

## April 1997 • America Reads Challenge

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Nat'l Catholic Educ Assoc in MN (4/1-4)	2 Amer Assoc School Librarians Conf in OR (4/2-6)	3 NSTA Conf in LA (4/3-6)	4	5
6	7	8	9 Council for Exeptional Children in UT (4/9- 13) NAFEO in DC (4/9- 13)	10	11	12 NAESP Conf in TX (4/12-16)
13 Nat'l Volunteer Week AACC Conf in CA (4/13-15) NAESP Conf in TX (4/13-16) AAU Conf in DC (4/13-15) Nat'l Volunteer Week Kickoff Parade in TX	14 Riley Goals 2000 w/ Jeffords in VT Rasco NAESP in TX	15 Nat'l Youth Service Day Rasco AACC in CA Riley AAU Conf in DC	16 Riley WH Teacher of the Year Event Riley Specter Hearing	17 Riley TIMSS Event w/ Gov. Carnahan in MO WH Zero-to-Three Conf. (Riley -??)	18 Riley Teacher's Forum in DC Rasco Parents Education Advocacy Training Center in VA WH Teacher of the Year Event	19 NetDay '97
20	21 Rasco Nat'l Ctr for Family Lit. In KY	22 Earth Day	23 WH AmReads Event Nat'l Conf of Black Mayors Annual Mtg in MO (4/23-27)	24 Take Daughters to Work Day Riley NCES Report Release-remarks	25	26 NSBA Conf in CA (4/26-29)
27 Presidents' Summit for Amer's Future in PA (4/27-29)	28	29	30			

## May 1997 • America Reads Challenge

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 <b>Wofford Labor-HHS House Approp Hearing</b>	2 <b>Riley NAEP Science Report Riley Garrison Elem School RWN Awards</b>	3
4 <b>Int'l Reading Assoc Conf in GA (5/4-9)</b>	5 <b>Council on Foundations Conf in HI</b>	6 <b>Riley Int'l Reading Assoc. in GA</b>	7	8	9	10
11	12 <b>Riley School Construction Event in Boston Riley Boston Globe Symposium on Literacy in Boston</b>	13	14 <b>Riley RWN Kickoff in DC</b>	15 <b>Riley RWN Event in Boston</b>	16	17
18	19	20 <b>Riley RWN/Spiderman Event in NYC Riley Satellite Town Mtg re: America Reads</b>	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29 <b>Riley RWN Event in Denver</b>	30 <b>Riley ED Standards Event in San Fran Riley Speech to W. Coast College Pres</b>	31

## June 1997 • America Reads Challenge

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 <b>Riley Blue Ribbon Schools Event in San Fran -TBD</b>	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10 <b>Riley NAEP/TIMMS Grade 4 Report</b>	11	12	13	14
15	16	17 <b>Riley Satellite Town Mtg re:Preparing Children for Success</b>	18 <b>PTA in KS (6/18-21)</b>	19	20 <b>US Conf of Mayors in CA (6/20-25)</b>	21 <i>First Day of Summer</i>
22	23	24	25	26 <b>Amer Library Assoc Conf in CA (6/26-7/3)</b>	27	28
29 <b>PTA Conf in CA (6/29-7/2)</b> <b>Nat'l Community Service Conf in NY</b>	30 <b>NEA Conf in GA (6/30-7/5)</b>					

## July 1997 • America Reads Challenge

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 PTA Conf in CA (6/29-7/2) NEA Conf in GA (6/30-7/5)	2 Nat'l Literacy Day	3	4 Independence Day	5
6	7	8	9 Educ Commission of the States Annual Mtg in RI (7/9-12)	10 Nat'l Traci Collins Day	11 Nat'l Assoc of Counties Conf in MD (7/11-15)	12
13	14 Riley CASE in DC	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26 Nat'l Urban League in PA (7-26-29)
27 Nat'l Gov.s Mtg in NV (7/27-30)	28	29	30	31		

# \$100,000 gift to help kids learn to read

By Virginia Grantier  
Special to the Denver Post

**DOUGLAS COUNTY** — The sun shone brightly, the temperature was in the 70s, but it was Christmas for the Douglas County school district Tuesday.

The district received its biggest private donation ever — \$100,000 — to kick off a \$1 million fund-raising drive to expand a program for students who are struggling in reading.

Castle Rock residents Ron and Carol Moore wanted to help the district kick off the campaign for its Read-to-Succeed program in a substantial way.

Under the program, one full-time teacher will be assigned to each district school to provide a half-hour of daily, individual tutoring for 12 weeks to students who have fallen at least a grade level behind in reading. Parents must read with their students at night.

"We think it's so important to learn to read," Ron Moore

told a crowd of students and adults before presenting a check at a Cherokee Trail Elementary School assembly.

Moore, president of Guaranty Bank and Trust in Denver, is a member of the Douglas County Education Foundation, which raises private money for special district programs. He announced the donation to the foundation board recently, said board member Steve Scherbeck. Board members almost fell off their chairs, Scherbeck said. "It's a gift from the heart all the way," he added.

Read to Succeed began six years ago at Cherokee Trail and is offered regularly there. Otherwise, though, it's available sporadically in about half the district's 26 elementary schools, depending on money.

Where the program is in place, it's credited with helping 400 struggling readers jump an average of two grade levels.

Former Cherokee Trail teacher Karen Johnson said Read to Succeed tutors use normal classroom teaching techniques, but on a one-to-one basis.

"That's the key element . . . You have their undivided attention and

Reading

complete focus."

The program is not intended for those with learning disabilities, but for those who for various reasons have fallen academically behind.

Program organizers hope that the \$1 million, plus \$2 million in matching funds from the school district and individual schools, will make the program available at all the elementary schools for the next five years, said Barb Kimball, a program coordinator.

District Superintendent Rick O'Connell said Read to Succeed costs about \$550 per child.

Many of the students who've participated might otherwise have fallen further behind and ended up in special education which is much more expensive. Or some parents might have resorted to private tutoring, some of which isn't very good, O'Connell said.

Denny Reeves' son Jake, a second-grader, made such remarkable progress in his reading skills that Reeves donated \$1,000 to the program, as well.

Jake's main problem was that he preferred playing or watching TV to reading, Reeves said.

But now, Jake reads for fun.

"The school and faculty have done a fantastic job," Reeves said.

MAR 19 1997

DENVER ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

# Couple put money where the mind is

By Shelley Gonzalez  
Rocky Mountain News Staff Writer

**PARKER** — A Castle Pines couple on Tuesday donated \$100,000 to jump-start a literacy program in Douglas County.

Ron and Carol Moore's gift initiates a \$1 million fund-raising campaign for Read to Succeed, a tutorial reading program for elementary pupils lagging at least a year behind their peers.

Supported by the Douglas County Educational Foundation the program can be fully implemented over five years, school district officials said. Ron Moore is on the foundation's board.

Formerly called LIT, Read to Succeed was developed in 1991 by Mary Jane O'Connell and Laura Harmon, who served as co-

## Pair kick off drive for funds to aid literacy

principals at Cherokee Trail Elementary School in Parker. The program caters to pupils in first through fifth grades who are struggling with reading and don't qualify for other federal or state special education programs.

The intense, 12-week reading program provides one-on-one instruction with a reading teacher outside regular classroom activities, and nightly follow-up with a parent.

A recent study of 128 second- and third-graders enrolled in the program showed dramatic improvements in reading skills. Proponents also said it boosts self-esteem and overall academic success.

"The change in Chris and his

attitude was very significant," one trainer observed in a second-grader. "He is almost the opposite of the quiet, withdrawn and worried child he was."

Another described how Jeremy, also in second grade, could read a book to his class for the first time two weeks before the program ended.

"Now he writes stories!" the teacher said. "In August, he wouldn't even try."

The program has been used in other elementary schools, and school district officials hope it will be incorporated at all Douglas County primary schools.

All donations go directly to the program because no administrative levies will be assessed. Con-

tributions will be matched, where possible, by the elementary schools' own fund-raising efforts or the district.

"One of the beauties of this program is that it is so easily transferable to other schools," said district spokeswoman Jill Fox. "One of our long-term hopes is to share this with other districts because it has been so successful here in Douglas County."

Ron Moore is chairman of Guaranty Bank & Trust and is majority shareholder of First National Bank of Castle Rock, The Links Golf Club and the new Highlands Ranch Golf Club. Carol, a reading tutor, is active in the community, especially in child and education programs.

The couple have been married for 44 years, have four grown children and four grandchildren.

# Improving Literacy, a Page at a Time

At D.C. School, Clinton Announces Tutoring Plan, Cites Lesson of 'Tortoise'

By Debbi Wilgoren  
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Clinton, combining his crusade for national literacy with his newly expressed concern for the nation's capital, announced new tutoring programs yesterday that will be organized by AmeriCorps workers at 18 struggling D.C. schools and staffed by hundreds of university students and volunteers from around the city.

"One of our goals has to be to make sure every 8-year-old in this country can read a book on his or her own—and every 8-year-old in this school, and every 8-year-old in this city," Clinton said during a speech at Garrison Elementary School in Northwest Washington's Shaw neighborhood. "To truly renew our capital city, we clearly have to start with our children."

Clinton and his wife, Hillary Rod-

ham Clinton, spent about 90 minutes at Garrison, one of 18 elementary schools the District has targeted for special assistance because its standardized test scores have been so low in recent years.

The visit began in Stephanie Early Abney's brightly decorated first-grade classroom, where letter combinations ("ch," "th") are written on construction paper mobiles along with the "hopes and dreams" of students ("I wish that people would get along with each other," "that I can learn how to read a book and color and write").

Sitting on folding metal chairs and surrounded by Abney, 19 rapt youngsters, an assistant teacher and two classroom volunteers, the Clintons greeted the students and were handed two classroom copies of the classic fable "The Tortoise and the Hare."

The president made sure the chil-

dren understood that a tortoise was a turtle and a hare was a rabbit. Then he and his wife took turns reading the words and showing the pictures.

The tortoise "was tired, but he didn't stop," Hillary Clinton said at the end of the tale, in which the tortoise beats the hare in a race because the hare stops to take a nap.

"Have any of you ever tried something that was really hard to do? How about reading? You just have to keep practicing over and over again, and not go to sleep, when you are learning to read."

President Clinton repeated the theme during his speech in the school cafeteria, which doubles as an auditorium and gymnasium.

"We're plotting out a race here for a tortoise, not a hare," he said of the tutoring initiatives he is launching in the District and across the country.

"This is not going to be done overnight. Children are not built in a day. But it is a very important start."

The District version of Clinton's "America Reads" program has three components: AmeriCorps-organized tutoring after school for first- and second-graders; Saturday tutorials for third- and sixth-graders; and family resource centers where parents can improve their own reading skills.

D.C. school officials said the tutorials for students, which began this week at Garrison, will be in place at all 18 targeted schools next month. The family resource centers will start next fall.

The two members of the national service program AmeriCorps who are working at Garrison said they have recruited about 50 tutors—workers from the government and private sectors, college students and senior citizens—but that more are sorely needed.

"A lot of people think that they may be too busy to tutor," said Tara West, 25, from Akron, Ohio. "But then, once they see the faces of the students, they think they have all the time in the world."

The presidents of American, Catholic, Gallaudet, Georgetown, George Washington and Howard

universities and Trinity College, all of whom attended yesterday's announcement, have pledged to send nearly 700 more college students to tutor in D.C. schools starting next year. About two-thirds of them will be paid through a new federally funded work-study program.

Their efforts were applauded yesterday by D.C. school Chief Executive Julius W. Becton Jr., who has emphasized public-private partnerships as the key to improving city schools.

"We can no longer afford to sit on the sidelines saying our problems can't be solved," Becton said. "Concerned citizens can and will make a profound and lasting difference for our children."

But Garrison, a cheerful, well-run school, is a textbook example of how complicated improving student performance can be. The school is an early-childhood learning model for the city, employing innovative teaching approaches lauded by experts across the country.

Its teachers have been recognized as caring and talented. Students are tutored and mentored by volunteers from Metropolitan Baptist Church,

the Department of Education and Anderson Consulting. Those who participate in an after-school baseball league receive additional academic help. But Garrison's test scores lag below even the city average, which itself is below the national norm. In 1995, the school's third-graders scored in the bottom 25 percent of a national standardized test in reading—a 17-point drop from 1994.

Abney, a highly regarded teacher, said all but seven of her 20 first-graders are already reading—and four youngsters are ahead of their grade level. She said her biggest struggle is helping those students whose parents cannot or do not to read to them at home and who therefore arrive in first

grade unable to recognize letters or link letters and sounds. "The ones who do very well are usually the ones who get a lot of home support," Abney said. "And that's why it's so important to have these tutors, because they're filling in that gap."

## EVIDENCE THAT TUTORING WORKS

Copy to Carol R.  
Jerrin  
Mike Lee  
Bob Shircian

### INTRODUCTION

Research has consistently shown that well-designed tutoring programs that use volunteers and other nonprofessionals as tutors can be effective in improving children's reading skills. Students with below-average reading skills who are tutored by volunteers post significant gains in reading skills when compared with similar students who do not receive tutoring from a high-quality tutoring program. Students who are tutored (henceforth "tutees") and tutors, in the case of peer or cross-age tutors, often demonstrate higher self-esteem and positive dispositions toward school. Among the features of tutoring programs associated with the most positive outcomes are extensive training for tutors, formal time commitments by tutors, structured tutoring sessions, careful monitoring of tutoring services, and close relationships between classroom instruction and curriculum and the tutoring services provided. Students with severe learning disabilities require special tutoring services, which can be provided by nonprofessionals under careful supervision.

### WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS ABOUT TUTORING

- **Tutoring programs that incorporate research-based elements produce improvements in reading achievement.**

A meta-analysis—conducted by Cohen, Kulik and Kulik—of 65 published studies that used rigorous evaluation methods to evaluate high-quality tutoring programs found positive, though modest, achievement effects across all of the studies. [Cohen, P.A., Kulik, J.A., & Kulik, C.L.C. (1982). *Educational outcomes of tutoring: A meta-analysis of findings. American Educational Research Journal, 19*. 237-248.]

A British tutoring program involving 2,372 elementary and junior high students who were tutored by trained parents and peers for an average of 8.6 weeks improved their reading comprehension 4.4 times the normal rate and word recognition 3.3 times the normal rate. Four months after the end of tutoring, the average tutee was still improving at twice the normal rate in both comprehension and word recognition. [Topping, K., & Whitley, M. (1990). *Participant evaluation of parent-tutored and peer-tutored projects in reading. Educational Research, 32*(1), 14-32.]

Two tutoring programs in Dade County, Florida, that trained cross-age and adult volunteer tutors to work with elementary school students found that tutees outperformed a randomly-assigned control group of students who were not tutored. [Madden, N.A., & Slavin, R.E. (1989). *Effective pullout programs for students at risk. In Effective Programs for Students At Risk*. R.E. Slavin, N. L. Karweit, and N.A. Madden, eds. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.]

An after-school tutoring program in which low-achieving second and third graders were tutored one hour, twice each week, by university students, retirees, and suburban mothers also generated strong improvements in the tutees' reading skills. Two reading specialists

selected the children for tutoring, recruited and trained the tutors, and monitored the tutoring sessions. In each of two years, the tutored group outperformed a closely matched comparison group on word recognition, passage reading accuracy, and spelling. Fifty percent of the tutored children made a full year's gain in reading while only 20% of the comparison group children did. [Morris, D., Shaw, B., & Perney, J. (1990, November). *Helping low readers in Grades 2 and 3: An after-school volunteer tutoring program. Elementary School Journal, 91*, 133-150].

Other studies have shown that carefully crafted peer, cross-age, and adult tutoring services can improve reading achievement among disadvantaged, mildly disabled, and limited-English-proficient students. [Bender, D.S., Giovanis, G., & Mazzoni, M. (1994). *After-school tutoring program. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Middle School Association*; Warger, C. L. (1991). *Peer tutoring: When working together is better than working alone. Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.*

- Tutoring can also lead to improvements in self-confidence about reading, increased motivation for reading, and behavior, both among tutees and peer or cross-age tutors.

The Partners for Valued Youth employed at-risk, limited-English-proficient middle school students to tutor low-achieving elementary schools students for four hours every week. After participating in the program, tutors had lower dropout and absentee rates, and higher self-concept scores than a randomly selected control group. Tutees also experienced improved reading scores, lower absentee rates, and fewer disciplinary referrals. [Robledo, M. del R. (1990). *Partners for valued youth: Dropout prevention strategies for at-risk language minority students. Washington, DC: US Department of Education.*]

Surveys of targeted groups of students who are tutored in reading, have shown positive outcomes for students' self confidence as readers, their motivation to read, and their views of their control over their reading abilities. [Lepper, M.R., & Chabay, R.W. (1988). *Socializing the intelligent tutor: Bringing empathy to computer tutors. New York: Springer-Verlag*; Topping, K., & Whitey, M. (1990). *Participant evaluation of parent-tutored and peer-tutored projects in reading. Educational Research, 32(1)*, 14-32; Merrill, D.C., et al. (1995). *Tutoring: Guided learning by doing. Cognition and Instruction, 13(3)*, 315-372.]

Researchers who have examined multiple tutoring programs generally agree on the factors that generate the most consistent positive academic outcomes for tutees. These include:

- Tutor-training

Tutees whose tutors who participated in on-going, intensive training throughout their

participation in a Dade County tutoring program outperformed tutees whose tutors did not complete the on-going training sessions. [Wasik, B. A., & Slavin, R. E. (1993). *Preventing early reading failure with one-to-one tutoring: A review of five programs. Reading Research Quarterly, pp. 179-200.*]

A review of college-based tutoring programs that recruit college students to tutor younger children concluded that tutor training was a key to project success. [Reisner, E.R., Petry, C. A., & Armitage, M. (1990). *A review of programs involving college students as tutors or mentors in grades K-12. Washington, DC: US Department of Education.*]

The importance of tutor training is reinforced by several other studies, which provide specific advice on the types of training that yield the best results. Jenkins & Jenkins (1985) point to the importance of training in interpersonal skills so tutors do not become impatient with tutees. Warger (1991) says training should include strategies for reinforcing correct responses and properly correcting incorrect responses. [Jenkins, J. R., & Jenkins, L. M. *Making peer tutoring work. (1987, March). Educational Leadership, pp. 64-68;* Warger, C. L. (1991). *Peer tutoring: When working together is better than working alone. Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.*

- **Well-structured tutoring sessions in which the content and delivery of instruction is carefully scripted.**

In a study of the use of tutorial scripts in teaching mathematics, McArthur found that the most successful tutors often have well-rehearsed scripts for responding to student errors. The results are general enough to apply to reading also. [McArthur, D., Stasz, C., & Zmuidzinas, M. (1990). *Tutoring techniques in algebra. Cognition and Instruction, 7. 197-244.*]

In their meta-analysis, Cohen, Kulik, and Kulik found that structured programs demonstrated higher achievement gains than unstructured programs. Wasik and Slavin (1993) reached similar conclusions when they examined five successful tutoring programs. [Cohen, P.A., Kulik, J.A., & Kulik, C.L.C. (1982). *Educational outcomes of tutoring: A meta-analysis of findings. American Educational Research Journal, 19. 237-248;* Wasik, B. A., & Slavin, R. E. (1993, Spring). *Preventing early reading failure with one-to-one tutoring: A review of five programs. Reading Research Quarterly, pp. 179-200.* ]

- **Close coordination with the classroom or reading teacher is essential.**

When tutoring is coordinated with good classroom reading practices, students perform better than when tutoring is unrelated to classroom instruction. [Venezky, R. L., & Jain, R. (1996). *Tutoring for reading improvement: A background paper; Reisner, Petry, & Armitage, 1990; Jenkins & Jenkins, 1987.*

- **Careful monitoring and reinforcement of progress**

A recent study of tutoring for 30 first grade children at risk in reading—conducted by Juel—reported that successful tutor-tutee relationships were characterized by (a) strong

reinforcement of progress, (b) a high number of reading and writing experiences in which the student moved from being fully supported to working independently, and (c) explicit demonstration of appropriate reading and writing processes. [Juel, C. (1996). *What makes literacy tutoring effective?* *Reading Research Quarterly*, 31(3), 268-289.]

- **Frequent and regular tutoring sessions, at least 3-5 days a week for 10-30 minutes daily** [Brailsford, A. (1991). *Paired Reading: Positive reading practice*. Kelowna, British Columbia: Filmwest Associates 1991; Warger, 1991; Robledo, 1990; Jenkins & Jenkins, 1985]
- **Specially designed interventions for the 17-20 percent of children with severe reading difficulties.**

Kameenui, Adams, and Lyon (1996) identified the most important strategies for improving early reading instruction and learning -- create appreciation of the written work, develop awareness of printed language and the writing system, teach the alphabet, develop student's phonological awareness, develop phonemic awareness, teach the relation of sounds and letters, teach children how to sound out words, teach children to spell words, and help children develop fluent, reflective reading. Trained volunteers under careful supervision from reading or resource teachers have proven to be effective instructors for learning disabled and handicapped students [Azcoltha, 1989; Madden & Slavin, 1989]

Weekly Cabinet Report  
America Reads Challenge  
Week of April 28, 1997

## LEGISLATION

On Monday, we transmitted the legislation to Congress. On Tuesday, Kennedy introduced it on the Senate side with the following original cosponsors (as of 4/29): Mikulski, Murray, Daschle, Dodd, Levin, Glenn, Inouye, Cleland, Wellstone, Kerry, Sarbanes and Reid. The House bill will likely be introduced on Wednesday.

On Monday, Carol Rasco and Susan Frost held a briefing with education associations and organizations to inform them we transmitted the bill, brief them on the bill, and provide to them summary documents and the actual legislation.

On Monday, America Reads staff delivered packages of the updated briefing materials to Department of Education staff. Many offices are also sending the updated materials to their constituent lists.

**FEDERAL WORK STUDY:** As of April 28, 166 college and university presidents have committed to join the America Reads Honor Roll.

This week Carol Rasco mailed a letter to the 166 institutions who have accepted the America Reads Challenge thanking them for their involvement and providing them with information to get their programs up and running. Some of the information includes: notification that the FWS Handbook will be mailed in the next few weeks, models from other campuses, the listing of other institutions who have signed on, WEB listing resources, and staff contacts both at US Department of Education, Corporation for National Service and San Francisco State University.

## OUTREACH

### This Week

On Monday, April 28, Carol Rasco and Susan Frost briefed outside groups on the America Reads legislation.

On Tuesday, April 29, Carol addressed the Western Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators national conference in San Francisco. She also addressed the annual business session and conducted a concurrent session on Federal Work Study.

On April 30, Carol delivered the keynote address at a ceremony at Arkansas Children's Hospital at which time the Jones Foundation of Springdale endowed chairs in the names of Dr. Betty Lowe and Dr. Pat Casey.

On April 30, Carol met with Pat Lile of the Arkansas Community Foundation to discuss America

Reads and potential activities in Arkansas.

On May 2, Carol participate in ReadAloud at P.S. 107 in Flushing, Queens.

On May 2, Carol visited the Middle Country Public Library in Centereach, Long Island, called "The Family Place," a national parent-child development program model at the Middle Country Public Library. She also visited the Brooklyn Public Library. Both libraries are part of an effort by Libraries of the Future to transform libraries into places that address a wider range of community and family needs; for example, meeting the needs of the children who come after school to be safe and do homework.

On May 4, Carol will address the National Council of Jewish Women Board of Directors.

#### Next Week (Week of May 5)

On Monday and Tuesday, Carol will make a presentation on Federal Work Study and a presentation on the America Reads Challenge at the International Reading Association conference in Atlanta.

On Friday, Carol will make remarks to the Institute for Educational Leadership Communications Executive Group in Washington.

On Friday, Carol will make remarks to the National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP) Governing Board in Washington.

Carol will meet with other organizations, including: religious leaders supporting America Reads, publishing-related organizations and companies planning to support America Reads, the Children's Literacy Initiative, New American Schools, and others.

#### **MEDIA**

##### This Week

Carol was interviewed by Claudio Sanchez, education reporter for National Public Radio, on Wednesday, April 30.

Carol was interviewed by Brian Kuebler, reporter with the University of Maryland, College Park campus, on Thursday, May 1, re: their sign-on to FWS America Reads Challenge.

##### Next Week

On Tuesday May 6, Carol will also appear on CNN on Susan Rook's Talk Back Live following her participation in the IRA conference.

## Effectiveness of Clinton Reading Plan Questioned

By Kathleen Kennedy Manzo and Joetta L. Sack

### Washington

At first glance, educators say, it is a grand plan: Mobilize a "citizen army" of college students, parents, senior citizens, and other do-gooders, and march them into schools around the nation to help all children read by the end of 3rd grade.

And few disagree that President Clinton's America Reads Challenge, which he promoted in his State of the Union Address and again highlighted at a visit to an elementary school here last week, is a bold attempt to address one of the critical problems in American education. With 40 percent of the nation's 4th graders overall—and much higher proportions of minority and disadvantaged students—reading below the basic level set by a national assessment, the challenge is huge.

But as excited as educators are by the plan to launch a national crusade to stamp out the reading problems of U.S. children, many are questioning the initiative's prospects for success.

Nor are they the only skeptics. Some Republican lawmakers, while acknowledging that the reading crisis is all too real, have nonetheless dismissed the president's plan as a duplication of existing programs. So far, the GOP has identified 14 federal programs and numerous private-sector ones that already promote literacy.

Finally, the plan has some people wondering where the elementary schools fit in and, perhaps more important, why all of these programs are necessary when the schools' foremost mission is to teach children how to read.

"If children at the end of 3rd grade can't read, then we have to examine what went wrong before we start talking about new programs and more money," Rep. Bill Goodling, R-Pa., the chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, said at a recent press conference.

"What we are discovering isn't that we don't have enough programs," said Mr. Goodling, a former teacher and principal, "but the problem is many of those programs don't work."

#### A Sophisticated Task

Almost universally, educators and policymakers note the sheer scope of

the proposal—\$2.75 billion to recruit and train 30,000 reading specialists and 1 million volunteers.

"It is analogous to President Kennedy's pledge to put a man on the moon," Robert E. Slavin, a leading reading researcher at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and a creator of the Success for All reading program, said last week. That proposal excited a nation to attain what many thought was unattainable, and President Clinton's plan has the potential to do the same for bringing students' reading skills up to par, Mr. Slavin said.

Although Mr. Clinton's proposal would boost community involvement in education and infuse new life into existing tutoring programs, researchers and reading experts doubt that America Reads can offer the comprehensive approach that is necessary.

"You really have to be cautious about using volunteers. If these children are not learning to read easily, I don't know how untrained people can be expected to do it better," said Judith R. Birsh, an adjunct assistant professor and master-teacher trainer at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Ms. Birsh is joined by others who say that the task of teaching reading is a sophisticated one and best attempted by those with an understanding of language and how children learn to read.

Also coloring the issue is the ongoing debate over whether phonics or whole language is the best method of teaching reading, although most researchers say a combined approach works best.

Some say the money would be better spent on better training for teachers in beginning-reading strategies. They also suggest directing more resources toward teacher professional development in reading instruction or toward existing federal programs that address reading deficiencies, such as Title I.

But Carol Hampton Rasco, a senior adviser to Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley, said that the program would be closely tied to children's regular classes and that the tutors would serve as "learning

partners" who would read with children, rather than provide instruction. Classroom teachers would refer children to the tutors, said Ms. Rasco, who will oversee America Reads.

Bella Rosenberg, the assistant to the president of the American Federation of Teachers, said that too many existing federal literacy programs don't serve their purpose, and that many don't address children's problems at all.

America Reads, Ms. Rosenberg said, is just what is needed to put children with less severe problems "over the hump."

#### AmeriCorps at the Core

Even though Mr. Clinton first proposed the program last August as part of his re-election campaign, the details are still being hashed out. They will be written into legislation that the administration will send to Congress in the next few months, Ms. Rasco said.

Democrats, who are in the minority on Capitol Hill, are confident that they can mobilize enough public support to get a bill passed. "I find it hard to believe that Congress is not going to want to put some resources into a goal that has such bipartisan support," said Harris L. Wofford Jr., the director of AmeriCorps and a former U.S. senator.

AmeriCorps, the federal program that offers young people college-tuition aid in return for community service, plans to mobilize volunteers this summer and set up local programs, Mr. Wofford said.

At the core of the initiative are 11,000 AmeriCorps members who will be targeted to recruit and coordinate local volunteers.

Administration officials expect to attract another 100,000 volunteers from college work-study programs. Leaders of Campus Compact, the arm of the Denver-based Education Commission of the States that promotes community service in higher education, recently urged more than 500 college presidents to set aside part of their federal work-study money for America Reads.

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### Reading cont.

More than \$1.5 billion in new funding would provide after-school reading specialists to train and supervise tutors. They would provide individualized instruction in after-school, weekend, and summer programs for about 3 million children in kindergarten through 3rd grade who want and need extra help.

An additional \$300 million in challenge grants would be awarded over five years to programs that involve parents in their children's reading development.

The plan also calls for the expansion of Head Start, Title I, and Even Start, federal programs aimed at disadvantaged children, to strengthen the teaching of reading in schools.

Moreover, Secretary Riley promised in his State of American Education Address last week to "work with religious leaders from across the country to rally tens of thousands of volunteers to this national effort."

#### What Works?

Observers agree that recruiting 1 million volunteers, difficult though it may be, is not the most daunting task. The troops can be rallied through the expansion of existing programs and from AmeriCorps, college campuses, and local communities, they maintain. Preparing those volunteers is another matter.

"The use of tutors is fantastic as long as they get the training. That is where they will succeed or fail," said Miriam Y. Westheimer, the executive director of HIPPY USA, the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters, a New York City-based early-childhood enrichment program.

But research on which training methods work and which don't is limited. A 1993 study by Mr. Slavin and Barbara A. Wasik, also a Johns Hopkins researcher, found that programs deploying certified teachers showed greater improvements in student reading achievement than those using paraprofessionals.

Ongoing training and supervision are the vital elements, said Marcia A. Invernizzi, who runs the Book Buddies program with colleague Connie Juel.

The Charlottesville, Va.-based program uses doctoral students who serve as paid, part-time supervisors to school-based volunteers. The supervisors provide initial training, lesson plans, instructional materials, and continuing guidance to ensure that tutors are meeting students' needs.

"The supervisor is critical.

Volunteers don't have a clue what to do." Ms. Invernizzi said. "Many think that if you read Grimm's Fairy Tales to them, the children will learn to read."

States would be responsible for evaluating the programs that receive money through America Reads and for determining which ones are effective.

Experts caution that even though many programs report positive outcomes for participating students, there are few reliable data to prove these claims. Evaluating which programs will offer the best investments could be tricky, they say.

"There isn't much information about one-on-one tutoring, and certainly there is very little research about effective tutoring and less-effective tutoring," said Gerald E. Sroufe, the director of government and professional liaison for the American Educational Research Association, based here. "We believe this program is moving in the right direction, but there has got to be a good deal more research and development for these programs."

#### More Than Training

The challenges do not end with training, however. Although some of the participants in the America Reads program will be paid, most will not—a situation likely to create variations in the time and effort people are willing to commit to the project. Reading experts also say it is impossible to hold volunteers accountable for the improvement of their students.

"A lot of kids this program is aimed at, especially those in the lower 25 percent, are extremely disadvantaged. They have no book experience; they don't know their alphabet," Ms. Wasik said. "It seems very difficult to believe that those kinds of disadvantages can be ameliorated by a tutor who comes in twice a week."

Even teachers in the Success for All, an early-intervention reading program, who are trained and certified, have difficulty assisting such children, she said.

Some educators are also concerned that volunteers will not be equipped to deal with children who have learning disabilities.

"We want to make sure the people coming into schools are well-qualified," Sally N. McConnell, the government relations director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, said.

Dale Lestina, the chief lobbyist for the National Education Association, worries that volunteers will be unable

to identify a disability, making it essential that tutors work closely with classroom teachers.

The National Academy of Sciences is hoping to address the research deficit. A committee of the academy is conducting a study of reading programs around the country in the hope of isolating the elements that make programs effective. One part of the study will focus on volunteer tutoring programs, said M. Susan Burns, the director of the study.

Sponsored by the Department of Education and the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development, the study is expected out late this year. But if Mr. Clinton's initiative proceeds as swiftly as he would like, the data are unlikely to provide guidance in the early stages.

Planning such a far-reaching program in the absence of more abundant research has left many experts full of doubts.

"I wish it had been called the America Tutors initiative," Mr. Slavin of Johns Hopkins said. "But if you are creating the expectation that all children are going to learn to read through the use of tutors, it's just not going to happen."