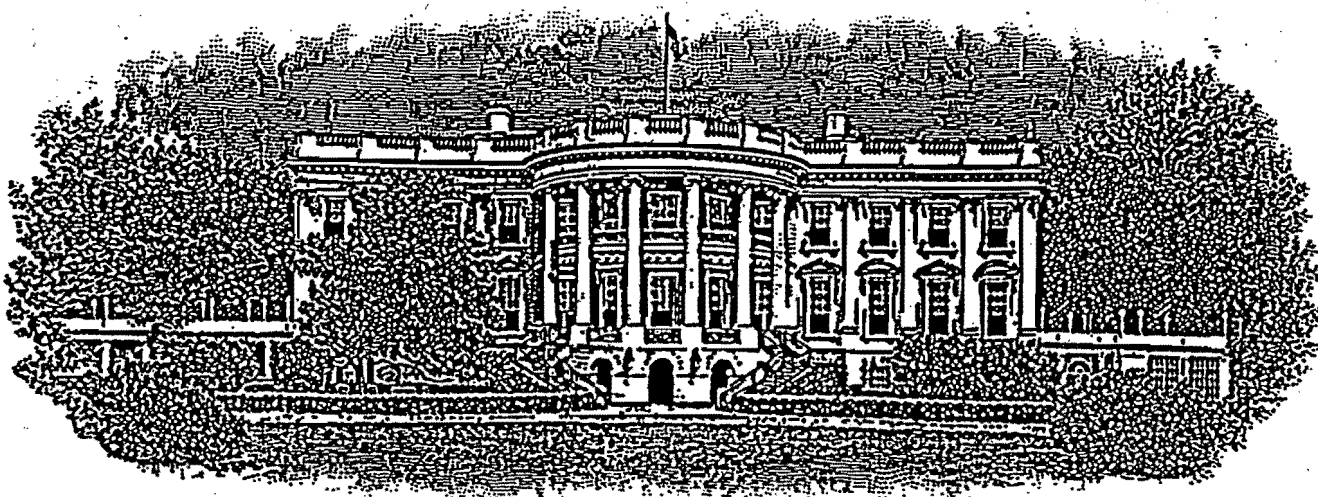


The White House



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FAX COVER SHEET

TO:

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FROM: **BILL KINCAID**

THIS FAX INCLUDES THE COVER SHEET PLUS 19 PAGES.

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MESSAGE:

PRESS MATERIALS ON THE PRESIDENT'S INITIATIVE ON NATIONAL STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE INCLUDING THE CREATION OF NATIONAL TESTS IN READING AND MATHEMATICS

- ▶ Mastering the Basics Once and For All: Reaching for High Standards in Reading and Math
- ▶ The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)
- ▶ Fourth Grade Reading Success
- ▶ The Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS)
- ▶ Eighth Grade Math Success
- ▶ Technical Information on the National Reading and Math Tests

Appendix:

- ▶ Schools with Exemplary Reading Programs
- ▶ Schools with Exemplary Math Programs

MASTERING THE BASICS: NATIONAL TESTS IN 4TH GRADE READING AND 8TH GRADE MATH

Overview

February 10, 1997

Tonight, I issue a challenge to the nation: Every state should adopt high national standards, and by 1999, every state should test every 4th grader in reading and every 8th grader in math to make sure these standards are met. President Clinton, State of the Union Address, Feb. 4, 1997

A CHALLENGE TO EVERY STATE: MAKE SURE EVERY STUDENT MASTERS THE BASICS IN READING AND MATH. Every parent has the right to know how well his or her child is doing compared with students in other schools, states, and countries. The U.S. Department of Education will give every state, school district and parent the opportunity to use voluntary national tests of 4th grade reading and 8th grade math, beginning in 1999. These tests will help states and local communities raise standards of excellence for teaching and learning in every classroom, and provide parents with accurate information about their children's academic performance. These rigorous tests will provide scores for individual students, measured against widely accepted national standards, that show whether students have mastered critical basic skills. **This will be the first time rigorous tests of reading skills at grade 4 and math knowledge and skills at grade 8, tied to national standards, are available to measure individual student and school performance throughout the nation.**

WIDELY RECOGNIZED TESTS BASED ON WIDELY RECOGNIZED NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS. These new tests will be based on two existing, widely accepted tests: the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 4th grade reading test, and the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) 8th grade math test. Currently, these tests are used to assess the overall performance of the nation as a whole or of interested states. In their current form, they cannot be used to measure the academic performance of individual students.

The NAEP reading test is based on widely accepted national content standards -- developed by local teachers, reading specialists, curriculum specialists, parents, and researchers -- reflecting a national consensus on what students should know and be able to do when they reach the 4th grade.

The TIMSS test is also based on widely accepted content standards -- in this case developed by representatives of the 41 participating countries -- reflecting an international consensus on what students should know and be able to do in mathematics by the eighth grade. In addition, these international standards are highly consistent with the national math standards developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), which are used extensively by virtually every state.

A NEW GENERATION OF TESTS MEASURING INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS AS WELL AS STATES. The current NAEP and TIMSS tests are designed to assess how the entire nation, or individual states, perform in these subject areas. They do not show how individual students perform. The tests are administered to a sample of students in participating states or districts, rather than to all students. Each student in the sample takes only a portion of the total test questions. As a result, no student receives a score for these tests.

President Clinton's plan is to develop a new generation of the NAEP 4th grade reading test and the TIMSS 8th grade math test, that can be given to all students in the appropriate grades, and which will provide meaningful scores comparing individual student performance to these widely accepted national standards. These new tests will be ready for use in schools by the Spring of 1999.

4TH GRADE READING AND 8TH GRADE MATH ARE KEY. Reading and math skills provide foundation for future learning. Research shows that students who fail to read English well by the end of grade 3 have a greater likelihood of dropping out, and risk a diminished chance of success in school and in life. Students who master the basics of math, including the essentials of algebra by the end of grade 8 have the foundation to take tough math and science courses in high school to prepare for college and high-skill jobs.

THESE TESTS WILL BE RIGOROUS AND CHALLENGING. Though the focus is on basic skills, these tests are challenging, not low level. While many U.S. fourth graders perform well on the NAEP reading assessment, 40% of our students do not reach the "basic" achievement level. In TIMSS, the U.S. average score for 8th grade math is below the international average, and only 5% of U.S. eighth grade students score in the top 10% internationally.

THESE TESTS WILL ASSIST TEACHERS, PARENTS, STUDENTS, AND LOCAL AND STATE LEADERS. While most states assess their students in reading and math, they generally set their proficiency levels lower than the challenging levels in the NAEP. These voluntary national tests will give parents and communities reliable benchmarks for student performance which will show how well their students are progressing toward meeting challenging national standards of excellence. These new standard measures of excellence can help parents hold schools accountable for improved performance, can help teachers and principals improve curriculum and instruction, and can give students a guide for charting their own progress. They can identify students and schools that need extra help.

DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THESE TESTS. The new tests will be based on NAEP and TIMSS, and will measure the performance of individual students and schools. The U.S. Department of Education will contract with independent test developers to produce the new tests, which will be available for the first time in the Spring of 1999. The test will be updated each year. Guidance for the test development will come from the most successful math and reading teachers from across the country, parents, governors, and local and state education, civic and business leaders. Interested test publishers, states, and local school districts will be licensed to administer the tests each year.

States and school districts can administer the test as part of their local testing program. After each test's administration, the entire test (along with answers, scoring guides) will be released to the education community. At that time, the test along with supporting materials will be available on the Internet so that students, parents and teachers can know what is expected to reach standards of excellence in reading and math. A new test each year will keep the content of the test current. These tests will help show who needs extra help, what changes schools need to make in teaching and the curriculum, and which schools need to be improved.

TESTING TO IMPROVE TEACHING AND LEARNING. President Clinton challenges the nation not only to take these new rigorous tests of reading and math but also to do the hard work of preparing schools, teachers, and students to reach these high standards. We will work with schools, school districts and states as they move forward to meet this challenge. The President's America Reads initiative will help mobilize an army of 1 million volunteer tutors to help children reach the basic level of performance on the NAEP reading test. His education budget -- with investments in teacher preparation, teaching the basics and advanced skills, technological literacy, choice and charter schools, and grass roots education reform -- will help improve teaching and learning in schools throughout the nation.

APPENDIX

SCHOOLS WITH EXEMPLARY READING PROGRAMS

SCHOOLS WITH EXEMPLARY MATH PROGRAMS

Schools with Exemplary Reading Programs

Magruder Primary School

Newport News, Virginia

Eugene Pointer, Director of Title I and Instructional Services

(804) 591-4545

Magruder, an urban school of 735 serving preschool through second grade, uses its Title I funds to support whole school improvements. Eighty-four percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch. Of the twenty-six elementary schools in Newport News in 1992, Magruder was last in reading achievement. Past failures have been turned into successes because of greater parental involvement, assistance from a home school coordinator, and renewed high expectations. Magruder is especially proud of its Parent Institute and Father Child Breakfast; family participation has grown from 150 in the first year to 508 in 1995. In addition, local business partners sponsor a home reading program, special assembly programs and parent activities. After three years of its reform effort, grade level or above readers soared to 80%. Magruder Primary School is now fifth in the division in reading achievement.

Reading skills among second-graders at Magruder have improved dramatically. In 1991-92, only one percent of second-graders scored at or above grade level. In 1993-94, 67 percent scored at or above grade level, and in 1995-96, 76 percent reached that performance level.

Hilliard Elementary School

Houston, Texas

Rufus Allen, Principal

(713) 635-3085

Hilliard -- a very high poverty, predominantly African American, urban school -- runs an intensive after school, weekend and summer school reading program. For four afternoons each week throughout the school year, six teachers and six to eight parent volunteers work with students on their reading skills -- emphasizing hands-on activities to reinforce what students learn during the day. The parent volunteers work closely with and receive training from classroom teachers. Eight Saturday mornings during the year, 125 students also participate in reading classes led by a team of teachers and parents. The students who participate in these programs also take advantage of a summer school program centered around thematic units. One special project is the creation of storybooks by and for the students. Parents and volunteers also participate in the Make All Reading Successful (MARS) program by attending classes and listening to the students read stories on a weekly basis. This approach has resulted in improved reading scores for the school over the past five years. In the spring of 1995, 80 percent of Hilliard third graders met the state's expectations on the state assessment in reading, an increase from 20 percent five years prior.

Samuel W. Mason Elementary School
Boston, Massachusetts
Joaquim Baptista, Title I Coordinator
(617) 635-6570

Mason School, once cited by a 1990 Boston Herald, with its then enrollment of 133, as "The Least Chosen Elementary School In The City", turned itself around through a variety of innovative approaches. The school has 296 students (43 % African-American, 23 % Cape Verdian, 14 % Latino, 13 % white, 3 % Asian-American, 2 % Native American.) Twenty-four percent of the homes are non-English speaking. Reading has been a primary emphasis of Mason's improvement efforts. Teaching teams include Reading Recovery and Resource Room teachers. These teachers work with grade-level clusters in the morning to reduce the student-teacher ratio from 26:1 to 13:1. In the afternoon, the team works with the kindergarten and early childhood teachers in the early literacy program, "Bright Start," in groups of nine students. Title I reaches all students and doubles the time in reading instruction. Special attention is paid to learning styles, with emphasis on accelerated reading instruction and problem-solving activities. In 1995, Boston College's Urban District Assessment Consortium Project found that Mason's reading performance exceeded the average score for the City of Boston and for the other 11 urban school systems in the project.

Grovetown Elementary School
Grovetown, Georgia
Carole Jean Carey, Title I Coordinator
(706) 863-1748

Sixty-eight percent of Grovetown's 717 students qualify for free or reduced lunch. While in the past, the school has ranked last in the county, it has improved dramatically. The Accelerated Reader Program uses an Olympic theme with students receiving bronze, silver and gold medals for their outstanding reading performance. The Junior Great Books and Einstein Math Club promote skills and confidence in reading and math. Students are peer facilitators, school ambassadors, and book buddies to lower grade students.

Reading scores at Grovetown have improved significantly. Mean reading scores on the ITBS for the entire school increased 5.4 NCEs (normal curve equivalents, a standard unit for test measurement) in 1993, 1.4 NCEs in 1994, 10 NCEs in 1995, and 8.1 NCEs in 1996. Fifth-graders now score in the 52nd percentile in reading. When Grovetown's Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores were announced for 1994-95, the community rejoiced at the school's advances, with the mayor announcing test score improvements on a billboard outside his office.

Montview Elementary School
Aurora, Colorado
Colleen Rickert, Title I Coordinator
(303) 344-8060

Aurora's 725 students, 76% of whom receive free or reduced lunch, flourish in this year-round schoolwide program. Although transiency, poverty and the number of LEP students have increased over the past two years, Montview's Balanced Literacy Program has allowed students to achieve tremendous success in reading, writing, spelling, listening and speaking. During daily two-hour blocks of time, students schedule independent activities in peer revision of writing samples, paired reading, cross grade level reading buddies, sharing published works, spelling, and listening to teacher readings. Montview has received support from state colleges and universities, as well as the local community. Family Literacy Nights are held regularly and parents are given learning activities to use at home. "Book It" and "October Read Aloud" further encourage reading as does a senior citizen organized book giveaway to help build home libraries. Achievement for all students is increasing, with 83% of Title I students reaching proficient levels in reading and 92% in math.

John F. Kennedy Elementary School
Kingston, New York
Fred Wadnola, Principal
(914) 331-3174

Eighty-two percent of this inner city's school's 340 students are on free or reduced lunch, yet they thrive under the school's integrated curriculum and literacy emphasis. Kennedy School is a regional training site for Reading Recovery. Reading Recovery, an accelerated reading program, works one-on-one with the lowest 20% of first graders. After an average of 20 weeks, students graduate to grade level. Most never again need remedial reading. Kennedy Kids/Adults Together pairs adults and children weekly for reading and literacy activities. For many kids from troubled families, this is the only bonding they have with an adult other than their teacher. An impressive array of reading programs has resulted in 97% of fifth graders scoring above the state reference point, compared to 80% three years ago.

PRESIDENT CLINTON'S AMERICA READS CHALLENGE ACT OF 1997

April 26, 1997

AY, AS HE PREPARES TO LEAVE FOR PHILADELPHIA, PRESIDENT CLINTON WILL ANNOUNCE THAT HE IS SENDING LEGISLATION TO CONGRESS THAT EMBODIES THE SPIRIT OF THE PRESIDENTS' SUMMIT FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE -- THE AMERICA READS CHALLENGE ACT. The America Reads Challenge Act will help mobilize AmeriCorps members, skilled reading specialists, and an army of trained volunteer reading tutors to ensure that every student can read independently and well by the end of 3rd grade. The Act sets forth the first comprehensive, nationwide effort to create after-school, summer, and weekend tutoring in reading. The America Reads Challenge Act is a five-year, \$2.75 billion commitment to local communities and organizations, as well as national and regional efforts. It includes:

America's Reading Corps. The Act would fund 25,000 reading specialists and tutor coordinators, including 11,000 AmeriCorps members, to mobilize one million volunteer reading tutors.

- Coordinating with the in-school reading program, tutors will provide individualized after-school, weekend, and summer reading tutoring for approximately three million children in grades K-3 who need the extra help.
- AmeriCorps members and others will work to recruit these tutors, and reading specialists will provide their training and supervision.

Parents as First Teachers Challenge Grants. The legislation also recognizes that, as their children's first teachers, parents can give their children the firm foundation they need to do well in school. These Challenge Grants would provide more than \$300 million over five years to foster effective programs to provide assistance for interested parents to help their children become successful readers by the end of 3rd grade.

- **Head Start and Title I/Even Start.** These grants will build on other commitments to early learning in the President's balanced budget plan. This includes an expansion of the Head Start program reaching one million 3- and 4-year olds and additional investments in Title I/Even Start to strengthen reading instruction during the regular school day as well as family literacy efforts.

THE PRESIDENT'S LEGISLATION ADDRESSES CHILDREN'S READING NEEDS. Research shows that children who cannot read well and independently by the end of third grade are less likely to succeed in school and are likely to drop out. While American students today generally read as well as ever, 40% of our fourth graders read below the basic level on the 1994 National Assessment of Educational Progress. According to studies, however, well-designed tutoring programs result in student gains in reading.

PRESIDENT CLINTON IS ISSUING THE AMERICA READS CHALLENGE TO ALL AMERICANS -- AND THEY ARE RESPONDING. The America Reads Challenge asks every American to help in this effort, building on the work being done by classroom teachers, librarians, tutors, and reading specialists.

Encouraging Involvement. The America Reads Challenge is pursuing several essential strategies to help our children learn to read: creating more learning opportunities to supplement classroom reading instruction; encouraging parent involvement to help children develop readiness skills for reading beginning at birth, as well as involvement throughout the school years; and bringing best teaching practices into classrooms.

Federal Work Study Expansion. President Clinton has asked college presidents to allocate half of all their new work-study slots to college students who become America Reads tutors. The goal is to give 100,000 federal work study students the opportunity to help children learn to read better. So far, 166 colleges have pledged thousands of students to tutor in elementary schools.

Service Summit Commitments. As part of the President's Service Summit in Philadelphia, major non-profits and corporations have committed to recruit tens of thousands of new tutors specifically for the America Reads effort, with tens of thousands of additional commitments to literacy activities.

AMERICA READS CHALLENGE: THE LEGISLATION

BACKGROUND

While American students today generally read as well as ever, 40 percent of our fourth graders scored below the basic level on the 1994 National Assessment of Educational Progress. Research shows that children who cannot read well and independently by the end of third grade are less likely to succeed in school and more likely to drop out. Reading is a skill that is developed not only in the classroom, but also outside of school and in the home. As teachers, schools, librarians, and principals work to strengthen in-school reading programs, all caring Americans can also play a role in helping young children learn to read.

When asked what was needed most to provide extra help to children who needed it, teachers, principals, librarians, parent groups, businesses, education and literacy groups, and community organizations said locally based coalitions could mobilize high-quality volunteer tutors to extend the learning time of children who need help in reading. In particular, they said they need trained reading specialists and tutor coordinators to help their schools and communities match tutors with children, and to provide training to tutors. Also, many parents want ideas and tips on how to help their children develop language and reading skills beginning at birth.

The America Reads Challenge legislation sets forth the first comprehensive, nationwide effort to create after-school, summer, and weekend tutoring in reading. Working with teachers and parents, this unprecedented initiative calls on all Americans in all fields -- schools, libraries, religious organizations, universities, the media, community and national groups, and cultural organizations, as well as college students, business leaders, and senior citizens -- to ensure that every American child can read well and independently by the end of third grade. The America Reads Challenge would mobilize tutors, reading coordinators, and experts in communities and states to assist existing literacy efforts, or to aid in the development of new reading partnerships to help our nation's children to read. It links parents, teachers, AmeriCorps members, trained reading professionals, and volunteer tutors to school, library, and community literacy efforts.

PROVISIONS OF THE LEGISLATION

1. America's Reading Corps: The America Reads Challenge would build on groundwork being laid by classroom teachers, librarians, and reading specialists by drawing upon the invigorating spirit of community volunteers in tutoring and mentoring. The Reading Corps grant is the heart of the legislation and would fund 25,000 reading specialists and tutor coordinators -- including 11,000 AmeriCorps members -- over five years. Over a five year period, tutor coordinators would help recruit one million volunteer reading tutors to be trained by the reading specialists.

The nearly \$1.5 billion in new education investments from the proposed legislation would supplement classroom reading instruction by enabling local reading partnerships to hire qualified professionals, such as a reading specialist or teacher, to train tutors and connect the school's reading program with the tutoring. By the fifth year of the program, it is expected that the tutors, coordinating with the classroom reading program, would be providing individual after-school, weekend, and summer reading tutoring for approximately three million children in grades K-3 who want and need the extra help. This effort would help link the reading program, teacher, school, child, and family.

The America Reads Challenge would also take advantage of the strength of AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve and the Senior Corps, which are involved in communities throughout the United States. An additional \$1 billion from proposed increases in appropriations for the Corporation for National Service would help local reading programs recruit and organize volunteer tutors.

A local reading partnership would include at least two agencies or organizations -- one of which must be a public school or a school district. The other could be a library, literacy group, museum, business, or youth-serving group, among others. The legislation requires that:

- Each local reading program use qualified and trained individuals;
- Each local reading program serve an area with a high number or percentage of children from low-income families or with the greatest need for reading assistance;
- Each local reading program build on and support in-school reading programs;
- Each local reading program make parental involvement and support a high priority, and be coordinated with early childhood and family literacy programs, such as Even Start and Head Start; and
- States demonstrate that all programs funded with the grant would reach children in the greatest need of assistance; use effective practices that show the most promise in helping all children -- including children with limited English proficiency and children with disabilities; and a clear strategy for coalition building.

Seventy percent of the State-grant money would be allocated to the states according to the Title I formula, and 30 percent will be awarded competitively based on the quality of state plans. States would distribute the funds to local applicants.

2. Parents as First Teachers Challenge Grants: The second part of the legislation recognizes that as their children's first teachers, parents can give their children the firm foundation they need to do well in school by, for example, reading to their children 30 minutes each day from infancy onward, talking with their children, or getting their children library cards and accompanying them to the library regularly.

The Parents as First Teachers Challenge Grants would provide \$300 million over five years to foster effective programs to help parents help their children become successful readers by the end of third grade. The bulk of this money will be awarded to local communities and organizations, with some available for national and regional groups.

Applicants for the Parents as First Teachers Grants must have a demonstrated record of working with parents in improving the reading skills of their young children, or must be planning to use a model that has been demonstrated to be effective. Grantees must strive to collaborate and form partnerships with other programs that provide support for parents, such as adult education and Even Start, and must include two or more groups.

3. Effective Models and Exemplary Partnerships: The Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education and the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National Service would award \$500 million over five years to support effective models and partnerships which local communities and States can adapt. The purpose of these grants is to ensure that local communities have up-to-date information about what is working to help our children read -- including activities that assist parents working with their children beginning at birth. National organizations, as well as local and regional partnerships would be eligible for this funding.

4. Research and Evaluation: The legislation would allocate funds to evaluate programs, disseminate information about best practices, and provide technical assistance to local programs.

THE AMERICA READS CHALLENGE: THE INITIATIVE

American students are competitive on international comparisons when it comes to literacy, but too many young people are struggling through school because they have not mastered essential and basic reading skills. Research demonstrates that if students cannot read well by the end of third grade, their chances for success are significantly diminished, and they have a greater likelihood of dropping out or engaging in escalating delinquent behaviors. In 1994, 40 percent of America's fourth graders failed to attain the basic level of reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. In response, the President announced the Administration's commitment to mobilizing public and private resources to help all our children to read well.

The America Reads Challenge asks every American to identify what role he or she can play -- professionally and personally -- to help all of our children to read independently and well by the end of third grade. While remaining sensitive to the unique learning needs of each child, we must work hard to instill in each of them, and in ourselves, high expectations for their reading skills.

Study after study finds that sustained individualized attention and tutoring after school and over the summer, when combined with parental involvement and quality school instruction, can raise reading levels. Teachers, principals, and librarians play a key role by strengthening reading in school and extending learning through after-school, summer, and weekend programs. Parents and other concerned individuals in local communities, including the private sector, are equally valuable as tutors, mentors and reading partners. Engaging parents, educators, and the broader public to address this reading challenge together is the first step.

Several strategies are essential for helping our children learn to read:

Create More After School, Weekend and Summer Learning Opportunities To Supplement Classroom Instruction in Reading

Even when students receive the very best in-class instruction, some will always need extra time and assistance to meet the high levels of reading skills needed in school, in the workplace, and throughout life. The fundamental purpose of the America Reads Challenge is to enable parents and educators to complement and expand existing successful literacy efforts to help many more children increase their skills and achievement levels, and to provide children who need additional help in reading with extended learning time.

Research demonstrates that tutoring increases a child's reading achievement, confidence and motivation, in addition to a sense of control over his or her reading ability. Tutors -- whether they are volunteers, peers, cross-age tutors or professionals -- produce positive results.

The America Reads Challenge will build on, expand and initiate thousands of local efforts to

improve reading. It will also build upon nationwide efforts such as:

- **Read!Write!Now!:** With 50 reading and literacy groups, the Department of Education designed this summer program in 1994 to help fight the "summer reading drop off." The program encourages children to read 30 minutes a day at least once or twice a week with an older reading partner, get a library card and use it, and learn a new vocabulary word a day. Local libraries, Title I schools and youth groups such as the Girl Scouts and Boys and Girls Club of America will help sponsor sites for this summer program -- expected to reach 1.5 million children.
- **Corporation for National Service:** National service grant programs that engage volunteer tutors in literacy efforts are working in hundreds of communities nationwide. This focus will continue to increase as all branches of national service -- AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America and the Senior Corps -- make childhood literacy a higher priority in their grant process.
- **Federal Work Study (FWS):** Colleges and universities throughout the nation will receive a 35 percent increase in Federal Work-Study funding beginning in July of 1997. President Clinton has challenged all colleges and universities to join The Honor Roll, by pledging 50 percent of their FWS increase for tutoring pre-school through elementary school children in reading. In exchange, Secretary Riley will waive the requirement for these colleges to match 25 percent of the funds for FWS students who serve as reading tutors. The goal is to enlist at least 100,000 college students to help with reading.
- **America Reads Challenge Legislation:** The Administration is proposing legislation that will launch the first nationwide effort to supplement classroom instruction in reading with high-quality volunteer tutoring, primarily after school and during summers. If enacted, the proposal would fund the start up or expansion of community partnerships among schools, libraries, community organizations, businesses, youth-serving groups and local literacy projects, among others, working to help children with reading. In addition, the legislation would create Parents as First Teachers grants to support programs that underscore the importance of parents staying involved in their children's lives as they make the transition into their school years.

Strengthen Parent Involvement and Our Nation's Investment in the Early Childhood Years, So That Our Children Develop Readiness Skills for Learning to Read by the Time They Enter School

Parents are their child's first and most important teachers beginning at birth. Every parent and caregiver can participate in simple daily activities with their babies and toddlers to teach them

about language and to prepare them better to learn to read. Research shows that parents and caregivers can engage in exercises to foster development of the necessary skills in their child, and parents and caregivers can work together to ensure that each child has the proper foundation for reading skills. Many local parent and community efforts across the country give examples of how successful parent and caregiver programs can be developed; however, there is far more need than programs currently available. The America Reads Challenge seeks to reinforce the importance of skill-building activities for children beginning at birth, and of programs that encourage and support parent involvement in these activities.

Early childhood researchers, along with the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Corporation for National Service, have developed a kit called Ready*Set*Read that summarize ideas for parents and caregivers to help their young children develop and improve their language skills. The kit includes an activities booklet, a calendar of suggested daily activities, and a growth chart that identifies language skills many children can perform during each growth period.

Furthermore, a number of existing Federal resources and programs already delivering services to families with young children or involved in parent education and skills training can be strengthened in order to educate better and assist families with early childhood development and early literacy skills. For example:

- **Head Start Expansion:** One million 3- and 4-year olds will be reached through the expansion of Head Start programs, already a part of President Clinton's balanced budget.
- **Even Start Expansion:** Additional investments are included in President Clinton's balanced budget plan to expand and strengthen family literacy efforts.

In addition, **Parents As First Teachers Grants** would support efforts that help parents who want to be active partners with their children as they transition into school, and throughout their education experience.

Bring Best Practices Into the School and Classroom

Teacher Preparation: Teachers often report they would like to be better prepared to teach reading in the classroom, and that they would like additional support and training from reading experts and professional development programs throughout their careers. Working with exemplary teachers and successful local reading programs, the Department of Education will identify examples to improve teacher development in reading instruction for experienced and beginning teachers.

Principal Leadership: In addition to teachers, principals are critical leaders in our schools and in our efforts to meet our children's education needs. While principals are often leaders in community efforts, many have expressed a desire for additional leadership training and development to prepare them better to work with communities to link reading efforts outside of school with in-class instruction. America Reads will participate in efforts with the Department of Education and principals around the country to support efforts to expand principal leadership training.

Strengthening of Title I: Additional investments are included in President Clinton's balanced budget plan to expand efforts to strengthen reading instruction during the regular school day.

Highlight Successful Reading Programs: As a part of this effort to bring best practices into our schools, strong reading programs will be identified based on current research and the findings will be disseminated. Three areas of particular focus will be children in poverty served by Title I, children with disabilities served by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and children who speak English as a second language.

Promote Greater Public Awareness and Local Partnership Building

The America Reads Challenge will encourage states and communities to form literacy partnerships among schools, libraries, youth-serving groups, businesses, public and private agencies, and other community organizations, and to build on them where they already exist.

America Reads will use all available resources to raise awareness about what each of us can do to help our children learn to read well and independently by the end of third grade, beginning at birth.

Support Research and Evaluation

America Reads will continue to support research and evaluation in a range of critical areas related to reading and early childhood development. Dissemination of up-to-date research findings to a wide audience remains a priority. Research findings by the National Institute on Child Health and Human Development, for example, have been incorporated into materials use to improve reading for children with reading problems. Research on after-school tutoring and successful in-school instruction in reading for the U.S. Department of Education are being used in the America Reads Challenge. In addition, the National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council report on prevention of reading difficulties in children will be completed by mid-November 1997.

**RAISING STANDARDS AND PREPARING STUDENTS
FOR THE 21ST CENTURY ECONOMY**

**CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS CHIEF EASTIN ACCEPTS THE PRESIDENT'S CHALLENGE:
HIGH-TECH INDUSTRY LEADERS CALL ON OTHER STATES TO FOLLOW SUIT**

California State Superintendent Eastin Responds to the Challenge. Today, California Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin will accept the President's challenge to support the establishment of voluntary national tests to measure the performance of 4th graders in reading and 8th graders in math. Eastin will make her commitment to work to make sure that students throughout California can participate in these tests. By taking this action, California will insure that its students, parents and teachers will have honest, accurate information about whether students are mastering basic skills. Eastin will be accompanied by supportive educators and parents from California.

Nearly Twenty Percent of the Nation's Students to Participate. California public schools serve more than five million students, representing over 11% of the nation's public school enrollment. Currently, the states of Maryland, Michigan, and North Carolina, along with the U.S. Department of Defense schools, are committed to participating in the national tests. With California's pledge, the percentage of the nation's students involved would increase to nearly 20 percent.

High-Tech Industry Leaders Endorse Tests, Call on Other States to Participate. U.S. Students must meet world class standards in order to thrive in the global information-age economy of the 21st Century. John Doerr, partner in the Silicon Valley venture capital firm of Kleiner, Perkins, Caufield & Byers, will announce that a group of over 200 technology industry leaders who hire graduates from across the country has endorsed the President's standards and testing initiative. Moreover, the technology industry leaders will write to all governors, state legislative leaders, chief state school officers, and state board of education chairs calling on them to accept the President's challenge as well. Doerr will be joined via audio feed from San Jose's Stonegate School by Jim Barksdale, CEO & President of Netscape Communications, Mayor Susan Hammer, and students who will participate in the tests in 1999. Other CEO's will participate in the event at the White House and from San Jose.

A Challenge to Every State: Make Sure Every Student Masters the Basics in Reading and Math. Under the President's plan, the U.S. Department of Education will give every state, school district, and parent the opportunity to use voluntary tests of 4th grade reading and 8th grade math, beginning in 1999. These tests will help states and local communities raise standards of excellence for teaching and learning, and provide parents with accurate information about their children's academic performance. This will be the first time rigorous tests of reading skills at grade 4 and math knowledge and skills at grade 8, tied to widely accepted national standards, are available to measure individual student and school performance throughout the nation. President Clinton's Call to Action for American Education also stresses helping students prepare for the tests, such as the President's America Reads Initiative to mobilize an army of one million volunteer reading tutors.

SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS

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Proposed high school standards applauded, but fate is in doubt

BY SARAH LUBMAN
AND LORI ARATANI
Mercury News Staff Writers

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University of California regents Thursday praised proposed new high school graduation standards but had one key question: When will they take effect?

The answer: maybe never, if a state-appointed commission doesn't approve them.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin, for one, is worried.

"They don't have to accept them, but we hope they will," said Eastin, who is also a UC regent. "There are a couple of members (on the commission) who are saying they'll oppose anything associated with me, which is unfortunate."

Eastin, along with a number of people who helped draw up the new standards over the past year, are concerned they could end up meeting the same fate as the state's now-defunct achievement tests. The California Learning Assessment System, or CLAS, died in 1994 amid a storm of protest from conservative groups and complaints from educators about scoring errors.

The proposed high school graduation requirements, developed under the direction of the California Education Round Table, spell out what high school students should be expected to know and be able to do in math and English. They were presented at the regents' monthly meeting.

Students would be required to read the equivalent of 25 books a

year and take a year of algebra before graduating — a considerable step up from the current system. California now requires only two years of math in high school and lets districts set their own standards — standards that one Round Table task force head described Thursday as "abysmally low."

Three regents asked when the new requirements would take effect. The answer depends on what a state-appointed commission decides to do. The 21-member commission, established in 1995 as part of California's push to revamp its statewide testing program, is supposed to help determine what students need to know at every grade level. Among commission members are several advocates of a very traditional approach to education.

Eastin and others specifically cited commission member Bill Evers, a research fellow at Stanford's conservative Hoover Institution, as a potential opponent.

But Evers noted that the Round Table's proposal is only one of many plans the commission is reviewing, and he denied that he had singled it out for criticism. "Anyone who said that I've said anything on the subject is imagining it," he said.

Last month, the Round Table — which includes heads of all of California's public education systems — endorsed the standards and forwarded them to the commission. The commission will review them and then pass on its recommendations to the state

Board of Education, which has final authority on all education standards.

So far, the state board has only seen a draft of the new standards, but some trustees were bothered by the fact that the math requirement isn't as tough as California State University's demand that all entering students have two years of algebra.

"We felt the English language arts standards were excellent," said state board member Marion McDowell, a deputy superintendent with the Sequoia Union High School District. "There was some concern that the math standards were not as rigorous, but at the same time we recognize that they were still much higher than what the standards for high school graduation are now."

One professor who helped develop the math section said the consensus was that it was unrealistic to demand that all students be ready for college.

"The truth is, we're writing expectations for all students, and the truth is, many students don't go to college," said Scott Farrand, a math professor at CSU-Sacramento.

Farrand added that advocates of the new standards are pinning their hopes on the state Board of Education — even if the commission decides to ignore the recommendations.

"We're hoping that the Board of Education would look at ours and say, 'These are the ones to go with,'" he said.

Long Beach Will Create Academic High School

■ **Education:** Curriculum will be more demanding, and students will wear uniforms.

By DOUGLAS P. SHUTT **B1**
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The Long Beach Board of Education, continuing its efforts to establish stronger standards on academic achievement and dress, Tuesday night approved the creation of an all-academic high school similar to the highly regarded Boston Latin Grammar School.

The school board, which pioneered the use of school uniforms in elementary schools, also voted in a stricter dress code for more than 20,000 high school students

in the state's third-largest school district. Details of the dress code have yet to be decided.

The six-member school board unanimously approved both measures, overriding opposition by dozens of parents, students and teachers.

The classical high school will not require students to learn Latin, as does the Boston school, but will make study of the language available to all students. Students will be required to take four years of a language, as well as four years of science, math, English, history and humanities-fine arts.

On top of the more demanding, higher-expectation courses, students will have to wear uniforms, and both students and their parents will sign a contract agreeing to meet high attendance, conduct and homework requirements.

While a number of schools have established special programs for gifted students, the Long Beach program will be open to all average or better-than-average students who are willing to sign the contract. The program will be phased in over four years at Wilson High School, on the city's eastside, beginning with the ninth-grade class this fall.

Wilson serves the Belmont Shore and Naples beach communities and many of its students, as well as its teachers, reflect the casual, laid-back lifestyle of California beach areas.

Students are said to show up in everything from oversize baggy pants and sandals for the boys to bikini tops and bare-midriff shirts for the girls.

"You don't have any credibility to establish new rules when you don't enforce the old ones," said Mary Lou Cook, the mother of a Wilson student who is against requiring uniforms, in comments to the school board before the vote.

Some parents also complained that the district, in setting up a special all-academic high school, was establishing an elitist school that would drain the best teachers and students from the district's other high schools.

District Supt. Carl A. Oshin said stricter dress codes are necessary because the existing ones are too vague.

School board member Karin Polacheck disputed the contention that an elitist school would be created. She said the hope is that the classical school will be so successful, the concept will spread to the district's five other high schools. "We are trying to create one of many," she said. "It's not that we are trying to exclude anyone."

"No one said this was going to be easy," said conservative school board member Ed Eveland, a retired school principal and onetime deputy superintendent for high schools in Long Beach, before the meeting. "There is criticism that our public schools aren't worth a damn. Well, a lot of that is our fault. We have to start doing the job."

Eveland said he would like to see male students in "shirts, ties and coats" at Wilson.

Currently, the school district requires only elementary school students to wear uniforms.

At the classical high school, which is expected to have a beginning ninth-grade class of 850 to 900 students, there will be seven classes a day, one more than at regular high schools. All students in the program will be required to take the same classes.

Wilson High was chosen because it is located in the area where the school uniform policy was first tried in elementary schools.

Uniforms for elementary students and the classical high school are two of the latest initiatives undertaken by the school district.

In addition to requiring uniforms in the elementary grades, the district has established minimum academic requirements for lower school grades.

Third-graders who do not show minimum reading skills are going to be required to go to summer school beginning this summer.