

THE STATE OF MINNESOTA'S RIGHT TO READ PROGRAM

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In his Schoolmen's Day address on December 2, 1971, Governor Wendell R. Anderson declared that the realization of the Right to Read objective was a priority goal for his administration. As a move towards achieving that objective, the governor announced the initiation of the State of Minnesota Right to Read Program, and pledged himself and the authority and prestige of his office. It was also in that address that Governor Anderson advised Minnesotans that their state had been selected by the United States Office of Education as one of America's five original Right to Read Demonstration States.

The State of Minnesota Right to Read Program begins with the assumption that each child can achieve mastery of reading skills. Right to Read means that the schools are asked to give each pupil the competence he needs, regardless of the difficulties, and that means regardless of his initial and apparent interest, his cultural background, his home life, or his ability as measured by culture-bound tests. In effect, Right to Read asks the schools to guarantee the acquisition of necessary skills. Aptitude is viewed merely as the amount of time required by the learner to attain mastery of a learning task. Right to Read does not mean the right to be taught. Right to Read means the right to learn to read.

A plan to build reading programs in each local education agency throughout Minnesota has been formulated. The Minnesota Right to Read plan has two basic dimensions. One dimension is that of making direct technical assistance available to each public school district and to each private and parochial school administrative unit for a sustained period of time in order that a total reading program may be built which meets certain generally accepted criteria of excellence.

The second dimension is that of encouraging the identification of an individual within each public school district and each private and parochial school administrative unit who will be designated as the director of reading for the district or private and parochial school administrative unit. This person will then be prepared by the State Right to Read staff with the full range of competencies so as to permit the local reading program to be directed by a truly qualified individual.

Stated succinctly, the Minnesota plan will be an exercise in building the reading program within the full connotative meaning of the word program combined with inservice education,

and in developing reading leadership within each and every administration.

The task of reading program building signifies the necessity of focusing our attention on the matter of the preschool program, the elementary school, summer school instruction, the teaching of reading in the junior and senior high school, and the building of the adult basic education program for the out-of-school illiterate. The need most certainly also exists for attention to be directed at the task of building quality reading programs in those of our correctional and welfare institutions where the current program is either non-existent or very weak. We are seeking an all-encompassing approach to the resolution of the great educational problem of our time.

The State of Minnesota Right to Read program is thus envisioned as an aggressive comprehensive effort on behalf of Minnesota education which (a) focuses on a significant problem, basic to learning; (b) has high likelihood of success; (c) has direct payoff for children; (d) is within the state's resource capability of accomplishment; and (e) is achievable within a limited period of time.

It is intended that the Minnesota Right to Read Program consist of four phases. Phase I would extend from approximately May 1, 1972, to December 31, 1972. Phases II, III, and IV would conform to the calendar years 1973, 1974, and 1975, respectively.

Upon the recommendation of the Minnesota Right to Read Advisory Council, a copy of the Minnesota Right to Read Program has been distributed to all of Minnesota's school districts, parochial school units, and non-public and non-parochial school units. This program description was accompanied by an invitation for school districts, a pyramidal unit within a large school district if the district has attempted to decentralize administratively on this basis, and non-public school units to make application for Phase I participation. The total number of eligible units is in excess of 900. Applications for participation were to have been submitted by May 19.

From among the school districts and non-public school units who make application and agree to the conditions as specified in the Minnesota Right to Read Program/Local Education Agency Contract for Support of the National Right to Read Effort, twenty-two will be selected on the basis of two LEA's per each of the eleven State Development Regions with the exception of Regions Two and Five which shall be combined, and Region Eleven from which four selections shall be made. These selections are to be made by May 26.

Each Phase I LEA will have designated an individual as the LEA's reading director. This person will be acknowledged the

authority necessary to execute the responsibilities inherent in such a position. These twenty-two reading directors of Phase I LEA's will experience during the summer of 1972 a program of preparation of a minimum of thirty day's duration which will encompass both an academic and a practicum dimension.

The academic dimension of the reading director's preparation will encompass such topics as those enumerated below:

1. Basic reading theory
2. Curriculum and methodological alternatives
3. Pre-school programming for the disadvantaged and for those children who are not
4. Evaluation, record keeping, and reporting in reading
5. Organizing the classroom, the school building unit, the school district, and the community for reading instruction
6. The process of effecting educational change through community involvement
7. Supervision and improvement of instruction, including models of comprehensive, continuous, and intensive in-service educational programs
8. The articulation of the total reading effort within a school district or within a private or parochial school unit
9. Adult Basic Education Program models which would include the process of identifying the adult illiterate, encouraging his involvement, and guaranteeing his reading success through effective programming
10. Effective accommodation of varying learning rates, moments of readiness, and special needs and problems of pupils
11. Identification, preparation, and efficient utilization of staff: certified, employed teacher-aides, and volunteers
12. Dissemination of information to the patrons of the schools
13. Curriculum adjustments in other subject areas for those children who are unable to read at grade level
14. Maximum utilization of school and public library resources
15. Provisions in the area of reading for gifted and/or high achieving pupils
16. The process of applying a criteria of excellence for reading programming when evaluating the quality of existing program, making the needs assessment, prescribing the needed changes, and evaluating the success of the effort.

Primary responsibility for the conduct of the instructional phase of the Right to Read program will be borne by the state level Right to Read staff. This group will have the opportunity

to utilize the personnel resources of the State Department of Education in the areas of special education, special learning and behavior problems, Indian education, Adult Basic Education, early childhood education, education of the gifted, library services, education of the disadvantaged (Title One), and evaluation.

In addition to the classroom instruction, there will be a program dimension designed to provide the local reading directors with supervised practical experience. The current existing reading program for each local education agency will be studied.

A criteria of excellence for reading programming will then be applied. An assessment will follow of the strengths, weaknesses, and voids of the total program as it now exists. A prescription of recommended changes will then be cooperatively developed.

At this point, local program development would begin which will focus on the organization and administration of the LEA's adopted curriculum and methodology. Program development in the pre-school and in the area of adult basic education would be begun. Necessary instructional and informational materials would be prepared. In-service education for teachers and administration which focuses on curriculum, methodology, and organizational patterns and administrative procedures would be planned. A system of evaluation would be defined in order to measure reading improvement as a result of the Right to Read effort in the school district and in the private or parochial school unit.

Program implementation would then be begun in September coincidental with the advent of the fall school term. The initial implementation period would be the months of September through December. The local reading director will direct the implementation with the supervisory assistance of the state level Right to Read staff during Phase I, and with the supervisory assistance of the regional Right to Read directors and the state level Right to Read staff during Phase II, III, and IV.

In December of 1972, invitations will be tendered to eleven of the twenty-two reading directors of Phase I LEA's to begin serving on January 1, 1973, as regional Right to Read directors. They will be located on the basis of one for each Development Region with the exception of Regions Two and Five which shall be combined and Region Eleven in which two individuals will serve.

The board of education will grant a leave of absence to their district reading director if he/she is invited and accepts the offer to become a regional Right to Read director. The leave shall be for the life of the State of Minnesota Right to Read

Program. The local reading director who may be invited to become a regional Right to Read director will continue to maintain close contact with his/her district during the leave period. An acting reading director may be named with the Right to Read program assuming the responsibility of developing reading competence within that person during the period of January through May of 1973. The eleven regional Right to Read directors will then assume the role of providing direct technical assistance to remaining local education agencies.

In November of 1972, all of Minnesota's school districts, parochial school units, and non-public and non-parochial school units who made application for Phase I participation but were not chosen as a Phase I LEA will be contacted and asked to confirm their desire to receive Phase II consideration. In addition, all local education agencies not seeking Phase I involvement will be invited to apply for Phase II participation.

From among the LEA's who confirm their prior application or who make their initial application, 220 local education agencies will be selected on the basis of twenty LEA's per each of the eleven Development Regions with the exception of Regions Two and Five which shall be combined and Region Eleven in which forty shall be selected. Priority will be given to those local education agencies who requested Phase I participation, but who were not selected.

This process will be repeated in November of 1973 and in November of 1974 in order that an additional 220 local education agencies may be selected according to the same criteria for Phase III and Phase IV, respectively.

Mention must also be made of the fact that the conclusion of a calendar phase does not signal the end of the participating local education agency's involvement with Right to Read. All Phase I participants will continue to be served during Phase II, III, and IV. All Phase II direct participants will continue to be served during Phase III and IV. Phase III direct participants will receive service Phase IV. The proposed conclusion of the State Right to Read Program on December 31, 1975, will mean that Phase IV direct participants as well as the Phase I, II, and III school units must look to the Division of Instruction in the State Department of Education for the technical assistance that may continue to be needed as further refinement of the established reading programs is sought.

The program which is to be conducted by the state level Right to Read staff for the local reading directors of the twenty-two Phase I schools will be comparable in design to that program conducted by the eleven regional Right to Read directors as they each work during each of Phases II, III, and IV with a group of

twenty local reading directors from the local education agencies located within their regional boundaries. The program for each of the four phases will be thirty work days in length with the Phase I program concentrated in the months of May, June, and July, while the Phase II, III, and IV instructional programs will be conducted during the months of January, February, March, April, and May. On the basis of eight hours per day, the preparatory program for local reading directors will be 240 hours in length.