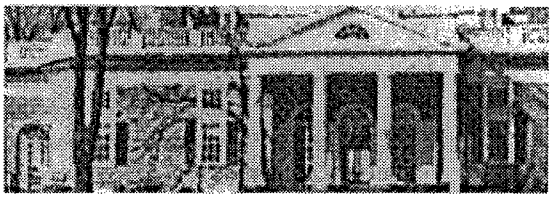

THE THOMAS JEFFERSON
INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY

Virginia Reading:

Doing it Right the First Time

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August 2003

Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy

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Virginia Reading:
Doing it Right the First Time

Executive Summary

Virginia has made dramatic reading gains over the last eight years. However, the Commonwealth continues to experience a significant and persistent Minority and Poverty Student Achievement Gap. Utilization of explicit phonics texts in the early years would likely help narrow that gap, but Virginia does not require the use of explicit phonics.

Challenges:

- More than twice the percentage of African-American fourth graders is performing at "Below Basic" level (53%) on the National Assessment of Educational Progress reading test as are white fourth-graders (20%). In eighth-grade, 14 percent of whites are "Below Basic" vs. 36 percent of African-Americans.
- Forty-seven percent of poor fourth-grade students (those eligible for free and reduced price school lunches) are "Below Basic" vs. only 20 percent of those not eligible. In eighth-grade, 33 percent of poor students are "Below Basic" against only 15 percent of non-poor students.
- On the National Stanford-9 exams, fourth-grade African Americans perform at the 35th percentile in reading; white and Asian students perform at the 63rd percentile. In ninth grade, Virginia's African American students are 30 percentile points behind white students.
- The result is increased remediation and increasing identification of students as "Learning Disabled (LD)." These classifications are expensive: Virginia spends $134 million a year for remediation. Combined state and local K-12 spending for LD staff is more than $500 million a year.
- Virginia does not require reading remediation programs to use scientific-based reading curriculum. Teachers generally have been inadequately trained in teaching reading using such methods.

Solutions:

- Research from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development indicates that the majority of LD students are actually "reading disabled." The number of poor readers served through expensive special education could be reduced by 70 percent through early identification and prevention, with a heavy emphasis on phonics.
- Los Angles switched to using explicit phonics. After three years, the Stanford-9 scores for inner city Los Angeles white and African-American students had risen to exceed those of Virginia students.

Recommendations:

- Virginia should require that elementary, reading and special education teachers demonstrate skills in the teaching of reading as a condition of license renewal.
- Virginia should require that reading remediation programs include the use of research-based reading programs.
- Virginia should establish a "Phonics Incentive Fund" to help failing schools purchase textbooks using systematic phonics for grades K-2, and to ensure the staff training necessary to do the job. Failing schools in need of remediation should be required to use the research-based curriculum that is proven to work.

Foreword

Our public schools' most fundamental responsibility is teaching children to read. Yet, as Chris Braunlich of the Thomas Jefferson Institute has documented in this report, many Virginia children are "curriculum casualties" of failed experiments in reading instruction.

We know what works. In their guide for educators, *Put Reading First*, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) have compiled decades of scientific research on how children learn to gain meaning from print.

These prestigious institutions have recommended specific reforms in reading instruction. As profiled by Mr. Braunlich, major school districts that have implemented these reforms have seen reading scores skyrocket, especially for those children often left behind.

Taxpayers benefit, too, as children learn to read the first time. Reduced remediation means more funds available for other school needs, including teachers' salaries.

Yet the "reading wars" continue. Most "curriculum leaders" continue to believe that "highly-structured instruction," such as systematic phonics, is bad, and "natural, self-constructed" learning is good. Science to the contrary is ignored in most school districts, where independent oversight and administrative accountability are at best in short supply.

Consider Fairfax County, Virginia's largest K-12 district. Principals were recently asked to choose one of two basal reading series (the basic reading textbook used in the classroom) to use in grades K-2. O*ne* chose the series with the "systematic phonics" recommended by NIH. Over *115* Principals picked the basals that did *not* include systematic phonics. Seventeen principals picked "a few of both."

The pressure on principals to oppose systematic phonics can be gauged by those results: 115 opposed, one in favor, 17 undecided. The losers? The 20% to 30% of all children, and the even higher numbers of economically-disadvantaged children, who scientists say need phonics to avoid reading difficulties -- and the taxpayers who will fund expensive, avoidable remediation.

What can be done?

The Virginia SOL's have yet-to-be-tested penalties for the victims of failed reading fads, but no explicit consequences for those who manage schools. The result is school accountability at risk. "Stakes" are the most complex component of school accountability, but difficult school change will not easily be won.

In Virginia's General Assembly, with 60 and 45 day-sessions, the game starts in the bottom of the ninth, with opponents of change in the lead. Virginia needs institutions that examine the data, and invite public discourse on K-12 school issues *before* the sessions begin, as the Thomas Jefferson Institute has done with this important paper.

Other states have emulated Virginia's clear standards. However, maximizing success has often required an engaged business community to reinforce and help move forward further educational improvement. Particularly in the area of reading, business has a clear interest in ensuring their customers and employees have the skills necessary for the 21st century, and Virginia businesses would do well to begin that kind of advocacy here in Virginia, as in other states. For example --

- The Texas Business and Education Coalition has been a notable prime mover in the progress of Texas schools.
- The Public School Forum of North Carolina is one of six business-supported organizations in Southeastern states dedicated to improving education.

In reading reform, thanks to Chris Braunlich and the Thomas Jefferson Institute, Virginia's children have a leadoff runner on first.

Who else will step up to the plate?

Rick Nelson
Fairfax County Federation of Teachers
August 2003

Virginia Reading:
Doing it Right the First Time

Introduction

Virginia has much of which to be proud in its dramatic reading gains over the last eight years, and the 2002 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading scores bear that out.

NAEP is commonly referred to as "The Nation's Report Card," -- the standard against which progress under the federal "No Child Left Behind" Act will be measured.

Following the worst drop in reading scores of any state in 1994, the state implemented "Standards of Learning" that provided goals for schools, teachers, and students in a wide range of subject areas. As a consequence, reading scores for Virginia's fourth-graders rose from an average scale score of 213 in 1994 to 225 in 2002 (the average score across the nation was only 217). Only two states achieved what the National Center for Education Statistics considers a higher level.

Reading achievement of Virginia's eighth-graders also improved. The average score of the Commonwealth's eighth graders in 2002 was 269, compared with 266 in 1998. Nationwide, eighth-graders scored at only 263 (The 1988 NAEP test was the first to include eighth-grade students).

But while test scores for African-American and Hispanic students also generally rose – in some cases dramatically – a significant and persistent Minority and Poverty Student Achievement Gap remains.

More than twice the percentage of African-American fourth-graders are performing at a Below Basic level (53%) as are white fourth-graders (20%). The same holds true for eighth-grade students, where 14 percent of whites are "Below Basic" vs. 36 percent of African-Americans.

Although the gap narrows for Hispanic students performing "Below Basic" (20 percent for whites vs. 28 percent for Hispanics in fourth grade; 14 percent for whites vs. 25 percent for Hispanics in eighth grade), this is likely due to the nature of Virginia's Hispanic population – many of whom came as educated refugees from war-torn nations – who were taught in Virginia, where failed bilingual education practices are not used, thus ensuring that immigrants received more intensive English-language instruction.

This is evidenced by the precipitous drop in test scores among those in poverty (eligible for free/reduced-price school lunches). Forty-seven percent of poor fourth-grade students are in the "Below Basic" category, vs. only 20 percent of fourth graders not eligible for reduced price meals. The same holds true for eighth-graders, where 33 percent of poor students are "Below Basic" against only 15 percent of non-poor students.

Measured against progress elsewhere in the nation, Virginia has risen from one of the worst performing states to one of the best.

But progress for African-American and poor students has been less than adequate for the goal of "leaving no child behind." The establishment of rigorous targets under the state's "Standards of Learning" has given a target for the vast majority of students – but closing the gap for those students with the greatest deficits will require an adjustment in the state's strategy.

Reading Wars: The Casualties

The decades-long "Reading Wars" in American education have been marked by a severe schism, dividing state and national education leadership, school districts, schools, and even parents within individual classrooms.

There have been three groups of casualties in these wars:

1. The 40 percent of American children – most of them poor and minority students – who cannot read at grade level;
2. The teachers who are left in a state of confusion by changing instructional methodologies; and
3. The taxpayers who are footing the bill for ineffective reading instruction, costly remediation, and increasing classification of students into expensive "learning disabled" categories.

Good stewardship of taxpayer money requires that expended funds meet two tough standards: "Do they work?" and "Are they cost-effective?"

Effective Reading Instruction

The research on what comprises an effective reading program is clear. A 1998 report issued by the National Research Council unmistakably declared that "beginning readers need explicit instruction and practice that lead to an appreciation that spoken words are made up of smaller units of sounds," while further noting that "Those who have started to read independently … should be encouraged to sound out and identify unfamiliar words."[1]

In 1999, the American Federation of Teachers called for the "Direct teaching of decoding, comprehension and literature appreciation," and "systematic and explicit instruction in the code system of written English."[2]

That same year, the Congressionally-chartered National Reading Panel assessed the scientific research literature on reading, concluding that "systematic phonics instruction enhances children's success in learning to read and is significantly more effective than instruction that teaches little or no phonics."[3]

Forty years of research have demonstrated that effective reading lessons include instruction in five key components: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary,

and text comprehension. But while many reading programs devote significant resources to areas like fluency, direct instruction in phonics has been ignored by those who suggest that reading skills are acquired through word familiarity.

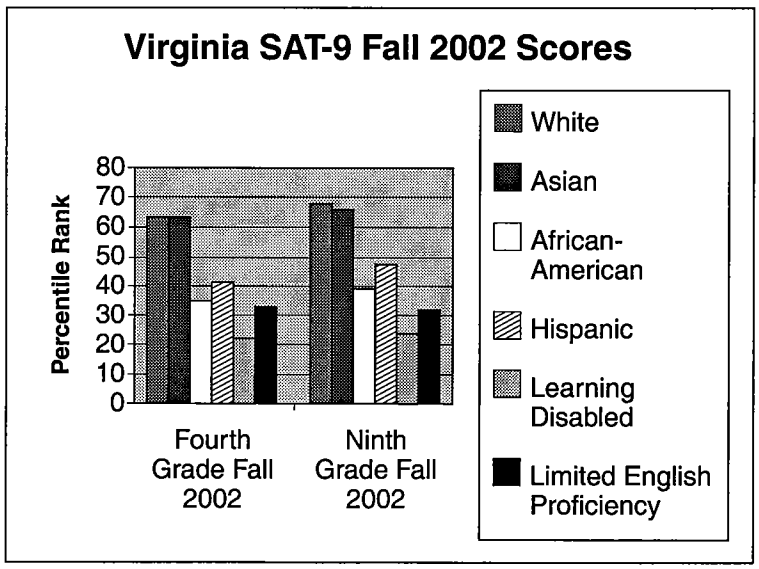
The human and financial costs have been expensive for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Reading: Virginia's Results

The human toll is clear, particularly for African American and Hispanic students. In the Fall 2002 nationally-normed Stanford 9 Grade 4 Reading examination, white and Asian students in Virginia scored at the 63rd percentile (the national average is the 50th percentile). However, Hispanic students scored at only the 41st percentile and African American students were at the 35th percentile.

Similarly, students classified as "Learning Disabled" score at the 22nd percentile, while "Limited English Proficient" students are at the 33rd percentile.

Nor does more time with current reading instruction appear to help. By the time Virginia's African American students reach ninth grade, they are scoring only at the 39th percentile – a full 30 percentile points behind white students. Hispanic students score at the 48th percentile, learning disabled students at the 24th percentile and Limited English Proficient students at only the 32nd percentile.



It is these students who are most often placed into remediation programs, and for whom passing the state Standards of Learning may seem out of reach. After all, if one cannot read, the task of passing a high stakes test is made all the more difficult.

Such remediation programs are expensive. The Commonwealth of Virginia spends $134 million a year for Remedial Education Payments, Early Reading Intervention and Standards of Learning remediation.[4] A report by the Virginia Federation of Teachers concludes that Virginia's combined state and local K-12 spending for Learning Disabled staff is more than $500 million a year.[5]

In major Virginia school divisions, Learning Disabled identification has risen six times faster than enrollment and, because of the low pupil-teacher ratios required (state staffing standards require one teacher per eight students), the runaway growth in LD identification is a key factor in the demand for new classroom space.

In Virginia's largest school division alone, Fairfax County, the number of teachers devoted to Learning Disabled students has soared from 1,026 in FY 2001 to more than 1,205 in FY 2004 – a nearly 20 percent increase, far outpacing the general student population growth. And this figure does not include more than 300 instructional assistants and other staff personnel devoted to LD instruction.

Indeed, an independent consultant retained by the Fairfax County School Board noted "The data suggest that the current general education approaches to problem solving and student support are not succeeding. In the six years from 1998 to 2003, the number of general education students in FCPS increased 8.5 percent, while the number of special education students increased 21.6 percent, nearly three times higher than general education.[6]

That report determined the average percent of initial referrals to special education that did not qualify for special education services, and noted "These non-qualifying referrals are of interest because they could indicate that campuses are looking to special education to solve problems not related to a disability, but caused by an inability to meet students' needs in general education, especially in reading and math."[7]

Wouldn't teaching reading effectively the first time be more cost-effective?

Reading: Virginia Practices

Effective reading instruction is likely to reduce the costly identification of LD students. Research from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development indicates that the vast majority of students categorized as "learning disabled" are actually "reading disabled." *Dr. Reid Lyon, President Bush's "reading czar," and others have concluded that the number of children identified as poor readers and served through special education could be reduced by up to 70 percent through early identification and prevention programs with a heavy emphasis on phonics and decodable text.*[8]

Over time, use of a phonics-based reading program (coupled with early identification of reading deficiencies) would dramatically reduce the number of LD teachers funded by the state and localities.

But to explain what Virginia *needs to do*, we must first understand current practice.

Virginia leaves a great deal of curricular decision-making to local jurisdictions. The Commonwealth does not have a state-wide curriculum, does not adopt mandatory state-wide textbooks, and does not require teachers to teach subjects in a particular manner.

State funding beyond traditional basic payments to meet the state's Standards of Quality and Basic Aid payments have traditionally focused on such areas as vocational education, special education, support for technology and school construction, and teacher quality. Remedial education has more recently centered around assisting students in meeting the state Standards of Learning benchmarks.

Such state funding typically comes with certain levels of "process" restrictions, but do not impose specific instructional methodologies on school divisions.

For example, Standards of Learning Algebra Readiness funds may only be used to provide math intervention services to students in grades 6-9 who are at-risk of failing the Algebra I SOL test, as demonstrated on diagnostic tests approved by the Department of Education. *Which* instructional program used is left to individual school divisions; the General Assembly merely underwrites an additional two and a half hours of instruction at a student-teacher ratio of ten to one.

The state simply proscribes the amount of time it will underwrite, and requires that 70 percent of a school's students must pass the Algebra I end-of-course test for the school to meet accreditation requirements. If a school were to consistently use a failing remediation program on 25 percent of its students, it would continue to receive funding for that program: the Commonwealth makes no judgment on "what works."

In other words, the *school* would meet its 70 percent passing rate goal ... but 25 percent of the students in it would still not be able to read at grade level.

The same is also true for the General Assembly's support for reading interventions ... but the effects of a failing reading program have a wider impact on the ability of students to succeed – either in school or in life.

School divisions with students demonstrating reading deficiencies based on their individual performance in diagnostic tests are offered additional assistance. Payments are computed at a student-teacher ratio of five to one. But there is no requirement that the intervention programs used by school divisions must demonstrate effectiveness.

Indeed, state law suggests that such funds be used for "special reading teachers; trained aides; volunteer tutors under the supervision of a certified teacher; computer-based reading tutorial programs; aides to instruct in-class groups while the teacher provides direct instruction to the students who need extra assistance; or extended instructional time in the school day or year for these students."

Nothing requires that such instruction be based on current research or that it be based on systematic explicit phonics instruction. This is the case even though research shows that the children most at-risk of reading failure are those least able to understand how letters are linked to sounds to form letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns, and most at a loss in understanding how to apply that knowledge in their reading.

Even the state's $134 million commitment to Remedial Education focuses on generalized programs designed to increase the success of disadvantaged students in completing a high school degree and to encourage further education and training. Only the Reading Recovery program is specifically endorsed to help children learn to read – a program the National Research Council noted shows "very small differences between the reading achievement of Reading Recovery children and other low-progress children" just 12 months after intervention.[9]

In other words, the state-endorsed Reading Recovery program does not work.

Reading: What Los Angeles Does

In 1998, the Los Angeles Unified School District adopted a new policy requiring teachers to spend a set amount of time each day on reading and language arts instruction: at least 90 minutes a day in kindergarten; 150 minutes in first and second grades and 120 minutes in third through fifth grades. By 1999, the district expanded the policy and required that targeted low-achieving schools must adopt one of three reading programs: Open Court, Success for All, or Reading Mastery.

The common factor in all three reading programs? Heavy use of phonics as a beginning sequence and a heavily scripted daily program requiring teachers to teach using pre-determined material to be covered each day.

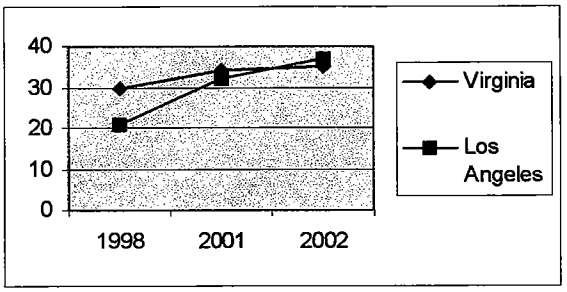
This adoption included a massive staff development effort to instruct teachers how to use the reading program, the hiring of 300 reading coaches trained in using the reading programs, and use of the Waterford Early Reading computer software to supplement the instruction.[10]

Although the district's focus was on K-2, some schools used a K-5 program, and by 2001 the reading program had expanded to include all students in grades 3-5, as well.

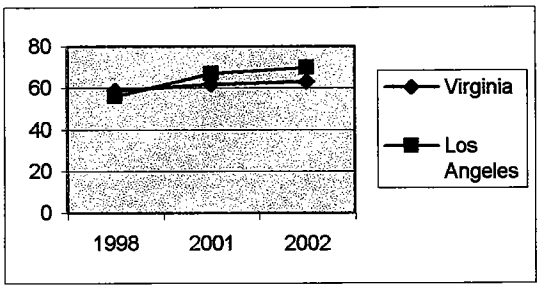
The results were noteworthy. In 1998, before the LA District Reading Program was introduced, African American 4th graders scored at the 21st percentile in the Stanford 9 reading examination. Hispanic 4th graders were at the 17th percentile and white students at the 56th percentile.

By the Spring of 2001, African American scores had risen to the 32nd percentile, Hispanic scores to the 26th percentile and white scores to the 67th percentile. Those scores continued to rise in the Spring 2002 SAT-9 results: African American 4th graders came in at the 37th percentile, Hispanics at the 32nd percentile and White students at the 70th percentile.

The result means that in tough, urban, inner-city Los Angeles, with higher rates of poverty and mobility, both African American and White 4th graders are essentially outscoring Virginia's students. Of the three disaggregated ethnic groups, only Virginia's Hispanic students scored higher than Los Angeles' students.



African American 4th Graders



White 4th Graders

Because some schools did not begin using the District Reading Plan until 2000-2001, a First Year Evaluation was able to make comparisons between the same schools before and after using the program, noting "First grade students receiving Open Court achieved significantly higher NCE (normal curve equivalent) scores on Reading, Language, and Spelling compared to first graders without the program in the same schools. This was also true for second graders. The positive effects of the Open Court program on student achievement are clearly indicated in this analysis."[11]

Indeed, in October 2001, Los Angeles noted that first-graders were scoring in the 56th percentile, representing an improvement of 21 percentile points in reading over two years. Non-English speakers had risen from the 33rd percentile to the 48th percentile, African American students rose from the 45th percentile to the 55th percentile; and scores for white and Asian students had risen eight and nine points, respectively.

Virginia could demonstrate the same gains. But doing so requires the state to leverage its resources in demanding that school systems utilize research-based reading instruction.

Virginia: Two Moves in the Right Direction

Two recent innovations in Virginia begin to do just that.

The state's "Reading First" program will provide nearly $13 million to selected Virginia schools to train teachers in the essential components of reading, and to screen, identify and overcome reading barriers facing students. The grants require schools to include all five essential components of good reading instruction: Phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension.

However, those requirements are driven by the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act, under which the federal "Reading First" grants are administered. A more valuable indication of the state's new direction is the recommendation of the State Board of Education and the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure (ABTEL) to require a reading instructional assessment for teachers of elementary students, and special education and reading specialists.

In addition, ABTEL seeks to require that in-service instructional personnel assigned as elementary (pre-k through 3 and pre-k through 6) and special education

teachers, reading specialists, and administrators be required to demonstrate skills in the teaching of reading as a condition of license renewal.

It may seem odd that teaching licenses do not currently require that teachers know how to teach reading, but few schools of education require any substantial amount of coursework. The average teaching college requires graduates to take just one course on how to teach children to read, and that course frequently focuses exclusively on the outdated "whole language" methodology. Dr. Louisa Moats, who has worked extensively in the study of early reading instruction notes, "Mainstream educators are being taught faulty ideas that will stand them in faulty stead when they get into the classroom. Basically, we need to start over. We need a systemic, sweeping change in the way teachers are prepared."[12]

The lack of accountability in schools of education filters down to the teachers themselves, when they are often encouraged to use programs without a strong evaluation component. And it is likely that teachers will receive little instruction from teaching colleges in how to conduct assessment and evaluation of their students.

Indeed, when the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education distributed a publication offering strategies that would improve reading education programs by stressing research-based strategies, they were bitterly attacked by the National Council of Teachers of English. NCTE, which remains a primary source of teacher reading education, opposes reading and vocabulary lists, as well as the use of grammar and usage exercises. Amazingly, NCTE's national resolutions also oppose the view that students should be expected to have achieved a certain level of accomplishment at the end of each grade level.[13]

Although Virginia's own teacher preparation programs reported in a 2001 state Department of Education survey that they include systematic explicit phonics instruction, that same study determined a need for demonstrated proficiency and additional training for those who do not demonstrate proficiency in teaching systematic phonics.[14]

Consequently, ABTEL has suggested that key instructional personnel be required, as a condition of license renewal, to complete one of several options to demonstrate skills in the teaching of reading –

- Take the state-adopted reading instructional assessment for Virginia;

- Complete additional coursework from a regionally accredited college or university aligned with the Virginia Standards of Learning and the reading competencies in the Licensure Regulations for School Personnel that addresses reading instruction at least in the areas of phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency; or

- Complete high quality professional development offered by school divisions that similarly meet the requirement of addressing reading instruction in the five key areas of phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency.

ABTEL also recommended that approved programs in administration and supervision also include graduate coursework in reading aligned with these same competencies and to expand such requirements for those seeking certification in middle school and secondary education.

Acting on these recommendations would put in place the needed requirements to ensure qualified teachers have been taught how to incorporate systematic phonics in reading instruction.

But at least one more action is needed.

Reading: Virginia's Textbook Conundrum

In November of 2003, the State Board of Education will adopt new K-5 reading textbook and instructional materials that will last until June 30, 2010.

The criteria for textbook adoption requires the use of all five of the essential components for reading instruction and, thanks to legislation offered by Delegate Tom Bolvin and passed by the General Assembly, textbooks in kindergarten and first grade must be 70 percent decodable – a key component of phonics instruction.

But local school boards may continue to adopt textbooks that are not on the board-approved list. Virginia's reluctance to require the use of research-based texts is likely to mean a significant number of failing students will continue to receive substandard reading instruction.

This is particularly disastrous for students trapped in a failing school. In the 2002-2003 school year, 85 schools were "Accredited With Warning" – meaning that the school was 20 points or more below benchmarks in one or more subject areas. Thirty-four schools were identified as failing schools under the federal No Child Left Behind Act – meaning that they failed to achieve state achievement objectives in reading and/or mathematics for two consecutive years. And as the national definition of "failing school" becomes more rigorous, those numbers are likely to rise in the short term.

The bulk of these schools were elementary schools. And 27 of the 34 schools failing under the NCLB provisions were in the cities of Petersburg, Portsmouth, or Richmond.

We know where the problems are. We know why the problems exist. And we know how to fix them. What it takes is political will.

The state should establish a "Phonics Incentive Fund" to help failing schools purchase textbooks employing systematic phonics instruction for grades K-2, and ensure the staff training necessary to do the job. More importantly, the state should *require* those schools – whose leadership seems incapable on its own of providing students with the basics of education – to use the research-based curriculum that is proven to work.

Such a fund could easily be carved out of the current $134 million in funding for remedial education, early intervention, or SOL remediation. With a classroom set of textbooks priced at about $3,000 for 20 students, a carve-out of $1.3 million -- just one percent of what we now spend on remediation efforts – would generate assistance to nearly 9,000 at-risk students and demonstrably help them learn the life-time skill of reading.

That carve-out would help every child in every Virginia elementary school identified as failing under the No Child Left Behind Act – and have enough left over to assist nearly 500 students in the remaining middle and high schools.

Recommendations

There are no silver bullets for teaching children to read. But common sense actions can be taken that improve opportunities for children and will help ensure their success as adults. Among these recommendations –

- Virginia should move forward as rapidly as possible to require that instructional personnel be required, as a condition of license renewal, to demonstrate skills in the teaching of reading;
- Virginia should require that reading remediation programs must include the use of research-based reading programs with a track record of success;
- Virginia should establish a Phonics Incentive Fund to help failing schools purchase textbooks using systematic phonics instruction for grades K-2, and ensure the staff training to do the job.

Doing this requires the Commonwealth to tell failing schools to do "what works," not "what you want." It requires a change in philosophy that imposes instructional methodologies on local school systems that have failed in their mission. And it requires the political will to oppose the entrenched procedures of localities who will not want to give up their prerogatives.

There is an old saying: "Government will always do the right thing, after it has eliminated all other possibilities."

For 24,119 students in Virginia (those who failed the reading part of Virginia's third grade SOL exam), the other possibilities have been tried and found wanting.

It is time to do the right thing.

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[1] *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, Catherine E. Snow, M. Susan Burns, and Peg Griffin, Editors, The Academy Press, 1998, p. 7.
[2] *Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science: What Expert Teachers of Reading Should Know and Be Able To Do,* American Federation of Teacher, 1999, pp 7-8.
[3] *Report of the National Reading Panel,* 1999, page 9.
[4] *Budget of the Commonwealth of Virginia,* 2003, Direct Aid to Public Education (197) (147).
[5] *VFT Briefing on Virginia Education Issues,* December 19, 2002, page 3.
[6] *Report of the Gibson Consulting Group: Special Education,* July 3, 2003, page 17.
[7] *Ibid.* page 17
[8] *Rethinking Special Education for a New Century,* G. Reid Lyon, Jack M. Fletcher, et. al., The Progressive Policy Institute and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, p. 260.
[9] *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children,* op.cit., p. 256.
[10] *Staff Response to the Minority Report to the 9th Report Card on Minority Student Achievement,* Fairfax County (VA) Public Schools, February 24, 2003, p. 5.
[11] *K-3 District Reading Plan Evaluation Year One: 2000-2001,* Los Angeles Unified School District, p. xi.
[12] *The Baltimore Sun,* November 5, 1997
[13] http://www.ncte.org/resolutions/
[14] *A Study of Virginia Teachers in Teaching Systematic Explicit Phonics,* Virginia Department of Education in cooperation with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, November 30, 2001, p.7.

About the Author

Christian N. Braunlich is vice president of the Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy, a non-partisan research and education organization devoted to improving the lives of the people in Virginia based on a philosophy of limited government, free enterprise and individual responsibility.

In 1995, Mr. Braunlich was elected to the Fairfax County (VA) School Board, the nation's 12th largest school system. The area Mr. Braunlich represents has a high level of students on free and reduced meals and ESOL students. He has devoted much of his time to addressing the challenges of reading instruction, and several of the schools in his area have adopted a reading program with intensive phonics instruction in the early stages – with remarkable success.

Mr. Braunlich has served as Chief of Staff to Rep. John LeBoutillier (R-NY-06); Assistant Vice President of Public Affairs for the National Association of Manufacturers, where he organized public affairs activities with small manufacturers on tax and regulatory issues; and President of the Alexis de Tocqueville Institution. He has also served as vice president of The Center for Education Reform, a Washington, DC-based organization focused on school choice, charter schools and achieving high academic standards.

He lives with his wife, Eileen, and four children: Christian, a senior at the University of Notre Dame; Stephen, a sophomore at the College of William and Mary; Brian, a senior at Hayfield Secondary School; and Catherine, a sixth-grader at Hayfield Elementary School.

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Michael Thompson, Chairman and President: For over twenty years Mr. Thompson owned his own marketing company. He has been very active in national, state and local politics as well as a number of state and community organizations, commissions, and committees.

Frank Donatelli: Vice Chairman: Senior Vice President and Director of the Federal Public Affairs Group for McGuire, Woods Consulting, Mr. Donatelli is the former White House Political Director for President Reagan.

Randal C. Teague: Secretary/Treasurer/Counsel: A Partner in the law firm of Vorys, Sater Seymour and Pease, Mr. Teague is a noted international attorney.

John Alderson: President of the John Alderson Insurance Agency, he chaired the Reagan for President campaigns in Virginia.

Warren Barry: Former State Senator, current Member of the Alcohol Beverage Control Board.

William W. Beach: Director of the Center for Data Analysis and John M. Olin Senior Fellow in Economics at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C.

Sandra D. Bowen*: Secretary of Administration and past Senior V. P. of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce. She served in major leadership positions for Governor Baliles and Robb.

Robert L. Hartwell: President, Hartwell Capitol Consulting, Senior Consultant to American Systems, International.

Alan I. Kirshner: Chairman and CEO of Markel Corporation.

Joseph Ragan: Founder and President of Joe Ragan's Coffee.

John Ryan: Senior Counsel and Director of Government Affairs for Bristol Myers Squibb.

Robert W. Shinn: Vice President of CSX Corporation.

Todd A. Stottlemyer: CEO, ITS Services, Inc..

Dr. Robert F. Turner: Law professor at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville.

Robert W. Woltz, Jr: President and CEO of Verizon-Virginia.

(*Mrs. Bowen is on a leave of absence during her tenure with Governor Warner.)

"... a wise and frugal government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned. This is the sum of good government, and this is necessary to close the circle of our felicities."

Thomas Jefferson

1801

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