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**First Lady Announces National Partnership to Prescribe Reading to Infants and
Toddlers**

3 PM ROOS ROOM

April 16, 1997

"There are few things that I believe could make a more dramatic difference over the next 10 years in this country than to persuade parents of all educational and economic levels to take this mission of reading to and talking with their young babies seriously."

-- First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, January 10, 1997

New Partnership to Prescribe Reading and Ensure That Children Who Come to the Doctor Have Access to Books. The First Lady is pleased to announce that a new national partnership has been created to prescribe reading to infants and toddlers. Pediatricians, hospitals, health centers, book publishers, libraries and others are coming together to make sure that infants and toddlers who come to the doctor have access to books and are read to regularly. The American Academy of Pediatrics is recommending that pediatricians prescribe reading to infants and toddlers as part of standard pediatric care.

The New Partnership Has Already Secured:

- More than 250,000 books to be distributed through health clinics and centers around the country;
- Commitments to train 10,000 pediatricians and 950 community health centers to prescribe reading
and provide books to hundreds of thousands of children by the year 2000.

Response to the President's America Reads Challenge and the First Lady's Call for a National Effort to Prescribe Reading to Infants and Toddlers. Today's announcement is in direct response to the First Lady's call in January for a national effort to build on the existing efforts to prescribe reading -- by programs such as Reach Out and Read and the American Library Association's Born to Read -- and to the President's America Reads Challenge to help parents be their children's first teachers and ensure that every child can read well by the end of third grade.

The Partnership, Led by Scholastic Inc., First Book, and Reach Out and Read, includes the American Academy of Pediatrics, National Association of Community Health Centers, National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions, American Library Association, Random House, Irving Harris and the Harris Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, American Booksellers Association, Association of American Publishers, Mellon Trust, Dreyfus Corporation, ABC Television, Reading Is Fundamental, National Association of Chain Drug Stores, and the National Community Pharmacists Association, and seeks additional partners.

Under the Reach Out and Read program, volunteers read to children in waiting rooms, health care providers prescribe reading, use books in well-visits, and give books to children at the end of a visit. This model program is already being used in more than 80 health centers and hospitals around the country.

Call to Ensure That by the Year 2000 Every Child Under Age Five Is Read to Regularly.

The First Lady is calling for every community to come together using its local library in partnership with local health providers to help encourage reading to young children and ensure that every child under age five is read to regularly by the year 2000. Today, only 39% of parents with children under three read to their children daily [Commonwealth Fund, 1996]. Research shows that when doctors prescribe reading and give books to low-income parents and their children, these parents are *four times* more likely to read to their children [AMA, AJDC, 8/91].

The White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning Will Underscore the Importance of Reading to Infants and Toddlers. *The White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning: What New Research on the Brain Tells Us About Our Youngest Children* will explore new research that shows that reading to children in their first few years actually helps their brain to grow in addition to enhancing their emotional and social development and laying the groundwork for vocabulary and later educational success.

Q&A on Prescription for Reading Partnership
INTERNAL

Q What is the role of the federal government?

A. This coalition came together in response to the First Lady's call in January and the President's America Reads Challenge. The First Lady held a meeting of nearly 20 groups and spoke repeatedly about the need for such an effort.

Q. Is this a part of America Reads?

A. Yes, we see it as part of America Reads. All efforts responding to the President's call to help ensure that third graders can read well are part of America Reads. The President's budget proposal contains funding both to support programs that help parents be their children's first teacher, and to help mobilize 1 million volunteers to tutor k-3 graders after school. This is the type of national effort that would be considered for America Reads Parents as First Teachers Challenge Grant funding.

Q. Is this eligible for federal funding?

A. Many of the individual members already receive federal funding, such as community health centers and libraries.

Q. Is a new 501(c)3 forming to do this?

A. No. The members making the initial commitments will form a steering committee to coordinate and implement their actions. They will develop a strategic plan in the next 4 weeks to guide their actions.

Q. How will the books be distributed?

A. Qualifying local programs will be shipped directly from the publishers. The partners will help them select appropriate books for each age and community.

Q. Who should people call for more information?

A. There is an 800 number set up to answer people's questions and for people who want to get involved. The number is 1-800-905-4363. People can also be directed to any of the partnership's members, and especially its leaders:

First Book, 202-393-1222

Scholastic Books, 212-343-6586

Reach Out and Read, 617-534-5701

Q. What is the relationship of this Prescription for Reading Partnership and Reach Out and Read?

A. The partnership will replicate and build on Reach Out and Read, and help build a community network around each Reach Out and Read program.

Q. Is Scholastic's donation in addition to the 1 million they donated to America Reads under the volunteerism summit?

A. The 100,000 is part of their commitment of 1 million books. Their pledge to match additional pledges of funding with books are in addition to the 1 million books.

Q. Where will the other 900,000 books pledged for America Reads go?

A. Scholastic and America Reads will work together to determine their best use and distribution.

Press Guidance

April 10, 1997

INS JUVENILE DETENTION POLICY

Background: Today's Washington Post reports on the Human Rights Watch Children's Rights Project's release of a 120-page report condemning INS' treatment of juvenile detainees.

Q: What is the Administration's response to the charges in the Human Rights Watch report?

A: INS takes its responsibility to protect the juveniles in its custody very seriously and is steadfastly committed to ensuring their physical and emotional safety. All of the facilities used to house juveniles in INS custody are state-licensed and meet or exceed respective state requirements for safety, education, recreation and physical exercise, nutrition, and medical counseling services.

Q: Why does INS put children in detention centers?

A: INS is responsible for ensuring that apprehended alien minors attend their immigration hearings. The Service makes every effort to release a juvenile to a responsible family member or agency in the United States consistent with the juvenile's safety interests. The majority of juveniles are released on orders of recognizance to family members in the United States, within 72 hours whenever possible. In addition to the government's legal obligations, INS sometimes detains minors to protect them from harm (i.e., alien smuggling gangs). Therefore, if a safe and reliable custodian cannot be found for a minor, INS will maintain custody.

Drafted: JSilverman/INS

Viewed by Rahm