compact for Reading Guide*, a publication that explains how high-poverty schools can develop an effective written agreement among families of at-risk children, teachers, principals, and students in the community to help improve the reading skills of all students, as well as how to implement compacts through family involvement in reading. Working with a team of teachers, the Department developed the School-Home Links Kit, which includes 100 1-page reading activities for each grade from kindergarten through third. Teachers use the School-Home Links to reinforce in-school reading activities through family involvement.

The Department has also partnered with McDonald's to implement and distribute *Raising Great Readers*, a booklet that includes tips for parents on how to make reading a daily, fun activity with their children. Through a collaboration with the American Library Association, Reading is Fundamental, Inc., Pizza Hut, and Scholastic Inc., the Department developed and will continue distributing Read*Write*Now! activity posters, which include reproducible reading and writing activities to help tutors, educators, and community members help all children improve their reading skills. Two and a half million posters were printed in English, and 250,000 were printed in Spanish. The Department has also developed and will continue to distribute the Read*Write*Now! tip sheet, which offers ideas and suggestions for librarians, teachers, camp counselors, and community leaders on how to design and implement a summer or after-school reading program.

The America Reads office will continue to expand and strengthen relationships with public and private sector organizations committed to improving literacy for all children. Within the Department, the Even Start Agency Cooperation and Collaboration Project, Building State Alliance for Family Literacy, provides support for technical assistance to states developing strategies for improving collaboration in local Even Start projects. Finally, the America Reads Web site provides a listing of the coalition partners as well as information for our customers on best services to improve reading for our Nation.

How We Coordinate with Other Federal Agencies

- **Monthly interagency meetings.** Department representatives meet monthly with staff from the Corporation for National Service (CNS) as well as representatives from the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) and the Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) program to strengthen collaborative efforts in improving children's reading skills.
- **Joint task forces.** The Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services have formed a joint task force to increase collaboration and coordination of services to children in early childhood; a report will be issued to Congress in March 2000. As part of this initiative, the two agencies will facilitate the community collaboration of HHS- and ED-funded activities for reading and early childhood development. They will jointly disseminate reading publications on early childhood.
- **Coordination of research.** The Department is collaborating with the National Academy of Sciences on their study examining early childhood pedagogy, with findings disseminated in the spring of 2000.

- **Interagency training.** The Department will collaborate with the U.S. Army and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to improve extended learning programs in reading. The Department will continue to help train Army staff directors to use America Reads Challenge Read*Write*Now! interventions and materials in the Army’s extended learning programs. The Department of Education will work with the Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Indian Affairs schools to encourage extended learning in reading programs that support the America Reads Challenge.

Challenges to Achieving Our Objective

Increasing the reading skills of American children depends not only on improving classroom instruction, but also on encouraging parents to take a more active role in their children’s reading from early childhood onward. Postsecondary schools must have access to the most recent research for professional development courses in the teaching and learning of reading. Getting this information out to postsecondary institutions that prepare teachers for the classroom and to teachers already in classrooms remains a challenge. The Reading Excellence Act provides important new support to strengthen reading at home and in school. Furthermore, the Department’s research and dissemination efforts, as well as special program activities in reading, will further support and strengthen teacher preparation as well as school and home activities in reading.