
January 1973

IRA Reports on the National Right to Read Effort

International Reading Association

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mrj>

Recommended Citation

Association, International Reading (1973) "IRA Reports on the National Right to Read Effort," *Michigan Reading Journal*: Vol. 7 : Iss. 1 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mrj/vol7/iss1/5>

This Other is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Michigan Reading Journal by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.

IRA REPORTS ON THE NATIONAL RIGHT TO READ EFFORT

SEPTEMBER 1972

THE GOAL

As all IRA members know, the National Right to Read Effort involves both the public and private, professional and non-professional segments of society. It is aimed at ensuring that by 1980 ninety-nine percent of all people under 16 years of age living in the United States and ninety per cent of all those over 16 will possess and use literacy skills. Functional literacy is defined as possession and employment of reading skills which enable an individual to benefit from the options American society has to offer.

Although the Right to Read has worked only with limited discretionary funds, much has been accomplished during the past two years. It is hoped, however, that legislation introduced recently by Senator Thomas Eagleton (National Reading Improvement Act of 1972) will help provide additional financial and personnel resources for the Right to Read Effort.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

Right to Read operates under some basic principles which serve to maintain it as a people-oriented effort rather than as a process-centered program. The first of these is that with the exception of the one percent of our population which is considered uneducable, all people can learn to read if they are given materials designed to meet their needs.

The second is that teachers will adopt effective methods if they are provided with a viable and challenging program within which to work. And third, that the United States now has

the resources, research, human and financial power to cope with the reading crisis. The National Right to Read Effort, then, places great confidence in students, in educational personnel, and in the quality of available research. If these resources are used and if people throughout the country are committed to working toward the elimination of illiteracy, then the crisis will be quelled.

In pursuing these goals and in acting upon these principles, the Right to Read provides a delivery system which consists of information, technical assistance, and money. These will be discussed more fully in the remainder of this report.

SCHOOL- AND COMMUNITY-BASED CENTERS

Right to Read is presently servicing a total of 244 school- and community-based sites. In establishing these sites, the goal was for each selected site to plan the best possible program for its unique needs, using the materials, information, and assistance furnished by Right to Read. Each grant was given in two parts: a percentage of the total grant was given for a planning period with the balance of the grant becoming available upon completion of a work statement which reflected both site needs and Right to Read goals and objectives.

Of the 170 school-based sites, 131 have completed the planning phase of their grant and have received the balance of first-year funding for implementation of their programs. This includes the twenty-one Impact sites which average two schools for

each Right to Read program. Planning for second-year programs has begun.

The remaining 39 school-based sites and the 74 community-based sites were to submit work statements in August in order to become operational in September.

The school-based sites are designated in one of four categories:

* *Transition site* is without substantial federal funds earmarked for reading improvement but is willing to make the transition from existing ineffective reading programs to effective ones. Receives a grant of \$50,000.

* *Redirection site* does have substantial federal funds, however, it still has an ineffective reading program and needs to use resources differently. Receives \$30,000.

* *Expansion site* has promising practices related to the teaching of reading and has students who are achieving in the second and third quartiles instead of the lowest quartile, as the students in the first two types of sites. Receives \$40,000.

* *Impact site* has an exemplary program which can serve as a demonstration model regarding the application of reading methods, sound management, use of the diagnostic/prescriptive approach, and involvement of the community in its program. Has two satellite schools whose programs it must help to upgrade. Sites located in 21 large cities — each receives \$100,000.

The community-based programs during the past year have been directed toward the out-of-school adolescent population, the young adult, and the older adult who are in need of reading help. Community-based programs are much more diverse in type of location, population, and

program intent and can be found, for example, in prisons, community colleges, the inner city, and on reservations.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

One of the basic beliefs of the Right to Read Effort is that it is imperative to offer federal aid in the form of technical assistance as well as in the form of financial assistance. The Office of Education is working with 24 reading consultants and five institutional teams to provide technical assistance to Right to Read programs.

The reading consultants are distributed throughout the states, and the five teams are based at Ball State University in Indiana; Northwest Regional Lab of USOE; Our Lady of the Lake College in San Antonio, Texas; City College of New York; and the University of Georgia. Each of the teams has the equivalent of two fulltime members; one works with program planning and the other is a reading consultant. Funds for technical assistance amounts to \$327,927.00.

MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT AND DISSEMINATION

The *Needs Assessment Package* was developed by the Right to Read staff and includes step-by-step instructions for gathering data on student achievement, faculty skills and training needs, and information on basic approaches to reading and available materials. This is made available to every grantee and is an important part of each site's planning steps.

* *Program Planning Procedure Kit*: Set of three charts plus definition and objective cards which lead education decision makers through 11 essential planning steps.

* *Validated Programs* (Information Capsules): Five effective reading

programs in actual operation are presented in packaged form through an overview with the use of charts, sample materials, a taped interview with the project director, and a filmstrip of the program. Grantees choose one of these programs to replicate in part or completely. Materials include the process for implementing a program as well as descriptive information.

** Guiderule:* Sliderule giving summary data on each of the five model programs, includes target population, grades served, basic approaches, student gains within the program, and staff training methods.

** Status and Reporting Center Kit:* Seven charts designed to illustrate the progress of the project, highlight future decision points, and keep track of responsibilities. Kit provides for the self-monitoring of every aspect of the individual site's program and is made available to each grantee.

RIGHT TO READ STATES

Eleven states have signed an Office of Education/State Education Agency Agreement, whereby they become Right to Read states. These states have committed themselves to reading as a high priority. Each state agrees to utilize Right to Read as a coordinating vehicle for all federal and state programs with reading activities. The states working with OE developed their own guidelines and are implementing the Right to read Plan of Action and incorporating the criteria.

The eleven Right to Read states are: California, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Minnesota, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, North Carolina, Vermont, and Texas.

Eventually Right to Read hopes to have the financial resources to provide each of the fifty states with a technical assistance grant. At present every state

has appointed a Right to Read representative who serves as the link between the State Education Agency and the federal government and who helps to implement the OE/SEA Agreement, but only eleven of these persons are funded and many of the others cannot devote their full efforts to this important work. Some forty States submitted plans for Right to Read and have requested use of Right to Read planning and validated programs.

CROSS-BUREAU COORDINATION

Within OE, cross-bureau coordination has been established in order to facilitate planning between the various programs and the Right to Read Office. Eleven task forces are presently developing specific action steps for Fiscal Year 1973 to relate program activities to the Right to Read goal. These eleven programs are: Adult Education, Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education Formula & Library, Bilingual Education, Data Collection, Educational Technology, Evaluation, Renewal, Research & Development, Volunteers in Education, Model Cities, and Non-Public Schools Liaison.

NATIONAL READING CENTERS

The National Reading Center's responsibilities involve the solicitation of the involvement of the private sector in the National Right to Read Effort. The Right to Read Office has provided \$1,416,433 for the National Reading Center, and the Center's work is monitored through the Operational Planning System. A formal liaison relationship has been established.

In the area of public relations work, the Center has been responsible for the production of a series of radio and TV spots geared toward stimulating parental awareness of how to cope with reading problems. It has also established a speakers' bureau con-

sisting of volunteers who speak to groups about the Right to Read, using NRC developed materials. In addition, the center publishes a periodic newsletter entitled the *NRC Reader*. This newsletter along with twelve reproduced newspaper articles on parents, children and reading, and the "Answers Brochures" are available to the public.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Forty-five major professional organizations have been informed about the National Right to Read Effort. Of these, 25 whose goals relate most directly to the goals of Right to Read have been selected for continual liaison. The International Reading Association and the American Library Association are two of these. From meetings with the 25 associations, specific plans for their involvement in the Right to Read Effort, resolutions of support, and the establishment of endowment funds have resulted.

In addition, Action, Volunteers in Education, Department of Defense (overseas schools branch), Neighborhood Youth Corps, and Job Corps are discussing ways in which to incorporate Right to Read resources and concepts into their programs. Reading is Fundamental and Children's Television Workshop are also involved in exploratory discussion with Right to Read staff.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

A number of special projects were funded by the Right to Read. These are projects which have broad implications for education and embrace the concept of a multiplier effect. Some of these include: development of a pilot project, by the National Urban Coalition, to upgrade the reading skills of welfare mothers; study by a bilingual research firm into

the needs of functionally illiterate Spanish-speaking populations throughout the United States and recommendations on ways in which a nationally televised reading readiness program could meet these needs; development of criterion-reference tests for bilingual children; and production of five-minute pilot films which test the feasibility of teaching 3-5 year olds to read via television.

PLANS FOR FISCAL '73

The National Right to Read Effort is intended to span all ages and to have an impact upon every program which relates to reading, both within the federal government and at state and local levels. Limited funding and a small staff has made it prudent to limit target populations and groups with which the Office will work in its initial stages. However, plans are to expand the operation of the Office as human and financial resources permit.

The Office plans to establish programs which will have a multiplier effect, such as:

- * Teaching staff development trainers who would provide assistance in in-service education and on-the-job training in the area of reading.

- * Training a cadre of state level technical assistance persons to provide specific services to local districts in planning, implementing, and evaluating reading programs.

- * Developing procedures and design for an adult "Sesame Street" to reach the millions of functionally illiterate adults.

- * Training, on a regional basis, local education agencies to utilize the effective reading programs which have been validated by OE.