U.S. Department of Education
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
Reading Excellence Act

Non-Regulatory Guidance for State and Local Grantees

DRAFT

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Contents

Section A. Overview

A1. What is the purpose of the Reading Excellence Act (REA)?

The purpose of the REA program is to assist schools across the country in implementing scientifically based reading instruction to ensure that every child is a proficient reader by the end of the 3rd grade.

In the last several years, rigorous scientifically based reading research has identified the most effective practices on effective ways to teach children to read. This scientifically based reading research identified phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, fluency, and reading comprehension as major components of reading instruction. The REA program was enacted in 1998 to put this research into practice in classrooms across the country. REA focuses on helping to accelerate the progress of student learning. States and school districts set high standards, assess student progress, place highly qualified teachers in classrooms, and target resources to areas of great need.

REA supports scientifically based reading activities in local educational agencies (LEAs) in participating States. LEAs work with schools to select programs of reading instruction based on scientifically based reading research, carry out professional development for teachers and other instructional staff, and implement programs to assist kindergarteners experiencing difficulties with reading skills. REA also provides for family literacy services and tutoring.

In adopting these scientifically based practices, REA gives States and schools the resources and skills they need to teach all children to read by the end of third grade.

A2. Why issue new Non-Regulatory Guidance?

REA Non-Regulatory Guidance for State Applicants was issued in March 1999 and April 2000 to assist State educational agencies (SEAs) with general implementation questions, primarily related to the application process and initial program start-up. Now that all State grants and most LEA grants have been awarded, it is necessary to revise the guidance to reflect the program's current status. This guidance seeks to address challenges that SEAs and LEAs may face during their second and third years of implementation, as well as to assist grantees in coordinating REA with current reading initiatives authorized under the No Child Left Behind Act.

A3. What is the relationship between the No Child Left Behind Act and Reading Excellence Act?

The use of scientifically based research is a cornerstone of the No Child Left Behind Act. The Reading First program, authorized in the No Child Left Behind Act, presents us with an opportunity to ensure that all children across the country benefit from scientifically based reading instruction and learn to read well. While only some States were able to participate in the discretionary grant REA program, Reading First provides an opportunity for every State to implement reading programs based on scientifically based reading research that help all students achieve reading mastery by the end of third grade.

Quite simply, Reading First focuses on what works, and will support proven methods of early reading instruction in classrooms. The program provides assistance to States and districts in selecting or developing effective instructional materials, programs, learning systems and strategies to implement methods that have been proven to teach reading. Reading First also provides assistance for the selection and administration of screening, diagnostic and classroom-based instructional reading assessments with proven validity and reliability, in order to measure where students are and monitor their progress. States and districts implementing REA programs can relay their experience with scientifically based reading instruction as they expand and strengthen their programs to meet Reading First requirements.

A4.   How can States ensure all REA activities are scientifically based?

States may find the definitions and requirements of the Reading First program helpful as they seek to ensure all REA activities are scientifically based and of high quality. States may consult the Guidance for the Reading First Program (April 2002) and the Criteria for Review of State Applications, which are available on the Department web site at http://www.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst/.

A5.   How can State and local educational agencies effectively coordinate REA and Reading First programs?

As States prepare for the transition from REA to Reading First, the definitions, requirements, and tenets of the Reading First program may be helpful in assisting SEAs and LEAs in implementing their current REA grants. For example, SEAs and LEAs can coordinate the two programs in the areas of:

Professional Development. Just as REA professional development activities must be based on the high standards of scientifically based reading research and be delivered by highly knowledgeable providers, Reading First aims to build internal capacity related to scientifically based reading instruction. Within each State, the expansion of the K-3 reading infrastructure made possible by Reading First funds can and should be helpful in implementing Statewide improvements.

Instructional Materials. In REA, States are responsible for ensuring that LEA activities prepare teachers in all the major components of reading instruction and that districts and schools use practices based on scientifically based reading research. The rigorous standards set forth in Reading First may be used as a guideline in these efforts. For example, States may consult the Guidance for the Reading First Program (April 2002) and the Criteria for Review of State Applications, which are available on the Department web site at http://www.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst/.

Assessment. In both REA and Reading First, States should assist local districts in identifying screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based instructional reading assessments. We expect that the instruments chosen should be appropriate for children in kindergarten through third grade and measure the essential components of reading. To collect the most accurate data, we expect States to use assessments with the highest validity and reliability.

Coordination Among Literacy Programs. The Reading Excellence Act requires States to build on and promote coordination among literacy programs. As such, the Department expects States to coordinate REA funds with Reading First transition activities and encourages States to place special emphasis on REA activities that help support Reading First priorities.

In addition, Sections B and C and Appendices A, B, and D provide information from the Guidance for the Reading First Program that may be especially helpful in assisting your State in implementing its REA program.

Section B. Components of Effective Reading Programs

B1.   What are the essential components of reading research?

Scientifically based reading research has identified five essential components of effective reading instruction. To ensure that children learn to read well, explicit and systematic instruction must be provided in these five areas:

1. **Phonemic Awareness** – The ability to hear, identify and manipulate the individual sounds – phonemes – in spoken words. Phonemic awareness is the understanding that the sounds of spoken language work together to make words.

2. **Phonics** – The understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes – the sounds of spoken language – and graphemes – the letters and spellings that represent those sounds in written language. Readers use these relationships to recognize familiar words accurately and automatically and to decode unfamiliar words.

3. **Vocabulary Development** – Development of stored information about the meanings and pronunciation of words necessary for communication. There are four types of vocabulary:

   - Listening vocabulary – the words needed to understand what is heard
   - Speaking vocabulary – the words used when speaking
   - Reading vocabulary – the words needed to understand what is read
   - Writing vocabulary – the words used in writing

4. **Reading fluency, including oral reading skills** – Fluency is the ability to read text accurately and quickly. It provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Fluent readers recognize words and comprehend at the same time.

5. **Reading comprehension strategies** – Strategies for understanding, remembering, and communicating with others about what has been read. Comprehension strategies are sets of steps that purposeful, active readers use to make sense of text.

Appendix A summarizes the key findings from scientifically based research on the essential components of reading instruction.

B2.   What is scientifically based reading research?

The statute defines scientifically based reading research as the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading difficulties (Section 2252(5)). To meet the statutory definition, the research must:

➢ employ systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment;

➢ involve rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn;

➢ rely on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations; and

➢ have been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review.

B3. What evidence is critical in evaluating scientifically based reading research?

When reviewing research findings to determine whether they meet the criteria for scientifically based reading research, State educational agencies, local educational agencies, and schools should consider the extent to which the research meets each of the criteria. Question for consideration about each criteria include:

> **Use of rigorous, systematic, and empirical methods.** Does the work have a solid theoretical or research foundation? Was it carefully designed to avoid biased findings and unwarranted claims of effectiveness? Does the research clearly delineate how the research was conducted, by whom it was conducted, and on whom it was conducted?

> **Adequacy of the data analyses to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn.** Was the research designed to minimize alternative explanations for observed effects? Are the observed effects consistent with the overall conclusions and claims of effectiveness? Does the research present convincing documentation that the observed results were the result of the intervention? Does the research make clear what populations were studied (i.e., does it describe the participants' ages, as well as their demographic, cognitive, academic, and behavioral characteristics) and does it describe to whom the findings can be generalized? Does the study provide a full description of the outcome measures?

> **Reliance on measurements or observational methods that provided valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations.** Are the findings based on a single-investigator single-classroom study, or were similar findings observed by multiple investigators in numerous locations? What procedures were in place to minimize researcher biases? Do observed results "hold up" over time? Are the study interventions described in sufficient detail to allow for replicability? Does the research explain how instructional fidelity was ensured and assessed?

> **Acceptance by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review.** Has the research been carefully reviewed by unbiased individuals who were not part of the research study? Have the findings been subjected to external scrutiny and verification?

B4. Must research related to instructional programs, methods, and strategies meet all of the characteristics of scientifically based reading research?

Yes. The statute requires these characteristics.

Readers seeking additional guidance may wish to consult standard references on research methods. One source readers may want to consider is the National Academy of Sciences' National Research Council report "Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children" (1998). The National Research Council, when conducting a review of reading research, followed basic guidelines for scientific method. The NRC wrote:

"Our review and summary of the literature are framed by some very basic principles of evidence evaluation. These principles derive from our commitment to the scientific method, which we view not as a strict set of rules but instead as a broad framework defined by some general guidelines. Some of the most important are that (1) science aims for knowledge that is publicly verifiable, (2) science seeks testable theories—not unquestioned edicts, (3) science employs methods of systematic empiricism…Science renders knowledge public by such procedures as peer review and such mechanisms as systematic replication."

Appendix D provides sources of additional information on scientifically based reading research.

B5. Is a State educational agency responsible for ensuring that only programs based on scientifically based reading research are funded through REA?

Yes. In its application to the Department for Reading Excellence Act funding, each SEA described how it would ensure that the subgrantees use practices based on scientifically based reading research. In monitoring subgrants received by local educational agencies, it is the SEA's responsibility to ensure that all REA-funded strategies, programs, and activities proposed and implemented by districts meet the requirements of the REA. If programs and strategies do not meet the provisions of the law, or are not scientifically based, or are not of high quality, a State should assist sites in correcting these problems. States should also closely examine their own State-level activities to ensure they are fulfilling all requirements.

Section C. Implementing an Effective Reading Program

C1. What are the key elements of an effective reading program based on scientifically based reading research?

A high-quality reading program that is based on scientifically based research must include instructional content based on the five essential components of reading instruction (See Question B-1) integrated into a coherent instructional design. A coherent design includes explicit instructional strategies that address students' specific strengths and weaknesses, coordinated instructional sequences, ample practice opportunities and aligned student materials, and may include the use of targeted, scientifically based instructional strategies as appropriate. The design should also consider the allocation of time, including a protected, uninterrupted block of time for reading instruction of more than 90 minutes per day.

A high-quality reading program also includes assessment strategies for diagnosing student needs and measuring progress, as well as a professional development plan that ensures teachers have the skills and support necessary to implement the program effectively and to meet the reading needs of individual students.

C2. What practices and strategies for classroom instruction should be evident in implementing a high-quality reading program based on scientifically based reading research?

Certain elements should be visible in any REA classroom in the country, regardless of which specific program is in use. Standards and accountability are the foundation of the REA classroom. Expectations are clear, as are strategies for monitoring progress toward meeting them. A comprehensive reading program provides the basis for instruction, and connects meaningfully to supplemental materials. In-class grouping strategies are in use, including small group instruction as appropriate to meet student needs. Student placement in groups is flexible, with placement and movement based on ongoing assessment, and different curricula may be in use to instruct different groups. There is active student engagement in a variety of reading-based activities, which connect to the five essential components of reading and to overall, clearly articulated academic goals. Effective classroom management and high levels of time on task are also evident.

C3. What practices and strategies for professional development should be evident in an effective reading program?

Professional development related to a high quality, effective reading program should aim to increase student achievement by enabling and ensuring the implementation of the particular program(s). Research has shown that teachers who participate in well-designed professional development activities get better results from their students. Well-designed professional development aligns clearly with the instructional program, including its research base, as well as with State academic and performance standards. Adequate time must be available for teachers to learn new concepts and to practice what they have learned. Coaches, mentors, peers and outside experts provide feedback as new concepts are put into practice. Professional development must prepare all teachers to teach all of the essential components of reading instruction (See Question B-1), and to know how they are related, the progression in which they should be taught, and the underlying structure of the English language. Teachers also must understand why some children have difficulty learning to read well and learn how to administer and interpret assessments of student progress. Professional development should also prepare teachers to effectively manage their classrooms and to maximize time on task.

C4. What practices and strategies for assessment should be evident in an effective reading program?

A high-quality, effective reading program must include rigorous assessments with proven validity and reliability. These assessments must measure progress in the five essential components of reading instruction (See Question B-1) and identify students who may be at risk for reading failure or who are already experiencing reading difficulty. A reading program must include screening assessments, diagnostic assessments and classroom-based instructional assessments of progress. The administration of screening assessments determines which children are at risk for reading difficulty and need additional support. Diagnostic assessments provide more in-depth information on students' skills and instructional needs that forms the basis of the ideal instructional plan. Classroom-based instructional assessments determine whether students are making adequate progress or need more support to achieve grade-level reading outcomes.

Section D. State Implementation

D1. How long are the grant funds available to States?

A State educational agency that receives a grant must expend the funds during the three-year period beginning on the date on which the grant is made (Section 2253(a)(2)(B)). No extensions should be necessary for cohort 2 and 3 grantees, which have sufficient time to implement quality programs and will be able to continue appropriate activities under Reading First. States should require subgrantees to adhere to their timelines and complete programs in a timely fashion.

D2. May a State educational agency reserve a portion of its grant for State use?

Yes. Section 2254 specifies that up to 5 percent of the REA grant be reserved for State use of administration costs of the Local Reading Improvement subgrants, evaluation and performance reporting. Each SEA may use no more than 2 percent of its REA grant fund to carry out evaluation and performance reporting required by Section 2259. *Evaluation and reporting activities must cover both the Local Reading Improvement Subgrants and the Tutorial Assistance Subgrants. (*Further, this 2 percent is part of the 5 percent reserve for administration.)

SEAs pay for State administration costs related to the Section 2256 Tutorial Assistance subgrants (TAG) out of the grant funds reserved for the TAG subgrants. (States reserve up to 15 percent for the TAG program and may use an unspecified amount for soliciting applications, making awards, and overseeing the performance of the subgrants.)

D3. Which LEAs should receive subgrants from States?

SEAs should make subgrants only to those eligible LEAs that submit high quality applications for funding and which in their applications show a clear commitment to using grant funds to support the implementation of reading programs and activities based on scientifically based reading research. If all eligible LEAs submit high quality applications, they may all receive funding. However, there is no requirement to give money to all eligible LEAs. SEAs could, for example, not fund the LEA with the largest number of poor children if that LEA submitted an application that was not of high quality or included practices that were not consistent with Reading Excellence Act requirements.

In addition, SEAs may want to consider whether the funds available will allow them to fund all qualified applicants at a sufficient level to support effective programs and make awards accordingly, since a solid level of funding is necessary to effectively carry out the REA activities.

D4. What is the State's responsibility in regards to monitoring REA funded activities?

It is the State's responsibility to closely examine State level and subgrant activities in their REA programs to ensure they are fulfilling all requirements. If programs and strategies do not meet the provisions of the law, or are not scientifically based, or are not of high quality, a State should assist sites in correcting these problems. We encourage States to pay particular attention to the LEA's choice of strategies for reading instruction, and professional development.

To effectively monitor subgrant activities, the Department encourages States to award subgrants on a timeline that allows both local and State activities to conclude within the grant's three-year period.

D5. What are the State's responsibilities regarding professional development activities at both the State and local levels?

REA funded professional development activities must be coordinated within the State and based on scientifically based reading research. The State must also work closely with subgrantees to ensure

professional development activities for the classroom teacher and other appropriate instructional staff on the teaching of reading are based on scientifically based reading research.

Professional development activities that are not consistent with REA requirements may cause the REA grant to be out of compliance, and may hinder your State's progress in meeting new Federal reading expectations.

D6. How does the Reading Excellence Act serve private school children?

Funds awarded to SEAs and LEAs under the REA are subject to the requirements of Section 9501 of ESEA (Participation by Private School Children and Teachers) and the regulations in 34 C.F.R. 299, Subpart E. The statute and regulations require the grantee and subgrantees to provide private school children and their teachers, or other educational personnel, with program educational services or other benefits on an equitable basis with public school children and teachers.

States and school districts must consult with appropriate private school officials during the design and development of the programs under the REA on such issues as how the eligibility of private school children will be determined; how the children's needs will be identified; what services will be offered; how and where the services will be provided; and how the services will be assessed. Private school students in the district must have access to both types of Tutorial Assistance (TAG) programs that the district provides (school-based and non-school based).

Expenditures for the educational services and benefits provided for private school children and their teachers must be equal, taking into account the number and educational needs of the children to be served, to the expenditures for participating public school children and their teachers.

All services or benefits provided under the REA must be secular, neutral, and nonideological.

The services and benefits provided under the REA must be provided by employees of a public agency or through a contractor that is independent of the private school and any religious organization in the provision of those services and benefits.

D7. How is the eligibility of private school children determined?

REA subgrantees must consult with appropriate private school officials regarding how the eligibility of private school students will be determined. Generally, private school children in the areas served by the selected public schools would be eligible for REA services. This determination can be made in one of two ways, either by the residence of private school children in a selected public school attendance area (as in Title I) or by location of a private school in a selected public school attendance area.

Section E. Program Evaluation and Reporting Requirements

E1. What reports must a State file on the performance of its grant?

Each SEA that receives a grant must submit an annual performance report to the Department. The report must include a description of the LEAs that received funds, information on the program or programs of reading instruction used by the LEAs, the results of the State evaluation, and any other information as required by the Secretary.

The Department has developed a report form that further clarifies this information and standardizes collections across States. This form will be released in the Fall of 2002. The reports are due 90 days after the first and second grant years.

E2. Are there any final reporting requirements at the end of the three-year grant period?

Pursuant to §80.40 (b)(1)(Monitoring and Reporting Grant Performance) of the Education Department General Administrative Regulations, grantees of the REA program must submit a final performance report, due 90 days after the expiration or termination of grant support (including the "no-cost extension" period). A format for this report can be obtained by contacting REA staff.

E3. Must a State conduct an evaluation of its Reading Excellence Act program?

Yes. Each SEA that receives a grant must evaluate the success of the State's subgrantees in improving student reading achievement and meeting the purposes of the Reading Excellence Act (Section 2259(a)). The SEA must submit the findings from the evaluation 90 days after the second and third grant years.

To collect the most accurate data, we encourage States to use assessments with the highest reliability and validity and to ensure the instruments measure the essential components of reading.

E4. Who should conduct the State evaluation?

The SEA must carry out the evaluation through a contract with an entity that conducts scientifically based reading research. That entity, not the SEA, conducts the evaluation.

When determining an appropriate contractor for the work, State educational agencies are encouraged to look at the contractor's past record in conducting rigorous, high-quality evaluations. Evidence of successful past work could include publications in rigorous peer-reviewed journals; research awards from national research organizations; and recognized reports to Congress, State educational agencies and other government agencies.

E5. Can a SEA conduct the required State evaluation through a contract with another portion of the State government that conducts evaluations?

No. Even if a State has a method of contracting with a component of itself, it cannot use that method to conduct the Section 2259(a)(2) evaluation.

E6. Will the Department conduct a national evaluation of the Reading Excellence Act?

The Secretary must conduct a national evaluation and must submit the results of a national evaluation of the Reading Excellence Act to the Congress (see Sections 2257 and 2259). The national evaluation covers several aspects of the program, including student achievement outcomes.

Section F. State Awards to LEAs for Local Reading Improvement Subgrants

F1.   What are Local Reading Improvement subgrants (LRIs)?

Local Reading Improvement subgrants are awarded to local educational agencies (LEAs) based on a competitive review process. The subgrants must be for an amount sufficient to enable the subgrantee to operate a program for a 2-year period.

The subgrants provide support to local educational agencies to advance reform of reading instruction in participating schools. This must include, among other activities:

  ➢ improving the reading instruction practice of teachers and other instructional staff through professional development based on scientifically-based reading research,

  ➢ carrying out family literacy services (e.g., parent and child interactive activities, early childhood education, adult training, and parent education), and

  ➢ providing early literacy intervention to children experiencing reading difficulties, including kindergarten transition programs.

Key features include the requirement that the LEA will base the project's activities on scientifically based reading research and will enter into an agreement with an expert on the particular reading program being implemented to gain assistance with its implementation.

F2.   What activities must the LEA perform?

In general, the LEA must provide for a variety of activities to advance reform of reading instruction in participating schools, and subgrant funds may be used for all of these activities. Reading instruction activities *must* be based on scientifically based reading research. Required activities include:

  ➢ Implementation of scientifically based reading programs

  ➢ High quality professional development for the classroom teacher and other instructional staff provided by individuals with expertise in scientifically based reading research

  ➢ Technical assistance related to implementation

  ➢ Kindergarten transition programs

  ➢ Reading support services during non-instructional time (after-school, summer, on weekends, etc.)

  ➢ Parent training to help their children with reading and training for other providing tutorial assistance

  ➢ Family literacy services (parent and child interactive activities, early childhood education, adult literacy, and parenting education)

  ➢ Promotion of reading and library programs that provide access to engaging reading materials

> ➢ Coordination of local reading, library, and literacy programs and others supported by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act
>
> ➢ Administrative costs

Note: Nothing precludes a LEA from using its own funds or funds from other sources to support the activities of the Local Reading Improvement subgrant project.

F3.   What instructional materials may the LEA provide with LRI funds?

Instructional materials, programs, strategies, and approaches in LRI sites must be consistent with scientifically based reading research. LEAs must prepare teachers in all major components of reading instruction and use practices based on scientifically based reading research.

F4.   What are allowable uses of funds for teacher training?

REA funds may be used for teacher training including the following activities:
- ➢ Direct instruction
- ➢ Travel (transportation/accommodations)
- ➢ Tuition for conferences, seminars, or other training forums
- ➢ Substitute teacher salaries/release time
- ➢ Materials
- ➢ Tuition for teachers to attend graduate classes or other classes to improve their skills to improve their teaching skills in reading

F5.   Can the LEA train personnel from other schools or LEAs in the research based reading instruction strategies or program being used in participating schools?

Yes, but only on a fee-for-service basis. To pay for these services, non-participating schools or LEAs may use Title I or other appropriate federal funds to the extent consistent with law and may be able to use State, local, or other resources as well.

F6.   What is the duration of a subgrant?

The State awards subgrants to support two years of local operations. However, the two-year period may be adjusted in a reasonable manner to avoid cessation of program benefits during the middle of a school year. For example, if a State issued subgrants in January 2001, the subgrants may extend though school year 2002-03 and need not end in January 2003. However, we encourage States to award subgrants on a timeline that allows both local and State activities to conclude within the grants' three-year time period. This will allow States to effectively monitor local activities throughout the length of the subgrants. As States monitor the progress of participating LEAs, they should intervene as necessary with LEAs and schools not making significant progress. Further, States should encourage districts and schools to adhere to the timelines provided in their local applications.

Note: A LEA can continue to use its subgrant even if it becomes ineligible with respect to the REA eligibility criteria. For example, if its schools in Title I School Improvement status leave that status during the two-year subgrant period, the LEA (and schools) can still participate.

F7.   How are administrative costs handled?

The LEA may use up to 5 percent of its subgrant for administrative costs. In addition, under Section 14203 of ESEA as amended by the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, it may consolidate its administrative funds under the REA with other administrative funds received under ESEA "covered programs."

Section G. State Awards to LEAs for Tutorial Assistance Subgrants

G1. What is a Tutorial Assistance Subgrant (TAG)?

As with the Local Reading Improvement Grants, a key feature is the requirement that the tutoring provided under the TAGs must be based on scientifically based reading research and also be consistent with the reading program used by the child's school.

The Tutorial Assistance Subgrants fund tutorial assistance in reading to children having difficulty in reading. TAG funds may be used to provide tutoring assistance before or after school, on weekends, or during the summer.

Each SEA may reserve up to 15 percent of its overall grant for this subgrant program, and must award at least one Tutorial Assistance Subgrant, assuming that an eligible LEA applies.

SEAs award Tutorial Assistance Subgrants to LEAs based on a competitive review process. There is no time period specified for the length of the subgrants, but SEAs may require the project period for the subgrants to end before or on the expiration of the SEA grant. So that TAG programs can be effectively monitored by the State, TAGs should not extend beyond the term of the SEA grant.

Other important features:

> ➤ Eligible LEAs must have schools in empowerment zones, in enterprise communities, in Title I School Improvement status, or have the first or second highest poverty numbers or rates among districts in the State. Participating schools must be in an empowerment zone or enterprise community, in Title I School Improvement status, or have the first or second highest poverty numbers or rates among schools in the districts. (Section 2256(a)(1))

> ➤ The LEA must give public notice of the availability of the subgrant funding to possible providers and to parents, within 30 days of receiving the State notice. (Section 2256(a)(2))

G2. Must a SEA award a Tutorial Assistance Subgrant?

Yes. Each SEA must make at least one Tutorial Assistance Subgrant to a school district. The State may reserve up to 15 percent of its Reading and Literacy Grant for this purpose.

There is one important exception, however. **If no LEA submits an application for a Tutorial Assistance Subgrant within 6 months from the date on which the SEA notified the LEAs that subgrants were available, the SEA may use the funds for Local Reading Improvement Subgrants—after fulfilling the following conditions.** To do so, the SEA must certify to the Secretary of Education that:

i) The SEA provided appropriate notice to LEAs regarding the availability of subgrants;

ii) No Tutorial Assistance Subgrant applications were received;

iii) The eligible LEAs properly provided public notice; and

iv) The LEAs satisfactorily demonstrated that no qualified research based tutorial assistance provider within their jurisdiction asked them to submit an application that met the stated criteria in the law.

G3. Who provides the tutoring services?

➢ Tutoring providers must include a school-based program as well as at least one independent provider under contract to the LEA.

➢ The contract provider(s) must be independent, in the provision of these services, of any private school whose children are being served and any religious organization.

➢ The tutorial assistance providers accepted for this program must have a record of effectiveness in providing tutorial services in reading readiness, reading instruction, or early childhood literacy.

G4. What must a LEA application contain?

Awards to LEAs for these subgrants must be made on a competitive basis. The SEA should develop an appropriate application form and instructions to ensure that it receives good applications and can make appropriate judgments about the likely quality of the local program.

➢ The LEA must submit whatever information the SEA requires.

➢ In addition, the LEA must submit an assurance that it will carry out each of the duties specified in section 2256(b) on Use of Funds for participating children.

➢ The LEA must also assure that it will limit use of the funds to children from eligible schools.

In addition, the Secretary encourages SEAs to consider requiring in the application information about how the applicant intends to comply with the equitable participation requirements of private school children.

G5. How must the LEA use TAG funds?

The LEA must use the funds for a variety of activities to provide tutorial assistance in reading—before school, after school, on weekends, or during the summer—to children having difficulty reading (section 2256(b)). The tutoring *must* be based on scientifically based reading research. (See Appendix B to evaluate program effectiveness.) Activities required include, among others:

➢ Developing provider eligibility criteria

➢ Offering multiple choices among providers for parents, including at least one school-based program and one contract program

➢ Developing procedures for:

   ▪ providing initial and additional information to parents on their choices, including recommendations when requested by the parent

   ▪ selecting children for the program, including selecting among children when too many are identified for services. *The selection procedures must include giving priority to children most in need, as determined through assessments, and randomly selecting children equally in need.*

   ▪ a methodology for paying providers through a contract

   ▪ ensuring oversight over the providers

- providing information to parents on the quality of the programs and on their child's progress

- ensuring participant confidentiality—the names of children participating in the program (and their parents) and any personally identifiable information about any child or parent may not be disclosed without the prior written consent of the parent.

G6. Which LEAs are eligible to receive Tutorial Assistance Subgrants?

To be eligible for a Tutorial Assistance Subgrant, the LEA must qualify by one or more of the following criteria:

i) ***Title I School Improvement status.*** At least one school that is identified for school improvement under section 1116(c) of ESEA must be located in the geographic area served by the LEA.

ii) ***High poverty numbers***. The LEA must have the largest or second largest number of children who are counted under section 1124(c) of ESEA, in comparison to all other LEAs in the State.

iii) ***High poverty rate***. The LEA must have the highest or second highest school-age child poverty rate, in comparison to all other LEAs in the State.

The term 'school-age child poverty rate' means the number of children counted under section 1124(c) who are living within the geographic boundaries of the local educational agency, expressed as a percentage of the total number of children aged 5-17 years living within the geographic boundaries of the local educational agency.

iv) ***Empowerment zone or enterprise community***. The LEA must have at least one school in the geographic area served by the LEA that—(i) is located in an area designated as an empowerment zone under part I of sub-chapter U of chapter 1 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986; or (ii) is located in an area designated as an enterprise community under part I of subchapter U of chapter 1 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

G7. How is notification made of the availability of Tutorial Assistance Subgrants?

Both SEAs and LEAs have duties with respect to notification on Tutorial Assistance Subgrants:

➢ ***SEAs.*** Prior to receiving applications, the SEA must provide a notice to all its LEAs regarding the availability of the subgrants. (Section 2256(a)(2)(A))

➢ **LEAs.** Within 30 days of receiving a state's notice, all LEAs that qualify (see Section G6 above) must provide public notice to potential tutorial assistance providers and parents in its jurisdiction that the subgrants are available and the LEA could apply to the State under a competitive process for the funds. LEAs must make this public notification as a condition of receiving Title I funds. (Section 2256(a)(2)(B))

The Department recommends that the State put notices in widely read newspapers, on their web page, in any appropriate listservs, and in other appropriate distribution mechanisms to meet this requirement.

G8. Must parents be notified about the availability of TAG tutoring programs?

Yes. Parents must receive the following information about choices of services under this program (section 2256(a)(2)(B)):

> ➢ Parents must be notified of the TAG tutoring options available for their eligible children. Each LEA receiving a TAG subgrant must be able to offer parents multiple choices for providers, including a school-based program and at least one non-LEA provider under contract.

> ➢ The LEA must develop information for parents of eligible children on their choices for tutorial assistance, including information on the quality and effectiveness of the tutorial assistance offered by each approved provider.

G9. May an LEA receive both a Local Reading Improvement and a Tutorial Assistance Subgrant?

Yes. An eligible LEA may apply to either or both State competitions for these subgrant programs.

G10. What is the duration of a Tutorial Assistance subgrant?

The State may award Tutorial Assistance subgrants for up to a two-year period. The two-year period may be adjusted in a reasonable manner to avoid cessation of program benefits during the middle of a school year. For example, if a State issued subgrants in January 2001, the subgrants may extend though school year 2002-03 and need not end in January 2003. The Department encourages States to not extend subgrants beyond the length of the State grant, so that the TAG programs can be effectively monitored throughout their duration.

Section H. Miscellaneous

H1. What regulations apply to the Reading Excellence Act program?

The Education Department General Administrative Regulation (EDGAR) provisions applicable to the Reading Excellence Act program are:

- ➢ Part 75 (Direct Grant Programs),
- ➢ Part 77 (Definitions),
- ➢ Part 79 (Intergovernmental Review of Department of Education Programs and Activities),
- ➢ Part 80 (Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments),
- ➢ Part 81 (General Education Provisions Act-Enforcement),
- ➢ Part 82 (New Restrictions on Lobbying),
- ➢ Part 85 (Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and Government-wide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants), and
- ➢ Part 86 (Drug-Free Schools).
- ➢ Part 97 (Protection of Human Subjects)
- ➢ Part 98 (Student Rights in Research, Experimental Programs, and Testing)
- ➢ Part 99 (Family Educational Rights and Privacy)

In addition, 34 CFR Part 299, which implements the general provisions in Title IX of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, applies to the Reading Excellence Act program.

Appendix A. Key Findings from Scientifically Based Research on Essential Components of Reading Instruction

Component of Reading Instruction	Definition	Key Findings
1. Phonemic Awareness	The ability to hear, identify and manipulate the individual sounds, or phonemes, in spoken words.	- Phonemic awareness can be taught and learned. - Phonemic awareness instruction helps children learn to read. - Phonemic awareness instruction helps children learn to spell. - Phonemic awareness instruction is most effective when children are taught to manipulate phonemes by using the letters of the alphabet. - Phonemic awareness instruction is most effective when it focuses on only on or two types of phoneme manipulation, rather than several types.
2. Phonics	The understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes, the sounds of spoken language, and graphemes, the letters and spelling that represent those sounds in written language.	- Systematic and explicit phonics instruction is more effective than non-systematic or no phonics instruction. - Systematic and explicit phonics instruction significantly improves kindergarten and first-grade children's word recognition and spelling. - Systematic and explicit phonics instruction significantly improves children's reading comprehension. - Systematic and explicit phonics

Component of Reading Instruction	Definition	Key Findings
		instruction is effective for children from various social and economic levels. • Systematic and explicit phonics instruction is particularly beneficial for children who are having difficulty learning to read and who are at risk for developing future reading problems. • Systematic and explicit phonics instruction is most effective when introduced early. • Phonics instruction is not an entire reading program for beginning readers.
3. Vocabulary Development	Development of stored information about the meanings and pronunciation of words necessary for communication. There are four types of vocabulary: a. listening vocabulary – the words needed to understand what is heard b. speaking vocabulary – the words used when speaking c. reading vocabulary – the words needed to understand what is read d. writing vocabulary – the words used in writing	• Children learn the meanings of most words indirectly, through everyday experiences with oral and written language. • Some vocabulary must be taught directly.
4. Reading fluency	The ability to read text accurately and quickly	• Repeated and monitored oral reading improves reading fluency and overall reading achievement. • No research evidence is available currently to confirm that instructional time spent on silent, independent reading with minimal guidance and feedback improves reading fluency and

Component of Reading Instruction	Definition	Key Findings
		overall reading achievement.
5. Reading Comprehension Strategies	Strategies for understanding, remembering and communicating with others about what has been read	• Text comprehension can be improved by instruction that helps readers use specific comprehension strategies. • Students can be taught to use comprehension strategies.

Appendix B. Using Scientifically Based Reading Research to Evaluate Reading Program Effectiveness

Criteria	Meets Rigorous Standard
1. Use of rigorous, systematic and empirical evidence	• The program has a solid theoretical or research foundation that is grounded in the scientific literature. • Program effectiveness has been shown through an experimental design that includes experimental and control groups created through random assignment or carefully matched comparison groups. • Program effectiveness has been demonstrated through research that clearly describes how, by whom, and on whom the research was conducted.
2. Adequacy of the data analyses to test the stated hypotheses and justify the conclusions drawn	• Research that demonstrates program effectiveness was designed to minimize alternative explanations, such as through a series of experiments that consistently support a given theory while collectively eliminating the most important competing explanations. • The overall conclusions of program effectiveness are consistent with research observations. • Research that demonstrates program effectiveness presents convincing documentation that the observed results were the result of the intervention. • Research that demonstrates program effectiveness clearly defines the population studied (student demographics such as age and poverty level, as well as cognitive, academic and behavioral characteristics; school attributes such as grade levels, size and racial, ethnic and language minority composition). • Research that demonstrates program effectiveness clearly describes to whom the findings can be generalized. • Research that demonstrates program effectiveness provides a full description of outcome measures.
3. Reliance on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations	• Gains in student reading achievement have been sustained over time. • Gains in student reading achievement have been confirmed through independent, third-party evaluation. • Program effectiveness has been demonstrated through multiple investigators in numerous

Criteria	Meets Rigorous Standard
	locations.
	• Research that demonstrates program effectiveness describes the program in sufficient detail to allow for replicability.
	• Research that demonstrates program effectiveness explain how instructional fidelity was ensured.
4. Acceptance by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective and scientific review	• Unbiased individuals who were not part of the study have carefully reviewed the research that demonstrates program effectiveness.
	• Program effectiveness findings have been subjected to external scrutiny and verification.

Appendix C. Definitions

The following definitions are contained in Section 2252 of the Reading Excellence Act.

(1) ELIGIBLE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROVIDER.—The term 'eligible professional development provider' means a provider of professional development in reading instruction to teachers that is based on scientifically-based reading research.

(2) FAMILY LITERACY SERVICES.—The term 'family literacy services' means services provided to participants on a voluntary basis that are of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family, and that integrate all of the following activities:

(A) Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children.

(B) Training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children.

(C) Parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency.

(D) An age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.

(3) INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF.—The term 'instructional staff'—

(A) means individuals who have responsibility for teaching children to read; and

(B) includes principals, teachers, supervisors of instruction, librarians, library school media specialists, teachers of academic subjects other than reading, and other individuals who have responsibility for assisting children to learn to read.

(4) READING.—The term 'reading' means a complex system of deriving meaning from print that requires all of the following:

(A) The skills and knowledge to understand how phonemes, or speech sounds, are connected to print.

(B) The ability to decode unfamiliar words.

(C) The ability to read fluently.

(D) Sufficient background information and vocabulary to foster reading comprehension.

(E) The development of appropriate active strategies to construct meaning from print.

(F) The development and maintenance of a motivation to read.

(5) SCIENTIFICALLY BASED READING RESEARCH.—The term 'scientifically-based reading research'—

(A) means the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading difficulties; and

(B) shall include research that—

  (i) employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment;

  (ii) involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn;

  (iii) relies on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations; and

  (iv) has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review.

Appendix D. References

Information on obtaining these resources is provided below. Electronic links are available at: http://www.ed.gov/teachers/how/read/edpicks.jhtml?src=ln.

- *Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read, Kindergarten through Grade 3*
  September 2001

  This publication was developed by the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) and was funded by the National Institute for Literacy through the Educational Research and Development Center Program. To order this publication, call 1-877-4-ED-PUBS.

- *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read*
  April 2000

  The National Reading Panel Report outlines the most effective approaches to teaching children to read, the status of the research on reading, and reading instructional practices that are ready to be used by teachers in classrooms. Both the report and the congressional testimony are available on line and in hard copy.

- *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*
  December 1998

  This landmark 1998 report of the National Research Council synthesizes the wealth of research on early reading development. It provides an integrated picture of how reading develops and how reading instruction should proceed. This book includes recommendations for practice and further research. Hardcover copies are available from the National Academy Press by calling 1-800-624-6242. Each book costs $35.95 plus shipping and handling.

- *Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success*
  1998

This guide, developed by the National Research Council, explains how children learn to read and how adults can help them. It provides ideas for the prevention of reading difficulties in early childhood and the primary grades. Copies are available from the National Academy Press by calling 1-800-624-6242. Each book costs $14.95 plus shipping and handling.