

### III. NARRATIVE

The primary goal of the Reading Excellence and Academic Development (READ) for Texas program will be to provide children in the greatest need with structured support in early childhood and the early grade levels in school so they become proficient readers. This goal complements the goal of the Texas Reading Initiative and the America Reads Challenge to ensure that all children are reading on grade level or higher by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and continue to read on grade level or higher throughout their schooling. The primary purposes of the READ for Texas program are:

1. to provide children with the readiness skills they need to learn to read once they enter school;
2. to teach every child to read in the child's early childhood years – as soon as the child is ready to read, or as soon as possible once the child enters school, but not later than 3<sup>rd</sup> grade;
3. to improve the reading skills of students, and the instructional practices for current teachers (and, as appropriate, other instructional staff) who teach reading, through the use of findings from scientifically based reading research, including findings relating to phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, fluency, and reading comprehension;
4. to expand the number of high-quality family literacy programs; and
5. to provide early literacy intervention to children who are experiencing reading difficulties in order to reduce the number of children who are incorrectly identified as a child with a disability and inappropriately referred to special education.

The central focus of state-level action will be to implement, at the subgrant level, comprehensive approaches to improve elementary school reading instruction consistent with scientifically based reading research. The primary activities of such approaches to be supported are:

1. the provision of professional development for the classroom teacher and other instructional staff on the teaching of reading based on scientifically based reading research;
2. the selection of one or more programs of reading instruction developed using scientifically based reading research;
3. the provision of family literacy services to enable parents to be their child's first and most important teacher;
4. the provision of transition programs for kindergarten children who are experiencing difficulty with reading skills; and
5. the use of supervised individuals (including tutors), who have been trained using scientifically based reading research, to provide additional support to children preparing to enter kindergarten and children in kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade who are experiencing difficulty reading.

These actions on the state and local level will ensure that the READ for Texas program will build local capacity to provide, improve, and expand services to Texas children.

## **A. READING AND LITERACY PARTNERSHIP**

In January of 1996, Governor George W. Bush announced his goal that all Texas children read on grade level or higher by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and continue to read on grade level or higher throughout their schooling. Governor Bush challenged all Texans to assist in efforts to meet this goal. Since Governor Bush's call to action, improved reading instruction has become a focal point in the Governor's Office and of the Texas Education Agency through the establishment of the Governor's Texas Reading Initiative.

An early partner to the Texas Reading Initiative has been the Governor's Business Council (GBC). In response to the Governor's challenge, the GBC sponsored a conference bringing together business and education leaders in Texas with national reading experts. In August of 1996, at the request of the Governor, with the advice of Commissioner of Education, Mike Moses, this joint effort grew into the establishment of the Governor's Focus on Reading Task Force. Members of the Task Force are individuals who have a significant interest and stake in reading performance in their local communities, the promotion of literacy for all Texas children in their early childhood years through the third grade and the promotion of family literacy services in Texas. The Task Force includes representatives of the business community, state and local educational agencies, private foundations, community organizations, literacy professionals and parents. A Planning and Advisory Committee of the Task Force includes the Commissioner of Education and Governor Bush's Senior Advisor for Education. The Committee interacts frequently with the Governor's Office and the Texas Education Agency to receive information and provide input on the activities of the Texas Reading Initiative. The membership list of the Task Force and Committee can be found in Appendix 4.

The mission of the Task Force is to organize support for the Reading Initiative and meet the Governor's goal. The Task Force has worked:

- to promote the importance of children attaining proficient reading skills in the early childhood years through the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and the importance of family literacy,
- to identify essential components of good reading instruction,
- to identify successful reading programs, and
- to report to local communities on the performance of their schools.

Task Force members have hosted Reading Summits in key cities across the state where business, education and community leaders assembled to hear from national reading experts and the Governor and Mrs. Bush about the importance of early literacy and the need to identify strong programs of scientifically research-based beginning reading instruction. National reading experts attending the summits have included Dr. Marilyn Adams, Dr. Claude Goldenberg, Dr. Barbara Foorman, Dr. Jack Fletcher, Dr. Doug Carmine, and Mrs. Jean Osborn.

The Task Force has assisted in the development and ongoing support of three outstanding reading research and instruction centers in Texas, the Center for Reading and Academic Skills (CARS) at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, and the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts (TCRLA) and the Texas Family Literacy Center (TFLC) both housed at the University of Texas at Austin.

The Task Force has worked with a variety of groups interested in good reading instruction and practice. They have worked to support the development of Spanish language public service announcements promoting literacy; to identify Head Start programs with strong early literacy components; to promote the national pediatric-based family literacy program, "Reach Out and

Read”); and to support the First Lady’s Family Literacy Initiative for Texas. Members of the Task Force have worked in their own communities by sponsoring and funding substantive teacher professional development symposiums. The Task Force has also been instrumental in leveraging private funds, including foundation funds, for projects that support the Texas Reading Initiative.

The Governor’s Focus on Reading Task Force is considered the Reading and Literacy Partnership for the state for the purposes of the Reading Excellence Act. The composition of the Task Force affords a diversity of perspectives for the READ for Texas program.

In the planning period allotted under the proposed timeline, the Task Force will carry out activities to assist in the development of the state plan, advise on the selection of subgrant recipients, and assist in the oversight and evaluation of the subgrant recipients and the program. The activities outlined on the proposed timeline in Appendix 5 include:

- designate a work team consisting of Planning and Advisory Committee members, Texas Education Agency staff and reading researchers to outline concepts of subgrant programs;
- designate Agency staff to draft READ for Texas proposal and preliminary subgrant Request for Applications (RFAs) and selection criteria;
- designate work team to review/approve/recommend to the Commissioner of Education the READ for Texas proposal;
- convene Task Force to review/finalize/recommend to the Commissioner of Education the subgrant RFAs and selection criteria upon notification of federal award;
- designate members of Task Force and/or Committee to participate in design and delivery of technical assistance workshops;
- designate work team to develop evaluation design and solicit appropriate entity to conduct evaluation;
- designate work team to solicit nominations for the subgrant application review panel and forward recommendations to Commissioner of Education;
- convene Task Force to review subgrant awards and forward recommendations to Commissioner of Education;
- convene Task Force, at least twice annually, to receive updates on progress of subgrant recipients and effectiveness of implementation of the READ for Texas program; and
- convene Task Force to review final evaluation report on program and forward evaluation to Commissioner of Education.

## **B. SCIENTIFICALLY BASED READING RESEARCH**

### 1. ESTABLISHING A KNOWLEDGE BASE

Reading is central to learning – in school, in the workplace, and in everyday life. For many children, learning to read and write during early school experiences is a pleasurable, and even a thrilling, experience for themselves, for their parents, and for their teachers. But for children who do not make good progress in these early grades, learning to read is difficult and associated with both present and future failure. Children who do not learn to read well in the early grades are likely to struggle with reading throughout their lives.

Our schools face many challenges when it comes to teaching reading. Although there are many children who come to school ready to read, there is an ever-growing population of children coming to our schools who have barely even seen a book, much less have the thousands of hours of lap reading, language development, and positive experiences with letters and sounds that are essential to learning to read.

In undertaking any change in our system of education, it is important to look at what we need to do in order to change the very fabric of our schools and our classrooms. Classroom instruction must incorporate what we know about how children learn to read if we are to be successful in preventing reading difficulties.

Fortunately, during the past several decades, compelling scientifically based reading research has revealed a clearer and deeper understanding of the abilities that lead to success with reading and about how children learn to read. This knowledge is useful to parents, teachers, and ultimately to the children. This knowledge has direct implications for preschool, kindergarten and the primary grades, programs of reading instruction and professional development, and most particularly for those children who have trouble learning to read.

From research, we know a great deal about how to address reading problems even before they begin. However, we have not been rapidly pouring this knowledge into everyday instruction in order to reduce the incidence of reading failure. We must move to ensure that the instruction currently being provided to our children reflects what we know from scientifically based reading research.

Fortunately we are at a turning point in beginning reading instruction. Considerable state and national attention has been focused on children's reading development. This attention has led to national efforts to synthesize the vast bodies of research on reading which in turn provides a framework for those interested in ensuring reading success for all children.

In 1990, Dr. Marilyn Jager Adams synthesized reading research in the landmark book, Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning About Print. Dr. Michael Pressley, in his recent book, Reading Instruction That Works The Case for Balanced Teaching, takes the recent scientific research and hundreds of hours of classroom experience and provides insight into the importance of developing word recognition and comprehension skills in children.

Other recent efforts such as the National Research Council's publication of Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children; the dissemination of information from the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development; the establishment of the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement; and the preliminary work of the new National Reading Panel have

afforded interested policy makers, educators, parents, and business and community leaders the information necessary to advocate improved reading instruction.

a) *National Research Council*

In 1998, the National Research Council issued the report, Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children. This report summarizes the vast body of research on beginning reading instruction. The purpose was to examine the research and report on steps that could be taken to intervene early in the lives of children in order to ensure the reading success of all children. This report is valuable not only in its summarization of research, but also in taking the important next step in translating that research into information to guide parents, educators, publishers, and others involved in the care and instruction of young children.

The report has been important to Texas as it serves to reinforce the direction we have taken in beginning reading instruction. Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children and the state's booklet entitled Beginning Reading Instruction: Components and Features of a Research-Based Reading Program are in alignment. The Preventing Reading Difficulties report states that the "critical importance of providing excellent reading instruction to all children is at the heart of the committee's recommendations... We also recognize that excellent instruction is most effective when children arrive in first grade motivated for literacy and with the necessary linguistic, cognitive, and early literacy skills. We therefore recommend attention to ensuring high-quality preschool and kindergarten environments as well. We acknowledge that excellent instruction in the primary grades and optimal environments in preschool and kindergarten require teachers who are well prepared, highly knowledgeable, and receiving ongoing support." (Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children, 1998, Catherine E. Snow, M. Susan Burns, and Peg Griffin, *Editors*. National Research Council. Washington DC: National Academy Press.)

Preventing Reading Difficulties presents recommendations based on scientific research in the areas of:

- promotion of literacy development for children during the preschool years, including children with special language and literacy needs;
- promotion of language and literacy growth in early childhood education;
- promotion of family literacy;
- improvement of reading instruction in kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade;
- provision of services to meet the needs of children with limited proficiency in English;
- achievement of schoolwide restructuring;
- provision of services to meet the needs of children with persistent reading difficulties;
- provision of effective tutoring services; and
- preparation and ongoing development of preschool and primary teachers.

From the findings and recommendations of the Preventing Reading Difficulties report we know that efforts need to be undertaken early in a child's development to foster language and literacy development, monitor progress and identify reading difficulties. We know that failure to develop language skills and vocabulary, understanding of print concepts, or the sounds of language during the preschool years puts some children at risk for reading difficulties and, as such, we must ensure that children have access to early childhood environments that promote language and literacy growth. Information from the report also indicates that participation in strong family

literacy programs can have a positive impact on the literacy interactions in the home. Such programs serve to support the instruction taking place in the child's formal schooling.

One of the strongest impacts of the report is the clear information on those factors that must be present in effective reading instruction. The report concludes that, in order to prevent reading difficulties, formal instruction in reading needs to focus on the development and mastery of word recognition skills and comprehension skills. Based on this conclusion, effective reading instruction must include:

- explicit instruction and practice with the sound structure of words (phonological and phonemic awareness) and with letter-sound correspondences;
- work on concepts of print and the basic purposes of reading and writing;
- practice of reading to promote accuracy and fluency;
- development of oral language and vocabulary; and
- instruction in comprehension strategies.

A subsequent publication from the National Research Council, Starting Out Right, provides us with information on the importance of creating literacy environments both at home and at school that support the motivation of children to read. Starting Out Right states:

“Research consistently demonstrates that the more children know about language and literacy before they arrive at school, the better equipped they are to succeed in reading.” (Starting Out Right, 1999, M. Susan Burns, Peg Griffin and Catherine E. Snow, *Editors*. National Research Council. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.)

Educators often have an expectation that children come to school with a high degree of background knowledge and enthusiasm for learning to read. Sadly, this is not always the case. Yet, we know from research that this motivation to learn and appreciation for literate forms is important for students to achieve.

Starting Out Right tells us that we must have professional development activities, as well as parental involvement programs, that prepare the adults in the lives of children to instill motivation to read and to take children from where they are in their literacy development and move them forward.

Starting Out Right urges the creation of literacy environments that:

- create language rich environments;
- encourage children to use new vocabulary and complex descriptions;
- support daily individual reading of texts below frustration level;
- support daily assisted reading of texts at a slightly challenging level;
- provide reading aloud activities to children often and enthusiastically;
- provide at-home and summer reading assignments and materials;
- offer a rich variety of types of text and topics;
- create home-made books, journals, fiction and non-fiction stories and plays;
- sing songs, play games with words and letters, and use manipulatives;
- provide literacy rich software and video products, and provide for opportunities to discuss, write and read books about the content and other elements of such products.

*b) National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development*

Another considerable wealth of reading research comes from the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). This research, conducted over the past thirty-three years and continuing today provides considerable insight into the risk characteristics that can be detected early and facilitate the opportunity for prevention and early intervention.

Many findings from NICHD sponsored research are consistent with and summarized in Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children.

NICHD research highlights the importance of early attention to children’s reading development.

“The NICHD prevention and early intervention studies speak to the importance of early identification and intervention with children at risk for reading failure.” (Reading: A Research-Based Approach, 1998, Jack M. Fletcher and G. Reid Lyon. Center for Reading and Academic Skills. University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston.)

NICHD research echoes the calls for focusing attention on all components of effective reading instruction in order to

“...ensure that adequate instructional time is allotted to the teaching of phonemic awareness skills, phonics skills, and spelling and orthographic skills. As the child develops proficiency with word recognition, reading fluency, automaticity and comprehension skills should be emphasized. *All* of these components of reading are *necessary* but *not sufficient* components of a complete approach to reading instruction.” (Reading: A Research-Based Approach, 1998, Jack M. Fletcher and G. Reid Lyon. Center for Reading and Academic Skills. University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston.)

*c) Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA)*

The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) provides another resource on the reading research of the past 30 years. CIERA provides educators with practical suggestions for improving children’s reading achievement based on research. CIERA has identified 10 research based principles necessary to improve the reading achievement of children. These principles are summarized below:

1. the importance of home language and literacy experiences that lead to the development of key print concepts;
2. the need for preschool programs for children who do not experience informal learning opportunities in their homes;
3. the promotion of skills that predict later reading success through a variety of classroom language and meaningful reading and writing events in kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade, particularly two of the most powerful of these predictors of reading success, letter-name knowledge and phonemic awareness;
4. the importance of primary-level instruction that is consistent, well-designed, and focused, where teachers lead lessons and children receive systematic word recognition instruction, as well as instruction in comprehension strategies;
5. the importance of primary-level classroom environments where children have opportunities to apply what they have learned in teacher-guided instruction to everyday reading and writing;

6. the recognition of the cultural and linguistic diversity of children and the impact of that diversity on instruction;
7. the importance of systematic instruction and well-balanced instruction for children with reading difficulties;
8. the need to sustain proficient reading in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and above through programs that offer deep and wide opportunities to read, that have an attention on new knowledge and vocabulary, that emphasize interaction with different kinds of text, and that pay explicit attention to how children reason about text;
9. the need for professional opportunities that allow teachers and administrators to analyze instruction, assessment, and achievement; to set goals for improvement; to learn effective practices; and to participate in ongoing professional development; and
10. the need for the involvement of entire school staffs in the achievement of children.

These principles reinforce to us the importance of early literacy experiences in families and through preschool programs. They emphasize the need for classroom instruction that is consistent, well designed and focused and that includes instruction in phonemic awareness, word recognition and comprehension. They support the need for a wide variety of both reading and writing experiences. They emphasize to us the need to understand the diversity of the children entering our schools and the importance of both effective early instruction to prevent reading difficulties and early identification of children experiencing problems in reading development. And, finally, they reinforce the need for intensive and sustained professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators.

*d) Texas Reading Initiative*

In the Texas Reading Initiative, we have focused our efforts on improving reading instruction through an attention to scientific research. Representatives of both the National Research Council and NICHD have conducted numerous presentations in Texas. In February 1997, Dr. Reid Lyon, Dr. Barbara Foorman, and Dr. Joe Torgeson provided an overview of findings from NICHD research at the first annual “Commissioner’s Reading Day.” Dr. Isabel Beck, Dr. Ed Kameenui, Dr. William Nagy, and Dr. Jack Pikulski presented research findings at the 1998 “Commissioner’s Reading Day.” And in February 1999, “Commissioner’s Reading Day” headliners included Dr. Sharon Vaughn, Dr. Patricia Edwards, and Dr. Catherine Snow, who presented an overview of Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children. In December 1998, Texas’ First Lady, Laura Bush, sponsored a conference to highlight early childhood development. Presenters at the conference included Dr. Susan Newman, who presented information on the joint position statement of the International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children.

Additionally, at the beginning of the Texas Reading Initiative, the Agency reviewed the literature on beginning reading instruction and, in an attempt to foster a common knowledge base in Texas, published the booklet, Beginning Reading Instruction: Components and Features of a Research-Based Reading Program. Over 100,000 copies of this document have been distributed in Texas and across the nation. Other states have used information from this document in the formulation of reading initiatives in their states.

The knowledge base supporting this booklet allows us to state components that must be in place as part of a complete research based reading program. In research based programs of beginning reading instruction:

- children have opportunities to expand their use and appreciation of oral language (*Oral Language Development*);
- children have opportunities to expand their use and appreciation of printed language (*Print Awareness*);
- children have opportunities to hear good stories and informational books read aloud daily (*Oral Language Development/Print Awareness*);
- children have opportunities to understand and manipulate the building blocks of spoken language (*Phonological Awareness*);
- children have opportunities to learn about and manipulate the building blocks of written language (*Graphophonemic Knowledge*);
- children have opportunities to learn the relationship between the sounds of spoken language and the letters of written language (*Alphabetic Knowledge*);
- children have opportunities to learn decoding strategies (*Alphabetic Knowledge*);
- children have opportunities to write and relate their writing to spelling and reading (*Orthographic Knowledge*);
- children have opportunities to practice accurate and fluent reading in decodable stories (*Fluency*);
- children have opportunities to read and comprehend a wide assortment of books and other texts (*Fluency/Vocabulary Development/Motivation*);
- children have opportunities to develop and comprehend new vocabulary through wide reading and direct vocabulary instruction (*Vocabulary Development*); and
- children have opportunities to learn and apply comprehension strategies as they reflect upon and think critically about what they read (*Comprehension*).

The complete text of the booklet, Beginning Reading Instruction: Components and Features of a Research-Based Reading Program, is contained in Appendix 6.

Such a knowledge base in beginning reading instruction has provided us with a common language and has served as an important starting point for making good decisions. Texas has used this knowledge base in the establishment of our state's curriculum standards, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS); in the creation of professional development products for teachers; and in evaluating applications for competitive grant programs.

## 2. RESOURCES FOR READING RESEARCH AND INSTRUCTION IN TEXAS

Texas has many outstanding reading researchers in the state. The following three entities comprise the research based infrastructure supporting the Texas Reading Initiative and available to support the READ for Texas program. These research bodies are the vehicles through which the READ for Texas program will infuse the components and features of research based reading instruction programs into classroom practice across the state. These include the Center for Academic and Reading Skills, the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts, and the Texas Center for Family Literacy.

### *a) The Center for Academic and Reading Skills (CARS)*

The Center for Academic and Reading Skills (CARS), directed by Dr. Barbara Foorman and her associates, Dr. Jack Fletcher and Dr. David Francis, is based at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston. An organizational construct through which scientifically based reading programs and related teacher training and assessment methods are disseminated throughout the state, CARS is a research facility that studies how reading and other academic skills develop in normal children, children who are underachievers, and children who are academically disabled. CARS is devoted to developing instructional methods that improve academic skills in all these children. Through CARS, NICHD supported studies of reading instruction in the early grades attempt to define the components of successful in-school reading approaches. Currently, CARS is identifying the specific components of reading curricula that best facilitate reading skills development in children who have difficulty reading at grade level. Activities at CARS include disseminating research-based information to teachers, curriculum developers, and others interested in educational program design; implementing prototypes of teacher training and program monitoring; and developing and promoting the use of improved methods of evaluating student performance, especially in the first three years of schooling.

The Agency has contracted with CARS to develop and revise the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI). The TPRI is a reading instrument designed to assess a child's reading skill and comprehension development in kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> grade and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. The TPRI contains both a screening portion and an inventory portion. The screening is based on empirically based predictors of reading success. These predictors were derived from a longitudinal database of reading development in over 900 children in kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades funded by NICHD. Teachers use the inventory portion of the TPRI to set learning objectives that will enable students to become successful readers.

The ability of the READ for Texas program to provide applicants with exposure to the nationally recognized work and products of CARS ensures that the subgrant programs will include the scientifically based reading research required to improve the performance of the neediest children.

### *b) Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts*

The Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts (TCRLA), directed by Dr. Sharon Vaughn and her associates Dr. David Chard and Dr. Pam Bell Morris, is housed at the University of Texas at Austin. TCRLA provides leadership to Texas educators through its partnership with the Agency and Region XIII Education Service Center. Its mission is to enhance the knowledge, skills and practices of educators in implementing the state curriculum framework, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The TCRLA houses two major components: the Reading and Language Arts Center for Educator Development, and a Center for Research and Evaluation.

TCRLA also produces professional development guides and other products relating to reading and language arts.

The TCRLA has been working with the Agency since 1997 to develop a cadre of reading professionals at each of Texas' twenty regional Education Service Centers (ESCs). Texas' ESCs provide technical assistance and resources to educators, campuses, and school districts to improve student academic achievement. Through quarterly professional development seminars and regional and summer institutes, research based professional development products have been disseminated. The reading professionals from the ESCs, known as "reading liaisons," participate in "trainer of trainers" sessions and subsequently deliver professional development workshops throughout the summer and school year to local educational agencies across Texas. This structure provides a core team of trained professionals and a consistent delivery of information on research based beginning reading instruction. Research based professional development products are available on topics such as phonological awareness, word analysis, reading fluency, comprehension, examining phonics programs, working with second language learners and developing literacy laboratories.

The Center is conducting, through funding from the U. S. Department of Education, research and evaluation in several critical areas. One research grant supports the examination of the implementation of documented, effective reading and language arts practices and how the results of those practices influences reading and language arts learning in other areas. A second grant supports the examination of factors that promote the bridging of research to practice in early reading. Finally, the third grant supports the analysis and synthesis of research on best practices in early childhood education.

In addition, the TCRLA is conducting a thorough evaluation of the Texas Reading Academies project. This multifaceted evaluation includes an examination of the effectiveness of efforts to provide professional development, reform curriculum, and initiate after-school programs in 10 of the 37 funded Texas Reading Academy grant awarded sites. As part of the Texas Reading Academies evaluation, TCRLA staff is conducting observations of classrooms across the 10 sites to document effective practices and good teaching that are aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills.

Affiliated with TCRLA, Dr. Alba Ortiz and Dr. Cheryl Wilkerson, are developing for the Agency an early reading inventory in Spanish for use in Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades.

#### *c) Texas Family Literacy Center*

The Texas Family Literacy Center (TFLC), housed at the University of Texas at Austin, has, as its central mission, the dissemination of scientifically research-based family literacy information to all stakeholders. Plans for the newly established center, the first of it's kind in the nation, include serving in a partnership capacity with the Texas Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative to strengthen and expand family literacy services. Further activities of the TFLC include:

- conducting research and a literature review for best practices and effective components of family literacy programs;
- developing a family literacy clearinghouse and database;
- creating professional development curricula;
- providing technical assistance to family literacy programs;
- developing a comprehensive website;

- conducting a family literacy survey for Texas; and
- sponsoring a family literacy conference, serving all stakeholders in Texas, in conjunction with the existing Texas Annual State Adult Education, Community Education, and Even Start Family Literacy Conference.

### 3. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR COORDINATION AND FACILITATION OF PROGRAMS

#### *a) Regional Education Service Centers (ESCs)*

Texas' twenty regional Education Service Centers (ESCs) were established by the Texas Legislature in 1967 to help school districts identify their needs and to provide services to meet those needs. Each ESC provides technical assistance and resources that are used by educators, campuses, and school districts to improve student academic achievement. The services offered are requested by school districts, the Agency, or mandated by the Texas Legislature and/or the Texas State Board of Education. Funds originate from local school districts, state and federal revenues.

Each ESC has designated a "reading liaison." The "reading liaisons" have been disseminating information and providing assistance to school districts as designed by the TCRLA and in support of the objectives of the Texas Reading Initiative.

#### *b) Title I*

The Title I program at the Agency has been instrumental in determining eligibility of local educational agencies (LEAs) for the Reading Excellence Act and will continue to be an integral partner of the READ for Texas program. The Title I program will be a vital source of information and strategy development for coordinating funding sources and increasing and expanding programs already in place to increase services for the neediest campuses.

READ for Texas subgrant recipients that are in Title I school improvement status will be required to coordinate Title I school improvement activities with the Local Reading Improvement and/or Tutorial Assistance Subgrant activities. This will include coordinating professional development activities, where appropriate, and technical assistance provided to the LEA and school as part of its Title I school improvement status. In addition, the Title I statute requires each Title I program to include strategies to increase parent involvement, such as family literacy services.

#### *c) Even Start*

The Division of Adult and Community Education administers the Agency's Even Start subgrant programs and is developing plans for Texas' Even Start Family Literacy Initiative Consortium. The Governor's Focus on Reading Task Force, as the Reading and Literacy Partnership for the READ for Texas program, will have an opportunity to serve as a member of the consortium of state-level programs for the Even Start Family Literacy Initiative. READ for Texas staff will be integral in the planning, development and implementation of the Even Start Family Literacy Initiative, which is in initial phases of development. This is an ideal opportunity to collaborate and build upon each program, creating a seamless approach to child, family and adult literacy initiatives statewide. The substantial expertise in scientifically research based practices for teaching reading of such entities as the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts (TCRLA), the Center for Reading and Academic Skills (CARS) and the Texas Family Literacy Center (TFLC), will provide a solid foundation for the Even Start Family Literacy Initiative.

Equally valuable will be the presence of the READ for Texas program in the Annual State Adult Education, Community Education, and Even Start Family Literacy Conference, coordinated by The Agency's Division of Adult and Community Education. READ for Texas subgrant

recipients will be encouraged to incorporate these opportunities into their professional development program designs.

*d) The First Lady's Family Literacy Initiative for Texas*

An alternative to the Even Start family literacy model is that developed by the First Lady's Family Literacy Initiative for Texas. First Lady of Texas, Laura Bush, developed a literacy initiative for Texas in 1996 with the support of the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy. This statewide initiative is designed to provide seed money for new family literacy programs.

Under this model, local educational agencies (LEAs) receiving subgrants may choose to secure technical and other assistance from a program providing family literacy services or may develop a family literacy model which:

- demonstrates fiscal responsibility;
- includes reading instruction for both parents or primary caregivers and their children;
- proposes specific activities that focus on the importance of adult/child reading time and interactions;
- works with prekindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students and their families;
- contains a specific instructional reading program using components that are research based and proven to increase the reading skill levels of children and/or adults;
- uses standardized assessment instruments, as well as other validated measures that provide the ability to document gains in reading achievement; and
- sets measurable project and instructional goals and objectives.

*e) Parent Involvement and Community Empowerment*

The Agency's Parent Involvement and Community Empowerment Unit serves as a resource for the regional Education Service Centers (ESCs) and school districts to use in their efforts to strengthen the relationship between families, schools, and local communities. Unit staff encourage collaboration among all parties that serve children and families, where the outcomes promote educational excellence and equity for all students.

The initiative has six main focus areas which include coordination of state, regional, and local initiatives that help young children enter school ready to learn; assistance to ESCs, districts, and campuses in their efforts to enhance parent and family involvement in education; encouragement of voluntary parenting education programs; promotion of adult and family literacy, which contributes to the overall improvement of educational and workplace skills for children and families; coordination with other public, community, civic and business organizations to foster successful transitions from school to work or other post-secondary options; and identification of policies that enable local communities to coordinate resources that serve the needs of students and families.

*f) Technology Integration*

Assisting in the success of local technology plans for enhancing literacy services will be three statewide initiatives originating from the Instructional Technology Division of the Agency. The Instructional Technology Division is responsible for carrying out the objective of improvement of student achievement through the full integration of technology into teaching and learning. Staff from this division will focus expertise and activities to assist participants in the workshop series in, among other things, identifying ways to use technology to enhance reading and literacy

professional development activities. The Texas Library Connection (TLC), the Texas Education Telecommunications Network (TETN), and the Texas School Telecommunications Access Resource (T-STAR) will be leveraged to provide extensive services to the READ for Texas participants.

The Texas Library Connection (TLC) is an integrated, resource sharing system for public school libraries, through which needed information resources are identified, accessed, and retrieved. The TLC facilitates library administrative services and local collection development and provides to participants appropriate electronic full text journals and newspapers and other informational databases such as Britannica Online and UMI's ProQuest Direct. TLC enhances the ability of participating libraries to contribute to and participate in local, state and national resource sharing initiatives including the academic library statewide initiative, TexShare, and the public library statewide initiative, the Texas State Electronic Library. Currently, over 3,500 campus libraries have merged records for over 27 million items held in those libraries into three million unique, standardized electronic records.

The Texas Education Telecommunications Network (TETN) is a statewide telecommunications infrastructure providing live, two-way videoconferencing between the regional Education Service Centers (ESCs) and the Agency. TETN was established to provide a 24-hour telecommunications network with the capabilities to connect to schools and other public institutions. Where practical and appropriate, throughout the program period, READ for Texas staff will conduct meetings on a variety of topics over the TETN system.

The Texas School Telecommunications Access Resource (T-STAR) is another key initiative that gives all districts equitable access to quality educational resources. T-STAR is a one-way video/two-way audio, satellite video system capable of delivering distance learning programming, teleconferences, professional development, training and instructional television directly to administrators, teachers and children in school districts and at regional Education Service Centers throughout Texas. From the T-STAR website, which will be linked to the READ for Texas website, T-STAR gives classroom teachers immediate access to resources and suggestions which can accompany the programming.

## **C. READ FOR TEXAS PROGRAM**

### 1. Overall Design

Children’s reading development and failure exists along a continuum. As such, a comprehensive program must address efforts to stimulate literacy development in the early years and improve family literacy; provide for early identification of reading difficulties; provide children access to well-trained teachers, other instructional staff, and tutors; and offer scientific research based programs for prevention and intervention as children enter and transition through the early grades in school.

The Reading Excellence Act requires a very concerted effort on behalf of state and local educational agencies to ensure that effective and comprehensive approaches to beginning reading instruction are established in order to build local capacity to provide, improve and expand services to children. The READ for Texas program is the Agency’s response to the requirements in the Reading Excellence Act. In describing the overall design of the READ for Texas program, it is important to emphasize that the Agency believes in the importance of providing good information to local educational agencies (LEAs) on scientifically based reading research and how that research can support improvements in reading instruction. Such improvement serves to support increased attention to children’s reading development, earlier attention to their reading difficulties, and successful efforts at prevention and early intervention.

While the establishment of programs of prevention and intervention are important, perhaps more critical is bolstering teacher knowledge. Enhancing teachers’ knowledge of the key components of research based reading instruction will result in improved ability to analyze the needs of children in classrooms and schools, assess the strengths and weaknesses of reading programs, and target programs based on the individual needs of children. The READ for Texas program provides for the purchase of more effective reading instructional materials for classrooms and schools, but more importantly, it emphasizes that the use of programs will only be successful when informed by outstanding teacher knowledge of the research on beginning reading instruction and how this knowledge translates to practice. This knowledge will also serve teachers well as they move children through different components and stages of reading development.

The READ for Texas program combines six components organized into four phases. The components of the program include:

1. provide LEAs with a research “knowledge base” to inform decisions about beginning reading instruction;
2. provide reports of professional development and beginning reading programs and approaches on their adherence to scientific research based guidelines;
3. coordinate with other state and federal programs;
4. provide technical assistance to LEAs in proposing comprehensive programs of reading instruction that include early identification, prevention, intervention, sustained professional development, and networks of community and family support;
5. develop the subgrant applications and selection process; and
6. evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

Activities to implement the components of the program will be conducted during four phases:

Phase I. Planning and Development.

Phase II. Assistance to Applicants.

Phase III. Selection and Implementation of Local Reading Improvement and

Phase IV.            Tutorial Assistance Subgrants.  
                          Evaluation.

See proposed READ for Texas program Timeline in Appendix 5 for a listing of specific activities in Phases I – IV.

## 2. Phase I: Planning and Development.

The initial phase of the READ for Texas program will be dedicated to developing resources and procedures that will allow for a high level of quality and program requirement compliance in the subgrant programs.

Work has been conducted over the last two years to build and communicate the knowledge base for beginning reading instruction in Texas. To further these efforts, during Phase I of the program, information on scientifically based reading research consistent with the definitions of “reading” and “scientifically based reading research” in the Reading Excellence Act will be developed and distributed through the websites of the Agency, the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts (TCRLA), the Center for Academic and Reading Skills (CARS) and the state’s twenty regional Education Service Centers (ESCs). A specific READ for Texas website will be established and linked to other sites.

One of the most important steps to be taken during this Phase is to provide a comprehensive model of beginning reading instruction against which programs and professional development products can be evaluated. A comprehensive model will include the information gleaned from the knowledge based outlined in Section B. Scientifically Based Reading Research.

The proliferation of beginning reading instructional programs and professional development products and the claims associated with them require educators to become more sophisticated consumers. Before educators make decisions on programs and products, they need sufficient data to answer basic questions such as:

- Is this program or product aligned with scientific research based principles of reading?
- Is the research conducted for this program or product valid and reliable?
- Does this program or product raise achievement levels in the ways and at the rates that its developer claims?
- With which group of students does this program or product get the best results?
- Can this program or product be implemented at a reasonable cost?
- What additional staff and financial resources are required for implementation of this program or product?
- What kind of training is required/provided for teachers and others?
- What support does the developer provide for implementation of this program or product?

By accessing good information on the efficacy of programs and products, educators will be better able to make decisions that will result in the successful implementation of instructional approaches for their schools.

In Phase I, the Agency will synthesize three recent reviews of components of professional development and three recent reviews of educational programs and products in order to provide clear guidance to local educational agencies. The recent reviews of components of professional development are Chapter 9 of Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children; Louisa Moats’ “Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science”, in print, American Educator; and an anticipated report from the International Reading Associations’ Commission on Teacher Preparation. A synthesis of these documents will help guide development of the content and evaluation of the professional development components of the LEAs subgrant applications. The three reports on educational programs and products are Reading Programs for Students in the Lower Elementary Grades: What Does the Research Say?, published by the Texas Center for Educational Research, Seven Promising Reading and Language Arts Programs, produced by the American Federation of

Teachers (AFT), and the recent American Institutes for Research (AIR) report, An Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform. Each of these reports provides educators with information on effectiveness of programs.

It is important to note that any such guide will, of course, only be able to contain a snapshot of the information that was available at the time it was prepared. Given that publishers of programs may continue to modify and strengthen materials and to gather and report information on their effectiveness, LEAs will be encouraged to further investigate any program or product they are considering. Additionally, such a review will not be meant to endorse any one program or product. Rather, it will assist educators who want to critically examine the most widely available beginning reading programs and products.

The TCRLA product, Examining Phonics and Word Recognition Instruction in Early Reading Programs, will provide LEAs an important resource in evaluating reading programs and products, as will the U.S. Department of Education's document, Continuum of Effectiveness. Both of these resources will be included in appendices in the Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrant and the Tutorial Assistance Subgrant (TAS) Request for Applications (RFAs).

Published programs may or may not cover all components of effective reading instruction. Educators will need to be especially vigilant in selecting programs to assess their strengths and weaknesses and determine methods to augment coverage of specific components.

During Phase I, the Agency will also identify good information on tutoring and effective reading and library programs. A recent report in The Reading Teacher, "Using Volunteers as Reading Tutors: Guidelines for Successful Practices" by Barbara Wasik (April, 1998) identifies the eight most important characteristics of effective volunteer tutoring programs (an on-site literacy expert; ongoing training and support for tutors; the use of a structured, scientifically research based lesson framework; consistent and intensive tutoring sessions; quality books and materials; consistent attendance by tutors; coordination with classroom instruction; and ongoing assessment for instruction). This and other information will be summarized and made available to LEAs for use in proposing tutoring activities. With the assistance from the Texas Library Connection, information will be gathered and disseminated on effective reading and library programs. Identifying good information on reading and library programs will help support the creation of literacy environments that motivate children to read.

During Phase I, READ for Texas staff will coordinate with other state and federal programs to ensure that potential participants are equipped with the knowledge, information and tools they will need to propose fully developed programs, aligned with local needs and with principles of scientifically based reading research.

Additionally, in Phase I, the Governor's Focus on Reading Task Force will be convened to review and finalize the Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrant and the Tutorial Assistance Subgrant (TAS) Request for Applications (RFAs), the selection process and the program evaluation. Upon completion of the Task Force's work, the Commissioner of Education will issue final approval of the subgrant RFAs.

All LEAs in Texas will receive letters notifying them of the READ for Texas program along with the district level criteria for eligibility. A follow up letter and copy of the RFAs will be mailed to the eligible LEAs as determined by the Agency. LEAs will have the opportunity to appeal eligibility criteria to the Agency.

During this time, LEAs intending to apply for a subgrant will be required to indicate such by submitting a Notice of Intent (NOI) to apply, along with a list of campuses to be included in the application. Review by appropriate Agency staff will take place again to ensure that all eligibility and communication issues have been sufficiently addressed by both the state and by LEAs, including issuance of public notice of the availability of the Tutorial Assistance Subgrant by each eligible LEA to potential providers of tutorial assistance operating in and parents residing in the LEA's jurisdiction.

RFAs for the subgrant program will be mailed directly to all eligible LEAs, along with detailed communication regarding subsequent workshops, which will be conducted in phase II of the program, and services available to assist applicants in planning, developing and proposing local READ for Texas subgrant programs.

*a) Local Reading Improvement (LRI) Subgrant*

As defined in the statute, local educational agencies (LEAs) eligible for funding under the LRI subgrant include LEAs that either:

- have at least one school that is identified for Title I school improvement;
- have the largest, or second largest, number of children who are in poverty; or
- have the highest, or second highest, school-age child poverty rate.

See Appendix 7 for list of identified eligible LEAs as of the date of submission of this application.

The Agency will administer the LRI as a competitive grant program to operate over a two-year period. Consistent with the requirements of the Reading Excellence Act, eligible LEAs will carry out the following activities:

- conduct professional development for the classroom teacher and other instructional staff on the teaching of reading based on scientifically based reading research;
- select one or more programs of reading instruction, developed using scientifically based reading research, to improve reading instruction by all academic teachers for all children in each of the schools and enter into an agreement with a person or entity responsible for the development of each selected program; under such agreement, the person or entity agrees to work with the LEA on implementation;
- provide family literacy services;
- implement programs to assist those kindergarten students who are not ready for the transition to first grade; and
- use supervised individuals (including tutors) who have been appropriately trained using scientifically based reading research to provide additional support before school, after school, on weekends, during non-instructional periods of the school day, or during the summer for children experiencing difficulty reading.

Federal statute requires that recipients provide private school children and their teachers, or other education personnel, with program educational services or other benefits on an equitable basis with public school children and teachers. During the development of their application, LEAs will consult with appropriate private school officials such issues as how the children's needs will be identified; what services will be offered; how and where the services will be provided; and how the services will be assessed.

LEAs will, to the extent feasible, form a partnership with one or more community-based organizations with demonstrated effectiveness to assist in carrying out the activities listed above.

See Appendix 1 to review the complete draft Local Reading Improvement (LRI) Request for Application.

*b) Tutorial Assistance Subgrant (TAS)*

As defined in the statute, local educational agencies (LEAs) eligible for funding under the TAS subgrant include:

- LEAs that have at least one school in an area designated as an empowerment zone or an area designated as an enterprise community;
- LEAs that have at least one school that is identified for Title I school improvement;
- LEAs with the largest, or second largest, number of children who are in poverty; or
- LEAs with the highest, or second highest, school-age poverty rate.

See Appendix 8 for list of identified eligible LEAs as of the date of submission of this application.

LEAs will be required to issue a public notice of the availability of the Tutorial Assistance Subgrant to potential providers of tutorial assistance operating in and parents residing in the LEA's jurisdiction.

Funds will be used for the provision of tutorial assistance, before school, after school, on weekends, or during the summer for children who have difficulty reading. Tutorial assistance programs and providers must provide services based on scientifically based reading research.

Federal statute requires that recipients provide private school children and their teachers, or other education personnel, with program educational services or other benefits on an equitable basis with public school children and teachers. During the development of their application, LEAs will consult with appropriate private school officials such issues as how the children's needs will be identified; what services will be offered; how and where the services will be provided; and how the services will be assessed.

See Appendix 2 to review the complete draft Tutorial Assistance Subgrant (TAS) Request for Application.

3. Phase II: Assistance to Applicants.

Activities in Phase II of the READ for Texas program will shift to provide technical assistance to eligible local educational agencies (LEAs) through a series of informational workshops.

Through our regional Education Service Centers (ESCs), and where appropriate via the Agency's Texas Education Telecommunications Network (TETN), workshops will be conducted to provide planning, needs assessment and program research assistance to eligible LEAs.

The following topics will be presented during the workshop series in an effort to fully equip applicants with the knowledge, tools and information needed to design and implement successful Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrant and Tutorial Assistance Subgrant (TAS) programs. Topics include:

- purpose and activities of the Reading Excellence Act and the READ for Texas program;
- eligibility criteria for LEAs and campuses;
- local needs assessment procedures;
- RFA application procedures and Agency contracting guidelines;
- required and prohibited use of funds;
- local evaluation component and state evaluation plan requirements;
- definition of “reading” and “scientifically based reading research” from the Reading Excellence Act;
- major components of scientifically based reading instruction (including phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, fluency, and reading comprehension);
- selection of professional development for teachers and other appropriate instructional staff on the teaching of reading based on scientifically based reading research;
- strategies and methods for coordinating professional development activities;
- selection of one or more programs of reading instruction, developed using scientifically based reading research;
- strategies and methods to include parents, tutors, and early childhood education providers in literacy-related activities;
- models of family literacy programs, such as the Even Start family literacy model and the First Lady’s Family Literacy Initiative for Texas;
- coordination of local, state and federal literacy programs;
- selection of tutorial assistance providers and programs;
- use of technology, both existing and proposed, to enhance reading and literacy professional development for teachers and family literacy professionals;
- strategies and models for reading and library programs that provide access to engaging reading material;
- strategies and models for programs to assist kindergarten children who are not ready to transition to the first grade, particularly children experiencing difficulty with reading skills;
- use of early reading diagnostic instruments, such as the Texas Primary Reading Inventory, to identify children at risk of being referred to special education for reading difficulties;
- provision of services to children at risk of being referred to special education and to children who have been evaluated for special education but have not been identified as being a child with a disability;
- strategies to consult with appropriate private school officials during the design and development of their programs on such issues as how the children’s needs will be identified; what services will be offered; how and where the services will be provided; and how the services will be assessed.
- establishment of a partnership with one or more community-based organization to carry out activities of the LRI subgrant; and
- communication obligations of LEAs eligible for the LRI and TAS subgrants, including reporting to parents regarding the professional qualifications of the teacher providing their child’s reading instruction and public notice of the availability of the TAS to potential providers for tutorial assistance operating in and parents residing in the LEA’s jurisdiction.

The workshop series will allow the state to bring applicants together with representatives from local, state and federal programs that have expertise in facilitating each of the required components. These activities will broaden the capabilities and knowledge level of the applicants regarding coordination of programs and funding sources, building effective instructional models, designing relevant needs assessments instruments, and developing effective formative and summative evaluation models. The workshops will also serve as a training ground for ongoing

dialogue about scientifically based reading research and professional development. In developing this application, the Agency has secured the participation of representatives from the following entities. Each of these entities plays a strong and relevant role in achieving the objectives of the READ for Texas program. While the following list is intended to be thorough, other entities may be identified during the planning period and invited to participate in the workshop series.

The Center for Academic and Reading Skills (CARS) staff will provide eligible LEAs with information on reading research. They will provide a mechanism for beginning reading program identification, selection and implementation. Additionally, they will assist with information on program evaluation.

The Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts (TCRLA) staff will assist LEAs in, among other things, identifying professional development programs, activities and materials related to reading instruction to improve instructional practices for reading based on scientifically based reading research.

The Title I program at the Agency has been instrumental in determining LEA eligibility and will continue to be an integral partner of the READ for Texas program. The Title I program staff will provide to LEAs information and strategies for coordinating funding sources and increasing and expanding programs already in place to increase services for the neediest campuses.

The Texas Family Literacy Center (TFLC) staff will not only provide ongoing services to READ for Texas subgrant recipients, it will also have a significant role in the workshop series. In addition to other topics, TFLC staff will provide READ for Texas applicants with information on how to provide family literacy services to enable parents to be their child's first and most important teacher.

Staff from the Agency's Even Start Family Literacy Initiative will assist in the workshop series in order to provide applicants with a dialogue about how to build on and promote coordination among literacy programs in the state. This assistance will increase the effectiveness of the programs and improve reading for adults and children, avoiding duplication of efforts of the programs.

Staff from the Parent Involvement and Community Empowerment Unit of the Agency will assist in the workshop series in identifying strategies for securing parent participation in literacy-related activities.

The Agency's Instructional Technology Division will be represented in the workshop series in an effort to assist applicants in identifying ways to use technology to enhance local subgrant programs, including reading and literacy professional development activities, family literacy programs and library programs.

Additionally, during the workshops, the selected evaluation entity will provide participants with information regarding local and state evaluation efforts in order to assist them in designing programs and evaluation plans which will meet the data collection and reporting requirements of the READ for Texas program.

#### 4. Phase III: Selection and Implementation of Local Reading Improvement (LRI) and Tutorial Assistance Subgrants (TAS).

In response to the Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrant and the Tutorial Assistance Subgrant (TAS) Request for Applications (RFAs), local educational agencies (LEAs) will be required to present a well-documented plan for meeting specific educational needs in their local schools and communities.

Quality proposals will be comprehensive and focus on activities necessary to implement a comprehensive system of sustained, intensive professional development; implement one or more scientifically based reading programs; establish or expand on family literacy services; provide programs of early identification and transition for students; and/or provide tutoring programs. Quality proposals will also demonstrate knowledge of scientifically based reading instruction and of the term “reading” as defined in the Reading Excellence Act.

During Phase III, eligible applications submitted in response to the LRI and TAS subgrant RFAs will be reviewed, scored, and recommended for award. The Task Force will solicit nominations for the subgrant application review panel. The Commissioner of Education, in consultation with the Governor’s Focus on Reading Task Force, will convene the review panel. Every effort will be made to include knowledgeable parents and business and community members on the panel.

The following selection criteria are proposed for review of applications:

- the quality of the comprehensive project proposed and the extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve or expand services that address the needs of the target population;
- the extent to which the proposed project reflects up-to-date knowledge of scientifically based reading research and will ensure effective reading instruction (including phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, fluency and reading comprehension);
- the extent to which the proposed project is a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for children;
- the extent to which the proposed project coordinates local, state and federal resources;
- the extent to which the proposed project encourages parental involvement and family literacy and programs for motivating children to read;
- the extent to which the proposed project identifies and selects a program of reading instruction developed in accordance with scientifically based reading research;
- the extent to which the professional development services proposed are based on scientifically based reading research and are of sufficient quality, intensity and duration to lead to improvements in practice;
- the extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and the anticipated results and benefits;
- the quality of the proposed management of the project;
- the extent to which the methods of evaluation of the proposed project include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data; and
- the extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended results.

Final selection of applications will be based on a satisfactory review of the applications by a highly qualified review panel. In their evaluation of applications, the review panel will use the following criteria for scientifically based reading research:

- employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment;
- involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn;
- relies on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations; and
- has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review.

The review panel will be comprised of professionals from the field who have demonstrated knowledge in scientifically based reading research and knowledge or experience with:

- improving the instructional practices of teachers and other instructional staff in elementary schools through the use of high quality, intensive and sustained professional development based on scientifically based reading research;
- selecting programs of reading instruction developed using scientifically based reading research;
- selecting or developing high quality family literacy programs;
- providing additional support for children having difficulty making the transition from kindergarten to the first grade; and/or
- supervising individuals (including tutors) who have been trained in scientifically based reading research.

The recommendations for subgrant awards will be presented to the Task Force. After review, the recommendations will be forwarded to the Commissioner of Education. Applicants will be notified of their selection as subgrant recipients in the LRI and the TAS subgrant programs. The application will be negotiated with each selected participant, a Notice of Grant Award (NOGA) will be issued and LEAs will commence implementation of their proposed programs.

This selection criteria is also contained in Appendix 3, following the drafts of the local reading improvement and tutorial assistance RFAs.

## 5. Phase IV. Evaluation.

Program evaluation will be conducted during Phase IV of the READ for Texas program. The purpose of the evaluation design is to assess the overall effectiveness of the READ for Texas program as it relates to accomplishing the primary objective of improving achievement in reading at the elementary and early childhood levels for children in the greatest need. In addition to focusing on achievement, the evaluation will also focus on the efforts of the READ for Texas program on the Texas educational system as a whole. The external evaluator will be charged with assessing and evaluating, on a regular basis, state and local educational agency activities, with respect to whether they have been effective in achieving the purposes of the Reading Excellence Act.

To that end, all local educational agency (LEA) subgrant recipients will be required to assess achievement outcomes using a common set of assessments described below. Similarly, specific instruments will be developed to measure direct benefit to teachers of all professional development activities, and LEAs will be required to provide all information needed to match child, teacher, classroom, and school data in a multi-level framework. The presence of the state's Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) makes this linkage of child, teacher, and school data feasible for all LEAs in the state. In addition to all mandatory assessment activities, LEAs will also be allowed and encouraged to continue assessments currently in use by the LEA, provided that the instrument(s) involved meet(s) acceptable standards of reliability and validity for measuring achievement in reading. These latter instruments will allow evaluation of the children's improvements relative to historical performance within the local district and will be aggregated across LEAs in a meta-analytic framework as a secondary evaluation of the READ for Texas program.

During the planning phase of the program, the Agency, in consultation with the Governor's Focus on Reading Task Force, will select an external entity that will carry out the evaluation activities. The proposal submitted by the entity contracted to conduct the evaluation would be subject to negotiation by appropriate Agency staff and approval by the Task Force. This contracted entity will be selected based on a set of criteria including, but not limited to:

- the contractor's past record in conducting rigorous, high quality evaluations;
- evidence of successful past work, including publications in rigorous peer-reviewed journals and past evaluations conducted in the field of scientific research based reading programs;
- research awards from national research organizations; and
- recognized reports to Congress, state educational agencies and other government agencies.

The external evaluator, along with appropriate Agency staff and a designee of the Task Force, will develop methods of evaluation based on objective performance measures including, but not limited to, those outlined below. All such measures and methods must be demonstrably related to the intended outcomes of the project and must produce reliable and valid quantitative and/or qualitative data relevant to the goals of the READ for Texas program. The evaluator will propose a plan to evaluate the most essential components of the program at the state level. This plan must:

- include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the outcomes of the project,
- produce reliable and valid quantitative and qualitative data regarding children, teachers (including tutors), and schools; and
- provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving the intended goals of the READ for Texas program.

As appropriate, the components to be evaluated will include:

- the extent to which state and local level program activities are being implemented as planned;
- the impact of teacher professional development on classroom practices and student outcomes;
- the efficacy of programs in providing professional development based on scientifically based reading research for teachers, other instructional staff, and tutors, serving children in kindergarten through grade 6 regarding scientifically research based reading;
- the efficacy of programs in providing effective reading instruction to children preparing to enter kindergarten and children in kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade;
- the efficacy of programs in providing effective tutorial assistance;
- the efficacy of programs providing family literacy services;
- the efficacy of programs in improving the achievement of children having difficulties in making the transition from kindergarten to 1<sup>st</sup> grade; and
- the efficacy of programs designed to reduce the number of children being referred to special education on the basis of low performance in reading.

In order to judge the effectiveness of the proposed READ for Texas program, the evaluator will also specify the type and methodology of data collection from the project sites, including:

- data regarding prior growth rates and other relevant prior data on children's performance from the participating schools;
- the timeline for the evaluation process, inclusive of activities to collect data indicating prior growth rates;
- data regarding activities to occur during the local program period(s); and
- data regarding activities to indicate longitudinal evaluation measures.

Additionally, performance measures will relate to both process and product measurements regarding the state activities. Process evaluation for Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrant and Tutorial Assistance Subgrant (TAS) programs will be based in part on written activity/progress reports to be submitted by project participants and on-site visitation by Agency and evaluation staff. In determining the quality of the project, information will be obtained from program participants (i.e., administrators, teachers, parents, children, others from the community, etc.) using a variety of methods (e.g., structured interview, focus groups, surveys, open forums) to determine the following:

- what types of process data will be collected and for what purpose;
- when various types of process data will be collected;
- what designs and methods will be used;
- what instruments will be developed and when; and
- the types of reports of interest to various stakeholders, the desired formats for presentation of information, and the desired timeline for receipt of such reports.

The information gathered for these purposes must allow the project to monitor progress and to provide information to stakeholders regarding the following:

- to what extent the activities of the project are being implemented as planned;
- to what extent barriers are hindering full implementation of the project as planned, and to identify plans and timelines for removing those barriers;
- how effective the activities of the project were in achieving the aims of the project; and
- what impact the activities of the project had on the participants.

A product evaluation design will be finalized and will measure the following:

- demonstrated increase in children’s reading proficiency as evidenced by improved levels of student performance on standardized reading assessments, including levels of performance and passing rates on the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) and on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS);
- demonstrated increase in attainment and application of educator knowledge and skills needed to ensure that all children in targeted populations perform at high standards in reading;
- reductions in the number of children requiring tutorial assistance for reading;
- reductions in the rates of children identified as at risk for reading failure at exit from kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades;
- reductions in the number/rate of children referred to special education for reading difficulties;
- the quality, type, and degree of coordinated funding with other available funding sources;
- the quality, type, and degree of participatory involvement practiced by the principal(s), teacher(s), parent(s), and when appropriate, children;
- the quality of any products/documents developed as part of the project;
- the strengths and weaknesses of the project; and
- any recommendations for modifying or improving the program as a result of on-going evaluation activities.

A variety of measurement instruments are currently in use in the Texas public school system and will provide the foundation for evaluating the success of the READ for Texas program.

Available to the READ for Texas program and the external evaluator will be data gathered from the following sources:

- the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), Texas’ public school system database;
- the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI), a kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade early reading instrument;
- the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), the state’s assessment instrument aligned with the state’s curriculum standards;
- the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), the state’s accountability rating system; and
- the adult skills assessment instruments, the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE), the Basic English Skills Test (BEST), and the Work Keys assessment.

The state’s Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) contains the data necessary for the legislature and the Agency to perform their functions in overseeing public education. PEIMS encompasses all data requested and received by the Agency about public education, including student demographic and academic performance, personnel, financial, and organizational information. In addition to local subgrant generated student data the evaluation will make use of PEIMS information, which will be made available to the evaluating entity throughout the grant period.

The Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) was developed by the Center for Academic and Reading Skills (CARS) through a contract with the Agency. The TPRI is a reading measure with demonstrably effective reliability and validity. It was designed to monitor progress over the school year for children in kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> grade and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. The TPRI consists of the following conceptual domains:

- Book and Print Awareness - knowledge of the function of print and of the characteristics of books and other print materials,
- Phonemic Awareness - the ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds within spoken words so that letters can be linked to these sounds,
- Graphophonemic Knowledge - the recognition of letters of the alphabet and the understanding of sound-symbol relationships (including application of letter-sound knowledge to encode regularly spelled words, increasingly complex spelling patterns, orthographic conventions, and morphological units such as plurals and verb tenses),
- Reading Accuracy - the correct identification of words, and
- Listening and Reading Comprehension—the understanding of what is being read.

The TPRI is to be given to all children in general education and to children receiving special education services with the decision of the child's ARD committee. An assessment instrument covering the development of reading skills and comprehension across kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades, the TPRI contains a screening portion and an inventory portion. The screening is based on empirically based predictors of reading success. These predictors were derived from a longitudinal database of reading development in over 900 children in kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades funded through NICHD. Teachers can use the inventory part of the TPRI to set learning objectives that will enable children to become successful readers. Because the content of the inventory is aligned with the TEKS, teachers will not be administering assessment instruments inconsistent with the state's curriculum standards.

Participants in the READ for Texas program will be required to use the TPRI, an instrument that has the capacity to provide longitudinal data on participating children. Its use in evaluating the effectiveness of program or institutional change will be invaluable. Additionally, by having READ for Texas subgrant recipients participate in a common evaluation plan and requiring them to have their teachers trained in and then use the TPRI in kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades, the READ for Texas program will afford the external evaluator the opportunity to measure the impact of the program across the state and to monitor gains over the course of the program.

In the fall of 1990, changes in state law required the implementation of a new criterion-referenced testing program, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). The implementation of TAAS shifted the focus of assessment in Texas from minimum skills to academic skills. The TAAS tests represent a more comprehensive assessment of the instructional targets delineated in the state's curriculum framework, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The goal of the assessment program in Texas is to measure student progress toward achieving academic excellence. The primary purpose of the assessment program is to provide an accurate measure of student achievement in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and science. The test results are used as a gauge for institutional accountability.

Under the TAAS testing system in Texas:

- The tests are grounded in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and reflect those skills in a manner congruent with sound instructional practice.
- Information about the content, level of expectation, and structure of the tests is based on judgments made by Texas educators, students, and the public.
- Texas educators guide all phases of test development.
- Test results are useful for providing a snapshot of individual student performance, an indicator of areas in which further diagnosis is warranted, and a mechanism for providing a "level playing field" for comparing the performance of campuses and districts.

The TAAS serves as a major factor for the state's public school accountability system, the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). AEIS reports are generated based on a wide range of information on the performance of children on each campus and school district in Texas every year. These reports also provide extensive information on school and district staff, finances, programs and demographics. From the information contained in the AEIS, campuses and school districts receive ratings from exemplary to low performing.

As part of the state's accountability system, the Agency has put considerable effort into determining "nearest neighbors." This system provides each school in the state with a set of "nearest neighbors" so that schools can judge their own performance relative to schools that are most comparable to themselves with respect to size, student population, teacher population, and other variables known to impact educational attainment. Through the statewide assessment and accountability system, performance of children and teachers in schools participating in the READ for Texas program can be directly compared to their own historical performance, as well as to the current performance of schools historically judged to be "nearest neighbors" who are not READ for Texas program participants. A proven and accepted system for identifying comparison schools coupled with the presence of a statewide assessment and accountability system, makes possible the evaluation of the specific components of the READ for Texas program in a "value added" framework through the use of appropriate multi-level modeling techniques. While statewide assessment and accountability has been a part of K-12 education in Texas for some time, recent developments in Adult Education will make possible similar evaluation of the family literacy components of the READ for Texas program.

After extensive study of the adult education assessment issue, the Adult Education Accountability Task Force made a three-part recommendation to the Commissioner:

- 1) use the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) for assessment of adult basic and secondary education students;
- 2) use the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) for assessment of limited English proficient individuals enrolled in adult English as a Second Language programs; and
- 3) conduct a linking study of the TABE and the American College of Testing's Work Keys assessment.

These changes will allow the TABE to be used by adult education programs for baseline assessment and the Work Keys assessment to be used as a measure of progress in the improvement of literacy skills.

In addition to the public school accountability system, Texas now has the beginnings of an adult and community education accountability system. The Adult and Community Education System (ACES) management information system is the Agency's state-of-the-art, web-enabled system that maintains participant information, including demographic data and assessment data, as well as information about classes, sites, programs and providers. ACES provides a wide range of information about adult education, including snapshots of student and program performance, personnel qualifications, staff development activities, and evaluation of staff development. The READ for Texas program will utilize the ACES system and require pre- and post-testing of participants in family literacy programs proposed by LEAs.

In addition to the existing system of data available, the evaluator will develop an instrument to evaluate the efficacy of professional development. Gains in teacher knowledge in the areas of phonemic awareness, reading development and reading comprehension can be documented by comparing pre-test and post-test surveys. Random sampling of teachers through observations of

classroom instruction using a systematic coding scheme to capture instructional strategies and children's engagement can also be valuable.

The data resources available to the evaluator and the plan for evaluation will allow for a full review of the READ for Texas program.

## 6. Management

### *a) Governor's Focus on Reading Task Force*

The Governor's Focus on Reading Task Force is considered the Reading and Literacy partnership for the state for the purposes of the Reading Excellence Act. The composition of the Task Force affords a diversity of perspectives for the READ for Texas program.

In the planning period allotted under the proposed timeline, the Task Force will carry out activities to assist in the development of the state plan, advise on the selection of subgrant recipients, and assist in the oversight and evaluation of the subgrant recipients and the program.

For further information regarding the establishment of the Governor's Focus on Reading Task Force and its role as the Reading and Literacy Partnership under the Reading Excellence Act, see Section A. Reading and Literacy Partnership.

### *b) Texas Education Agency*

The management and staff of the Texas Education Agency are dedicated to the children, parents and education professionals that form Texas' public education community. The policy management and administrative staff in the Agency's Office of Statewide Initiatives will be responsible for the implementation of the READ for Texas program. The staff is experienced in coordination and implementation of all external communication; timelines; and budgetary, management and evaluation components required for the implementation of the READ for Texas program. The team approach includes close synchronization and compatibility with the Office of the Governor, the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts (TCRLA), the Center for Academic and Reading Skills (CARS), the Texas Family Literacy Center (TFLC) and the state's twenty regional Education Service Centers (ESCs).

The Assistant Commissioner for Statewide Initiatives, Robin Gilchrist has provided leadership for the Texas Reading Initiative since its inception in 1996. She is experienced in building consensus, bringing together state and national leaders, recruiting qualified executive staff, implementing statewide reform initiatives, planning and developing infrastructure, and designing and implementing policies. Ms. Gilchrist will provide leadership, direction and integration of the Texas Reading Initiative principles with the READ for Texas program, including the approval of selected applications for the subgrant programs.

The Director of Special Programs, Gina Day, will serve as program director of READ for Texas. She has served the Texas Education Agency for over 9 years, most recently as the program director for the Texas Reading Academies grant program. Since the program's beginning in the spring of 1998, Ms. Day has written and developed the Request for Applications, recruited a broad diversity of reviewers, planned and conducted reviewer conferences, negotiated and managed hundreds of applications and directed the implementation of 58 Reading Academies programs. She has responsibility for coordinating the program evaluation through an external evaluator, as well as for coordinating with directors of state and federal programs regarding student, family and adult literacy. Previously, Ms. Day served as a program manager on the federally funded Technology Integration in Education (TIE) grants, funded by the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund (TLCF). In her current capacity as Director of the Texas Reading Academies grant program, she has worked with the program staff of three other competitive grant programs in the Agency, the Academics 2000 Reading Improvement grants, funded through Goals 2000, the Even Start Family Literacy grants, and the Comprehensive School Reform

grants. Ms. Day will be responsible for all aspects of the subgrant program, including the methodology for selecting applications, budgetary matters, timelines and submission of reports to the USDE.

Ms. Michelle Hurst will serve as Program Manager for the Read for Texas Program. She has previously served as a consultant at the Agency on two federally funded competitive subgrant programs, the TIE grants and the Academics 2000 grants. Among her contributions to the subgrant programs, Ms. Hurst has written and developed RFAs, including the draft RFAs for the Read for Texas program, participated in the coordination of multiple reviewer conferences, negotiated and managed over a hundred LEA applications, developed a quantitative matrix for technology needs assessment and generated large-scale summary evaluation reports for program progress reports to state and federal governing bodies. Ms. Hurst will be responsible for various aspects of the subgrant programs, including but not limited to, monitoring and providing support and technical assistance to subgrant recipients.

## **D. ASSURANCES OF STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY**

### 1. Coordination of Professional Development Activities Related to Reading with Other State and Local Level Funds to Ensure Improved Instructional Practices.

A critical component for fostering effective beginning reading instruction is teacher professional development. What teachers are trained to do and the materials they use make a difference.

Teacher knowledge must be fostered. Teachers need to understand what the target of instruction is, where instruction should be focused, and how best to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. In short, teachers need to understand the processes that their instruction is aimed at teaching and the behaviors that indicate whether children are progressing along the lines expected in learning to read. Teachers must have this knowledge in order to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of their teaching.

Teachers must be provided a solid foundation regarding the theoretical and scientific underpinnings for understanding literacy development. They need to understand what constitutes adequate research evidence, to be well versed about the research regarding sources of difficulty for individuals who are having trouble learning to read, and to know what strengths are central to skilled reading.

Not only do teachers need a firm foundation in scientific reading research, they also need the support to translate research into practice. In support of the Texas Reading Initiative, professional development products have been developed which provide both information on our “knowledge base” in beginning reading instruction and how to effectively translate this knowledge in practice in the classroom.

Texas has relied on the Agency published booklet, Beginning Reading Instruction: Components and Features of a Research Based Reading Program, as a foundation for our state’s required curriculum framework, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The TEKS for reading and language arts reflect scientifically based reading research in their approach to oral language development, phonological awareness, letter-sound knowledge (phonics), fluency and reading comprehension.

The Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts (TCRLA) and Center for Reading and Academic Skills (CARS) have created professional development products that translate scientific reading research into actions that classroom teachers understand. These professional development products reflect both the Beginning Reading Instruction booklet and the TEKS. Professional development sessions using these products have been conducted through the state’s twenty regional Education Service Centers (ESCs).

Through emergency funding from the 76<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature, the Agency will deliver professional development institutes on beginning reading instruction to all kindergarten teachers in the summer of 1999. These institutes, the Kindergarten Teacher Reading Academies, contain units on Oral Language Development, Phonological Awareness/Alphabetic Understanding/Word Study, and Book Knowledge/Listening Comprehension. Information in these units is derived from the TEKS, the Beginning Reading Instruction booklet, and the National Research Council’s report, Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children.

The 76<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature is currently considering extending funding to provide similar professional development institutes to 1<sup>st</sup> grade and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers in the summer of 2000 and

summer of 2001, respectively. The Agency will know the availability of those funds upon adjournment of the 76<sup>th</sup> Legislature, May 31, 1999.

A consistent approach to research based beginning reading instruction can be found in all these resources. Proposals for staff development submitted by local educational agencies (LEAs) in their applications for the Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrant and the Tutorial Assistance Subgrant (TAS) programs will be evaluated to judge the extent to which they are consistent with other state professional development opportunities.

Professional development opportunities through the READ for Texas program will focus on providing teachers and other instructional staff with both content knowledge and practice knowledge about beginning reading instruction.

Three categories of professional development will be required of all LEAs participating in the READ for Texas program. They are: (1) professional development centered on the knowledge base of beginning reading instruction, (2) professional development specific to the comprehensive program for reading improvement, and (3) professional development on the early reading diagnostic instruments for kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades, specifically the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI).

LEAs applying for funding under the LRI subgrant will, through their needs assessment, determine where gaps exist in the professional development base of their teachers and other instructional staff. LEAs will be required, to the extent possible, to leverage existing state and local resources to meet and complement their entire professional development program. LEAs will also be required, if applicable, to use resources acquired through previously awarded competitive grant programs, such as the Texas Reading Academies grant program and the Academics 2000 (Goals 2000) Reading Improvement grant program in a manner that complements the READ for Texas program. These two grant programs in Texas provide funds for professional development, as well as other activities and resources. The "Ready to Read" grant program, a proposed preschool extension of the Texas Reading Initiative, is being considered by the 76<sup>th</sup> Legislature. It would provide funds, on a competitive basis, to early childhood programs for professional development and other activities and resources. The Agency will know the availability of those funds upon adjournment of the 76<sup>th</sup> Legislature, May 31, 1999.

## 2. Address the Needs of Teachers and Other Instructional Staff to Effectively Teach Students to Read.

Attention to scientifically based reading research shows the magnitude of change that must take place if state and local educational agencies are to be successful in ensuring all children become proficient readers during the early grades in school.

Through the Texas Reading Initiative and attention to research, many resources have been established to support the retooling of our schools. These resources include the availability of reading instruments at kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> grade and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade; professional development products and sessions from the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts (TCRLA) and the Center for Reading and Academic Skills (CARS) that are distributed through our regional Education Service Centers (ESCs); and financial resources through the Texas Reading Academies grant program and the Academics 2000 Reading Improvement grant program. Changes in our schools require time and sustained support to achieve the desired success of effectively teaching all children to read.

The state's currently adopted instructional materials for reading at kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade do not align well with the state's new research based curriculum framework, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

Teacher preparation programs in Texas are only beginning to address the need to provide preservice teachers with a solid foundation in the theoretical and scientific underpinnings for understanding literacy development and the process of learning to read.

Local educational agencies (LEAs) have begun implementation of the TEKS and the requirement for reading diagnostic instruments at kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades in the 1998-1999 school year and need support for successful implementation.

Additionally, while Texas has a class size ratio of 22:1 at the early grade levels, resources are needed to effectively provide small group instruction and extended time on task for children developing their reading skills.

Funding from the Reading Excellence Act for the READ for Texas program will allow LEAs to provide the necessary instructional materials, sustained and intensive professional development, and additional personnel to expand the amount of time and the attention to instruction that are critical to meeting the needs of Texas children.

Through the Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrant program, LEAs will conduct a needs assessment including but not limited to the following areas:

- existing professional development of teachers and other instructional personnel as it relates to scientifically based reading research;
- existing core and supplemental reading programs as they relate to scientifically based reading research;
- existing technology and reading and library programs to support teacher development and reading practice for children;
- existing family literacy and parental involvement programs; and
- existing collaborations with early childhood programs, including Headstart and public and private preschool programs.

Information from the needs assessment will be used to establish a local reading improvement plan. All LEA's reading improvement plans will include the establishment of an implementation team to ensure effective support of the program. The implementation teams of participating LEAs will ensure that the district and campus improvement, technology, professional development and other relevant plans are modified or revised to include the activities, objectives and support mechanisms of the LRI and/or TAS programs, as locally appropriate.

### 3. Prepare Teachers and Other Instructional Staff in all the Major Components of Reading Instruction (Including Phonemic Awareness, Systematic Phonics, Fluency, and Reading Comprehension).

It is critically important to develop the knowledge base of teachers and other instructional staff regarding how to integrate explicit instruction in the alphabetic principle with reading for meaning and opportunity to learn. To accomplish this, ongoing professional development is necessary that covers topics such as, how reading develops; the relationship between language structure and learning to read and write; how to teach phonemic awareness, phonics and reading comprehension; and how to assess reading growth and achievement.

Through the Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrant program, the local educational agencies (LEAs) will conduct a needs assessment including but not limited to the following areas:

- existing knowledge base of teachers and other instructional staff related to all the major components of reading instruction;
- identification of professional development opportunities to build a knowledge base; and
- identification of core or supplemental instructional materials to support new knowledge and practices.

Information from the needs assessment will be used to establish a local reading improvement plan designed to ensure that teachers and other instructional staff are prepared in all their major components of reading instruction.

#### 4. Use of Technology to Enhance Reading and Literacy Professional Development.

The READ for Texas program intends to build an electronic community among READ for Texas participants using technology. Through technology, administrators, teachers, parents, and children will have immediate access to literacy experts, tools, products, data and information needed to make decisions, plan, educate and learn. Additionally, through this electronic community, participants will have opportunities to reach out to each other and to districts with similar demographics for the purposes of both learning from higher achieving campuses and mentoring others as they progress along the achievement continuum. For example, participants selecting similar approaches for implementing scientifically research based reading instruction and family literacy programs will have opportunities to identify each other and build smaller electronic networking communities for support and information sharing within the greater READ for Texas community.

The READ for Texas program will establish a unique website. From this site, participants will have opportunities to interact with program staff and the staffs of the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts, the Center for Academic and Reading Skills and the Texas Family Literacy Center, providing them with research, evaluation strategies and other information; access research and practice information; access extensive data resources available from the Agency, regional ESCs and others; access information and professional development materials related to locally adopted scientifically based reading programs; and link to other websites which have undergone scrutiny for adhering to the principles of scientifically based reading research.

The expansion of existing and development of new videoconferencing capabilities will further provide opportunities for electronic meeting and mentoring. Many videoconferencing prospects exist for enhancing implementation of the READ for Texas Program. These include electronic meetings and video programming originating from the Agency's satellite video network, T-STAR; from the Agency's statewide telecommunications infrastructure; and from government, non-profit and for profit providers of informative and/or professional development videoconferences concerning literacy development for children and adults, public policy issues of education and literacy, and development of family and community partnerships in education. The possibility also exists for bringing in national literacy experts for electronic discussions, for electronic field trips, and for participating in question and answer sessions.

Assisting in the success of local technology plans for enhancing literacy services will be three statewide initiatives originating from the Instructional Technology Division of the Agency. The Instructional Technology Division is responsible for carrying out the objective of improvement of student achievement through the full integration of technology into teaching and learning. Staff from this division will focus expertise and activities to assist participants in the workshop series in, among other things, identifying ways to use technology to enhance reading and literacy professional development activities. The Texas Library Connection (TLC), the Texas Education Telecommunications Network (TETN), and the Texas School Telecommunications Access Resource (T-STAR) will be leveraged to provide extensive services to the READ for Texas electronic community.

The Texas Library Connection (TLC) is an integrated, resource sharing system for public school libraries, through which needed information resources are identified, accessed, and retrieved. The TLC facilitates library administrative services and local collection development and provides to participants appropriate electronic full text journals and newspapers and other informational databases such as Britannica Online and UMI's ProQuest Direct. TLC enhances the ability of participating libraries to contribute to and participate in local, state and national resource sharing

initiatives including the academic library statewide initiative, TexShare, and the public library statewide initiative, the Texas State Electronic Library. Currently, over 3,500 campus libraries have merged records for over 27 million items held in those libraries into three million unique, standardized electronic records.

The Texas Education Telecommunications Network (TETN) is a statewide telecommunications infrastructure providing live, two-way videoconferencing between the regional Education Service Centers (ESCs) and the Agency. TETN was established to provide a 24-hour telecommunications network with the capabilities to connect to schools and other public institutions. Where practical and appropriate, throughout the program period, READ for Texas staff will conduct meetings on a variety of topics over the TETN system.

The Texas School Telecommunications Access Resource (T-STAR) is another key initiative that gives all districts equitable access to quality educational resources. The Texas School Telecommunications Access Resource (T-STAR) is a one-way video/two-way audio, satellite video system capable of delivering distance learning programming, teleconferences, professional development, training and instructional television directly to administrators, teachers and children in school districts and at regional Education Service Centers throughout Texas. From the T-STAR website, which will be linked to the READ for Texas website, T-STAR gives classroom teachers immediate access to resources and suggestions which can accompany the programming.

Finally, the READ for Texas program intends to explore all options for enhancing the electronic community of participants. Possibilities include, but are not limited to, creating listservs, chat rooms, and electronic bulletin boards for participants; delivering electronic newsletters and updates; conducting monitoring visits and evaluation activities via videoconferencing, as appropriate and practical; conducting regular, ongoing networking meetings via videoconferencing; providing for technology professional development for participants; and implementing methods and strategies for networking tutorial and/or family literacy service providers with participants in need in rural areas, as appropriate and practical.

Applicants for subgrants will be required to assess their technology needs. In their requests for technology development, they will be required to enunciate specifically how the equipment and services requested will be used. Users of equipment and participants and audiences for programs of videoconferencing and similar equipment must be specified. Additionally, equipment types and capabilities and possible providers of programming or services must be specified. Timelines and performance indicators for implementation, including installation of equipment, professional development concerning the use of the equipment and the programming, the schedule of activities and programming anticipated and the method for evaluating the extent to which the technology plans were effective and carried out as planned will also be required.

## 5. Participation of Parents in Literacy-Related Activities.

The Agency's Parent Involvement and Community Empowerment Unit serves as a resource for regional Education Service Centers and school districts to use in their efforts to strengthen the relationship between families, schools, and local communities. Unit staff encourage collaboration among all parties that serve children and families, where the outcomes promote educational excellence and equity for all students.

The initiative has six main focus areas which include: coordination of state, regional, and local initiatives that help young children enter school ready to learn; assistance to ESCs, districts, and campuses in their efforts to enhance parent and family involvement in education; encouragement of voluntary parenting education programs; promotion of adult and family literacy, and identification of policies that enable local communities to coordinate resources that serve the needs of children and families.

The Agency's *Parent Involvement Manual* will serve as an important resource for local educational agencies (LEAs) participating in the READ for Texas program by providing assistance in developing effective parental involvement programs. Listed in the manual, are seven basic principles for designing "The Family Partnership School." These principles and other practices for designing parental involvement programs will be shared with LEAs during the proposed technical assistance workshop series and may serve as a foundation for models of parental involvement.

Additionally, the Agency's Beginning Reading Instruction: Practical Ideas for Parents and Instruccion para comenzar a leer: Ideas Practicas Para Padres de Familia documents provide important information about learning to read and include activities for parents to use in helping their children become readers. Twelve essential components of research-based reading programs are discussed. Components one through five list activities that can be used with all children but which are particularly appropriate for preschoolers. Components six through twelve include activities that can be used primarily with children as they are learning to read at school. These widely circulated documents will be available to LEAs for use in parental involvement programs.

To examine the complete contents of Beginning Reading Instruction: Practical Ideas for Parents refer to Appendix 9.

A parental involvement plan will be a state-required component of the Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrant. During the application process for the LRI subgrant, LEAs will assess current local parental involvement efforts.

## 6. Ensure Subgrantees Will Meet the Requirements of the Reading Excellence Act.

The design of the READ for Texas program is built upon a foundation of research and up-to-date knowledge of scientifically research based reading practices as required by the Reading Excellence Act. The mechanisms for dissemination of information on scientifically based reading research, effective reading approaches and practices, and federal requirements is through the websites of the Agency, the Center for Reading and Academic Skills (CARs), the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts (TCRLA) and the Texas Family Literacy Center (TFLC); and through the proposed technical assistance workshop series. Through these channels the Agency will specifically and explicitly communicate information and provide technical assistance supporting all of the requirements of the Reading Excellence Act.

The review and selection of subgrant awards will result in recommendations for award only for those applications that reflect the knowledge and information imparted during the workshop series or comparable knowledge and information regarding the requirements of the Act. Applications not meeting all of the requirements or not containing the level of assurance necessary that the local educational agencies (LEAs) will be capable of carrying out all of the requirements will not be acceptable for award.

Finally, initial and ongoing process and formative evaluation strategies will be employed to ensure that all subgrant recipients are in compliance with the requirements of the Act, the provisions and assurances of the resulting contract(s), and the intent and objectives of the federal and state plans. Where instances of non-compliance occur, corrective measures will be taken immediately to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Act.

Monitoring, technical assistance and oversight by the READ for Texas staff and the external evaluator will be ongoing and continuous. Any difficulties on the part of subgrant recipients in meeting all of the federal and state requirements will be identified and recommendations and procedures for correction will go into immediate effect.

Federal statute requires that subgrant recipients provide private school children and their teachers, or other education personnel, with program educational services or other benefits on an equitable basis with public school children and teachers. Potential subgrant recipients will be required to consult with appropriate private school officials during the design and development of their programs on such issues as how the children's needs will be identified; what services will be offered; how and where the services will be provided; and how the services will be assessed.

Documentation will support all activities and the expectation of compliance by subgrant recipients will be communicated on a continuous basis.

## 7. Grants to Subgrantees in Both Rural and Urban Areas.

Letters of notification of the availability of both the Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrant and the Tutorial Assistance Subgrant (TAS) will be mailed to all eligible local educational agencies (LEAs). Eligible LEAs exist in both rural and urban locations in the state.

All submitted applications will be reviewed and scored for quality and the extent to which they meet the requirements of the Reading Excellence Act concerning establishment of a comprehensive program of beginning reading instruction based on scientifically based reading research. Additional factors will be considered prior to selection of applications for funding.

Where possible, projects will be selected to:

- establish programs that are cost effective;
- establish programs that are replicable;
- establish programs that are diverse with respect to size of districts; and
- establish programs that are diverse with respect to geographic location in Texas.

Through these additional factors, the Agency will ensure grants are made to at least one eligible LEA in a rural and in an urban location in Texas.

## 8. Process for Establishment of Reading and Literacy Partnership.

An early partner to the Texas Reading Initiative has been the Governor's Business Council (GBC). In response to the Governor's challenge, the GBC sponsored a conference bringing together business and education leaders in Texas with national reading experts. In August of 1996, at the request of Governor George W. Bush, with the advice of Commissioner of Education, Mike Moses, this joint effort grew into the establishment of the Governor's Focus on Reading Task Force. Members of the Task Force are individuals who have a significant interest and stake in reading performance in their local communities, the promotion of literacy for all Texas children in their early childhood years through the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and the promotion of family literacy services in Texas. The Task Force includes representatives of the business community, state and local educational agencies, private foundations, community organizations, literacy professionals and parents. A Planning and Advisory Committee of the Task Force includes the Commissioner of Education and Governor Bush's Senior Advisor for Education.

The Governor's Focus on Reading Task Force is considered the Reading and Literacy partnership for the state for the purposes of the Reading Excellence Act. The composition of the Task Force affords a diversity of perspectives for the READ for Texas program.

For further information regarding the establishment of the Governor's Focus on Reading Task Force and its role as the Reading and Literacy Partnership under the Reading Excellence Act, see Section A. Reading and Literacy Partnership.

## **E. ASSURANCES OF LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES.**

### 1. Assurance that Local Educational Agencies will Provide Professional Development Based on Scientifically Based Reading Research.

Subgrant recipients will be required to carry out professional development for the classroom teacher and other instructional staff on the teaching of reading based on scientifically based reading research. The overall design of the READ for Texas program incorporates in each phase, component and activity, the knowledge base surrounding scientifically based reading research. All professional development proposed under this program will endure rigorous review to ensure that it meets the criteria for being based on scientifically based reading research.

During Phase I of the READ for Texas program, the Agency will synthesize three recent reviews of components of professional development in order to provide clear guidance to local educational agencies (LEAs). These reviews are Chapter 9 of Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children; Louisa Moats' "Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science", in print, American Educator; and an anticipated report from the International Reading Associations' Commission on Teacher Preparation. A synthesis of these documents will help guide development of the content and evaluation of the professional development components of local educational agency (LEA) subgrant applications.

All information and technical assistance provided, during the proposed technical assistance workshop series, and ongoing through the program period, regarding professional development will be consistent with the findings of the research on which the READ for Texas knowledge base is founded. The Center for Academic and Reading Skills (CARS), the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts (TCRLA), and the Texas Family Literacy Center (TFLC) will provide initial and continuous support to the READ for Texas staff and the subgrant recipients in identifying, selecting, and implementing plans for professional development services and activities.

A system of sustained and intensive professional development will be a requirement of the Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrant. Careful consideration of the professional development components of all LEA applications for the LRI subgrant during the review and selection of awards; and consistent, continuous monitoring and review of subgrant recipients, will ensure that the implementation of intensive, sustained professional development is progressing as designed. Any need for intervention will be identified and technical assistance will be deployed at the earliest signs of need to ensure that subgrant recipients are provided with the support and information needed to carry out professional development based on scientifically based reading research.

## 2. Assurance that Local Educational Agencies will Provide Family Literacy Services.

In order to expand the number of high-quality family literacy programs, READ for Texas will fund projects whose family literacy component has a specific instructional reading program using components that are research based and proven to increase the reading development of children and/or adults. Local educational agencies (LEAs) receiving subgrants may choose to secure technical and other assistance from a program providing family literacy services or may develop a family literacy program based on the Even Start family literacy model or the First Lady's Family Literacy Initiative for Texas. Any model of family literacy service must be designed to enable parents to be their child's first and most important teacher.

Family literacy services provided to participants on a voluntary basis must be of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family. Additionally, any family literacy service plan must build on, and promote coordination among, literacy programs in the State (including federally funded programs such as the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), in order to increase the effectiveness of the programs in improving reading for adults and children and to avoid duplication of the efforts of the programs.

Careful consideration of the family literacy components of the LEAs applications for the Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrant during the review and selection of awards and consistent, continuous monitoring and review of subgrant recipients will ensure that the implementation of effective family literacy services are progressing as designed. Any need for intervention will be identified and technical assistance will be deployed at the earliest signs of need to ensure that subgrant recipients are provided with the support and information needed to carry out their family literacy program.

### 3. Assurance that Local Educational Agencies will Carry Out Programs to Assist Kindergarten Students in Transition to 1<sup>st</sup> Grade.

Evidence from research has shown that early intervention is the best and most promising mechanism for ensuring that children at risk for reading failure progress to proficient reading rather than fall hopelessly behind. Local educational agencies (LEAs) will be required, in the application for the Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrant, to develop plans to carry out programs to assist those kindergarten students who are not ready for the transition to first grade. Strategies and methodologies for early intervention, based on scientifically based reading research, will be shared and developed with and for participating LEAs. The state's research resources the Center for Academic and Reading Skills (CARS), Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts (TCRLA) and the Texas Family Literacy Center (TFLC) will be called upon to support LEAs in developing early intervention plans and strategies and will provide ongoing technical assistance.

Technical assistance, monitoring and continuous evaluation by the READ for Texas staff will ensure that subgrant programs are succeeding in reducing the number of children in need of early intervention and in providing the highest quality and most appropriate intervention strategies necessary to ensure that children having difficulty in transitioning from kindergarten to 1<sup>st</sup> grade are provided the services to meet their needs.

4. Assurance that Local Educational Agencies Will Use Supervised Individuals (including Tutors) Who Have Been Trained Using Scientifically Based Reading Research to Provide Additional Support.

Working in the school and classroom, with ongoing support and training from literacy experts trained in the implementation of scientifically based reading research, the tutoring component of either a Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrant or Tutorial Assistance Subgrant (TAS) application will provide intensive one-on-one and small group literacy tutoring to children preparing to enter kindergarten and children in kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Such a program will support and enhance the literacy instruction already in place at each school.

In their applications for the LRI subgrant and the TAS subgrant program, local educational agencies (LEAs) will be required to:

- provide tutors with high quality training in reading instruction which is grounded in scientifically based reading research;
- ensure tutors work closely with teachers to monitor instruction;
- require tutors to follow a lesson framework that includes elements research has found most effective for struggling readers; and
- monitor a tutor's services and provide supervision and feedback.

Through the application selection process, awards will only be made to those LEAs proposing tutoring programs that meet these requirements.

## 5. Assurance that Local Educational Agencies will select Reading Programs Based on Scientifically Based Reading Research.

The READ for Texas program ensures that local educational agencies (LEAs) will select approaches to reading instruction based on scientifically based reading research by providing LEAs with a research “knowledge base” to inform decisions about beginning reading instruction; providing reports on the adherence to scientific research-based guidelines and the effectiveness of beginning reading programs and professional development products; and providing technical assistance to LEAs in proposing comprehensive programs of reading instruction that include early identification, prevention, intervention, sustained professional development, and networks of community and family support.

The Agency will synthesize three recent reviews of educational programs and products in order to provide clear guidance to LEAs. These three reports are Reading Programs for Students in the Lower Elementary Grades: What Does the Research Say?, published by the Texas Center for Educational Research, Seven Promising Reading and Language Arts Programs, produced by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and the recent American Institutes for Research (AIR) report, An Educators’ Guide to Schoolwide Reform. Each of these reports provides educators with information on effectiveness of programs.

It is important to note that any such guide will, of course, only be able to contain a snapshot of the information that was available at the time it was prepared. Given that publishers of programs may continue to modify and strengthen materials and to gather and report information on their effectiveness, LEAs will be encouraged to further investigate any program or product they are considering. Additionally, such a review will not be meant to endorse any one program or product. Rather, it will assist educators who want to critically examine the most widely available beginning reading programs and products.

The TCRLA product, Examining Phonics and Word Recognition Instruction in Early Reading Programs, will provide LEAs an important resource in evaluating reading programs and products, as will the U.S. Department of Education’s document, Continuum of Effectiveness. Both of these resources will be included in appendices in the Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrant and the Tutorial Assistance Subgrant (TAS) Request for Applications (RFAs).

Published programs may or may not cover all components of effective reading instruction. Educators will need to be especially vigilant in selecting programs to assess their strengths and weaknesses and determine methods to augment coverage of specific components.

Information on evaluating programs will be disseminated to eligible LEAs during the proposed technical assistance workshop series prior to the due date for submission of applications for the Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrant. Through the application selection process, awards will be made only to those LEAs proposing to implement instructional approaches based on scientifically based reading research.

6. Assurance that Local Educational Agencies Will Provide to Parents, Upon Request, Teacher Qualifications.

In their applications for a Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrant award, local educational agencies (LEAs) will be required to state how they plan to make available, upon request and in an understandable and uniform format, to any parent of a student attending any school selected to receive assistance in the geographic area served by the LEA, information regarding the professional qualifications of the student's classroom teacher to provide instruction in reading. For the evaluation of the subgrant programs, LEAs will be required to document requests for such information and the responses to those requests. Ongoing continuous monitoring and evaluation of each subgrant will allow READ for Texas staff to intervene, if necessary, to ensure that such action is being carried out in a way that is in compliance with the Reading Excellence Act.

**F. ASSURANCE THAT READING INSTRUCTION WILL BE PROVIDED TO CHILDREN AT RISK OF REFERRAL TO SPECIAL EDUCATION AND CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN EVALUATED FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION BUT NOT BEEN IDENTIFIED AS BEING A CHILD WITH A DISABILITY.**

The Texas Reading Initiative has, from its inception, supported the reading achievement of all Texas children. The Initiative has focused on early identification of reading difficulties and programs of early prevention and intervention in order to prevent inappropriate referrals to special education.

Recognizing the need for early identification, the 75<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature instituted a requirement for early assessment of children's reading skill development and comprehension. Each Texas public school district is required to administer a reading instrument at kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades. One such instrument is the revised Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) developed by the Center for Academic and Reading Skills (CARS) through a contract with the Agency.

The TPRI contains a screening portion that is based on empirically based predictors of reading success. These predictors were derived from a longitudinal database of reading development in over 900 children in kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades. Teachers use the inventory portion of the TPRI to set learning objectives that will enable students to become successful readers.

The TPRI consists of the following conceptual domains:

- Book and Print Awareness - knowledge of the function of print and of the characteristics of books and other print materials;
- Phonemic Awareness - the ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds within spoken words so that letters can be linked to these sounds;
- Graphophonemic Knowledge - the recognition of letters of the alphabet and the understanding of sound-symbol relationships (including application of letter-sound knowledge to encode regularly spelled words, increasingly complex spelling patterns, orthographic conventions, and morphological units such as plurals and verb tenses);
- Reading Accuracy - the correct identification of words; and
- Listening and Reading Comprehension—the understanding of what is being read.

The TPRI is to be given to all children in general education and to children receiving special education services with the decision of the student's Admission Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee. The instrument is designed to be individually administered, one child at a time.

Local educational agencies (LEAs) participating in the READ for Texas program will be required to use the Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI). Requiring LEAs to have their teachers trained in and then use the TPRI in kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades, will ensure that children at risk for reading difficulties and referral to special education are identified and effective reading instruction will be targeted to their needs. Use of the TPRI will also allow teachers to more effectively direct the reading instruction of children who have been evaluated for special education but not been identified as being a child with a disability.

## **G. ADDITIONAL STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY ASSURANCES**

### 1. Build on and Promote Coordination Among Literacy Programs in the State.

The Agency firmly believes in effective planning for and use of all public resources. To that end, the staff of the READ for Texas program will ensure that Reading Excellence Act funds are effectively supportive of and coordinated with other federal, state and local funds in each phase of the program.

During the initial planning phase, all efforts will be made to evaluate the extent to which each eligible local educational agency (LEA) receives student or family literacy resources and the ways in which those resources are focused. Strategies for combining efforts among Agency programs serving the kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade population and the adults in the targeted communities will be refined and strengthened. Shared language and scoring mechanisms among the Request for Applications (RFAs) of the various programs and grant opportunities, including Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration, Title I, IDEA, Even Start, Adult Literacy, Texas Reading Academies, Academics 2000 Reading Improvement Grants, and the First Lady's Family Literacy Initiative for Texas will be developed to strongly communicate the need for LEAs to use appropriate sources of funds in the most efficient and effective ways. Extending the focus of the Reading Excellence Act on using scientifically based reading research as a foundation for all decisions will allow all potential sources of funding for coordination to be used effectively.

In the second phase, the proposed technical assistance workshop series will provide opportunities for information and emphasis on the coordination of funding sources. As stated in Section C.3.Phase II: Assistance to Applicants, the workshop series will allow the state to bring applicants together with representatives from federal, state and local programs who have expertise in facilitating each of the required components, including coordination of funding sources and the programs they support. Workshop presenters will provide applicants with information regarding existing literacy programs and ways in which they can be coordinated with activities proposed in subgrant programs. Sessions will be conducted to assist applicants in developing plans for making the most effective and efficient use of the variety of funding sources and programs available to them.

Where possible, individualized technical assistance will be provided for each eligible LEA pertaining to the Agency's records regarding the funding that the LEA is receiving and the ways in which they are using that funding. This will serve two purposes. First, it will advance the LEA's understanding of and thinking about the topic of coordinated funding, regardless of that applicant's future status as a participant in the READ for Texas program. Secondly, should that applicant become selected for participation in the READ for Texas program, a large degree of expectation can be held by Agency staff regarding the applicant's understanding of the emphasis placed on coordinated funding and the appropriate and efficient uses of federal, state and local funds.

The staff of the READ for Texas program and the providers of information for the workshop series will be responsible for communicating the ways in which LEAs can coordinate funding sources. Included in those efforts will be information regarding how proposed programs can appropriately:

- focus all possible funding sources on literacy activities;
- ensure that all federal, state and local funding provides for professional development activities that are complimentary, neither repetitive nor redundant, and expand and enhance existing professional development, with a focus on scientifically based reading research;

- combine funds from the Local Reading Improvement (LRI) grant program in schools operating a Title I schoolwide program with other schoolwide funds to upgrade the entire instructional program of the school, including the improvement of reading through the use of programs and professional development based on scientifically based reading research;
- complement any local Even Start program or First Lady’s Family Literacy Initiative for Texas program with LRI funds to expand family literacy services to more families with young children;
- complement any local Even Start program or First Lady’s Family Literacy Initiative for Texas program with LRI funds to provide joint professional development so that there is a greater continuity between early learning experiences of young children and their families and the reading instruction provided in the elementary grades; and
- include strategies to increase parent involvement, such as family literacy services, in Title I School Improvement campuses.

By providing information regarding the strategies and requirements listed above, the READ for Texas program intends to provide assurance that each LEA awarded a subgrant will provide family literacy services based on programs such as the Even Start family literacy model and/or the First Lady’s Family Literacy Initiative for Texas. LEAs, in turn, will be required to include an assurance that they will provide those family literacy services.

Further, during the first two phases of the program, the READ for Texas staff will explore ways to coordinate administration of the LRI subgrants with other family literacy programs through an Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative. As an integral member of the partnership for Texas’ Even Start Statewide Family Literacy Initiative, READ for Texas staff will develop coordination strategies and, where appropriate, integrate existing federal, state, and local literacy resources to strengthen and expand family literacy services in the state. A part of this strategy will be to coordinate family literacy activities through a consortium of state-level programs. That strategy will include activities of the Task Force or its designees, as well as other programs such as Title I, Part A; Even Start; and Adult Education.

The subgrant selection and implementation during Phase III of the program will provide a third opportunity to emphasize coordination of funding. Because the subgrant Request for Applications (RFAs) will be very explicit regarding the expectations in this area, the review and scoring of each application can be designed in such a way as to hold applicants to a very high standard of effective coordination of funding sources. Reviewers will be expected to evaluate and score applications with regard to the extent to which programs propose to appropriately carry out such coordination.

## 2. Promote Reading and Library Programs that Provide Access to Engaging Reading Material.

During Phase I of the READ for Texas program, the project staff will work with the Library Media Specialists in the Instructional Technology division, housing the Texas Library Connection (TLC), to identify reading and library programs that provide access to engaging reading material.

See Section 2.3.f. Technology Integration. for a full description of the TLC program.

Information on the TLC and reading and library programs will be provided through the proposed technical assistance workshop series.

### 3. Notification of Subgrants.

In compliance with the *Administrative Procedure and Texas Register Act of 1975*, notification of the availability of funding will be placed in the *Texas Register* on the date of release of the Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrant and Tutorial Assistance Subgrant (TAS) Request for Applications (RFAs). The *Texas Register* is the publication, available both online and by subscription, through which hundreds of state agency rule writers, in cooperation with the Office of the Secretary of State, fulfill the task of organization and systematic dissemination of state agency rules. In addition, all local educational agencies (LEAs) in Texas will receive letters notifying them of the READ for Texas program along with the district level criteria for eligibility. A follow up letter and copy of each RFA will be mailed to the eligible LEAs, as determined by the Agency. Campus level eligibility criteria will be outlined in this subsequent letter. LEAs will have the opportunity to appeal eligibility criteria to the Agency.

LEAs intending to apply for a subgrant will be required to indicate such by submitting a Notice of Intent (NOI) to apply, along with a list of campuses to be included in the application. Review by appropriate Agency staff will take place again to ensure that all eligibility and communication issues have been sufficiently addressed by both the state and by LEAs. A priority among these communication issues will be the requirement that LEAs eligible for a TAS subgrant provide public notice of the availability of the Tutorial Assistance Subgrant to potential providers of tutorial assistance operating in and parents residing in the LEA's jurisdiction.

RFAs for the subgrant program will be mailed directly to all eligible LEAs, along with detailed communication regarding subsequent workshops and services available to assist applicants in planning and developing applications in response to the RFAs.

#### 4. Assessment and Evaluation of Local Educational Agency Activities.

A complete description of how the Agency will assess and evaluate, on a regular basis, local educational agency activities supported by the Reading Excellence Act can be found in Section C.5. Evaluation.

## **H. COMPETITIVE PRIORITY: MODIFICATION OF TEXAS' ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS**

In their March 1999 meeting, the Texas State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) adopted reading standards for candidates seeking elementary-level certification to teach children from early childhood through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. A priority of the Board has been the adoption of the reading standards that will guide the preparation and professional development of teachers of children in their early years through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The standards approved are the result of input from a variety of sources: the Committee on Standards for Teachers of Reading; the Reading Standards Working Group; the Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts; and state and national experts. The standards have been drafted to ensure close alignment with the state's curriculum framework, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and with the key components of a scientifically research based reading program as articulated in the Texas Reading Initiative. A copy of the standards is included as Appendix 10.

These reading standards will guide the development of a framework for assessing educators on the requisite knowledge and skills in early reading. Additionally, these reading standards will guide the creation of an assessment framework for the Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas (ExCET) program, and the framework will serve as the set of specifications for the development of items to test the reading knowledge and skills of all educators seeking certification to teach reading to young children. The initial administration of ExCET tests that will incorporate the new reading standards is slated for the 2000-2001 school year.

The next step in the process of building the ExCET test items based on these standards is the creation of an assessment framework. This framework will provide additional details about how the reading standards translate to the form of test specifications that outline the parameters of the test content and item formats. While the assessment framework is in draft form, it will be validated by a statewide sample of Texas public school teachers and teacher preparation faculty by means of a job analysis survey. Plans are under way for conducting this job analysis survey in fall 1999. The results of the survey will be incorporated into the final reading framework for assessing candidates seeking elementary-level certification to teach students from early childhood through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. This survey will be conducted to provide empirical evidence in support of the validity of these standards, which will guide the development of test items.

Changes in standards and the new ExCET test will require educator preparation programs in Texas colleges and universities to align their curricula with the new standards. This, in turn, will increase the training and methods of teaching reading required for certification as an elementary school teacher to reflect scientifically based reading research. SBEC's budget and request for appropriations include expenditures for the development of this assessment and subsequent incorporation into applicable ExCET examinations.

The ExCET exam plays a key role in the Accountability System for Educator Preparation (ASEP). Similar to the state's accountability system for public schools, ASEP is an accountability system for Texas' educator preparation programs, including colleges of education and alternative educator preparation programs. Under ASEP, educator preparation programs are held accountable for the readiness for certification of educators completing their programs. ASEP is based on the performance of teacher candidates for certification on the ExCET exam. Presently, for a program to be "Accredited" to prepare educators, first-time pass rates for all certification examinations must be 70 percent or higher, or cumulative pass rates must be 80 percent or higher for each demographic group. In the first year of implementation of ASEP, 35 out of 86 educator preparation programs in Texas did not meet the standards.

The establishment of these new reading standards for elementary teacher certification will result in a more stringent teacher certification exam. This action, coupled with the role the exam plays in the accountability of educator preparation programs, will lead to changes in the methods by which Texas prepares teachers.