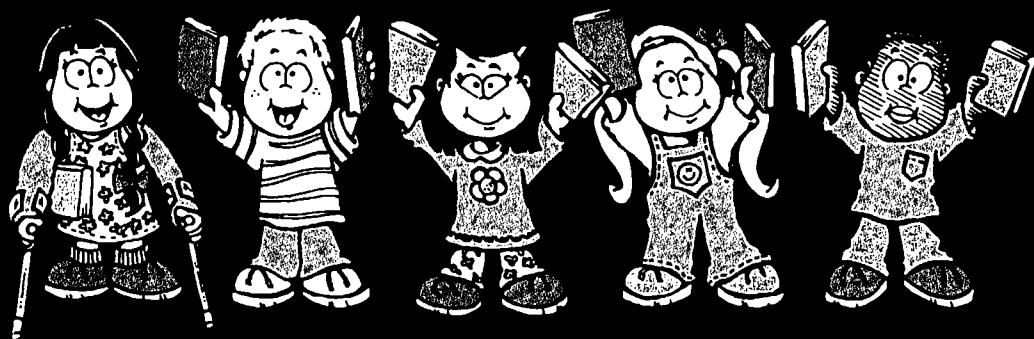

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202

Dear Families and Caregivers of Young Children:

In August 1996, President Clinton challenged every American to join his **AMERICA READS CHALLENGE** to help more children read well and independently by the end of third grade. This challenge is an opportunity for families and caregivers, along with many other partners in your community, to become part of a national, grass-roots effort to improve the reading and writing skills of America's youth. With almost 40 percent of children in the fourth grade not reading and writing at a basic level, families and caregivers that help young children learn about language can make a very important difference in the lives of these children.

To further the President's Challenge, we encourage you to use the activities and ideas in this **AMERICA READS CHALLENGE: READY★SET★READ** Early Childhood Learning Kit for all children from birth through age five, including those with disabilities. The kit was developed by reading experts using the best research and practices in early childhood language development, as well as the successful experiences of families and caregivers.

This **READY★SET★READ** Kit includes the following helpful items:

- **READY★SET★READ Activity Guide for Families and Caregivers:** These activity guides provide ideas you can use to help young children learn about language with age-appropriate activities.
- **1997-98 Early Childhood Activity Calendar:** This calendar is filled with helpful tips and special activities that promote reading and language skills for young children.
- **Early Childhood Growth Chart:** This growth chart for families and caregivers measures children's height and language development. It gives age-appropriate activities to promote language development for young children.

Parents are their children's first teachers, and caregivers play an essential role in supporting the work families have begun at home. We are pleased to provide both families and caregivers with our new **AMERICA READS CHALLENGE: READY★SET★READ** Early Childhood Learning Kit for your use with young children. We now invite you to change a child's life by helping children in your family and community improve their language skills.

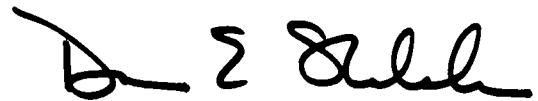
Sincerely,



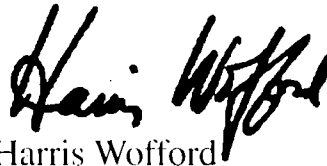


Richard W. Riley
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education





Donna E. Shalala
Secretary
*U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services*





Harris Wofford
Chief Executive Officer
Corporation for National Service

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AMERICA READS CHALLENGE

READY★SET★READ

FOR CAREGIVERS

Early Childhood Language Activities
for Children from Birth through Age Five



A Joint Project of the Corporation for National Service,
the U.S. Department of Education, and
the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services