

EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER 01-260

WHEREAS, the Florida Constitution provides that the education of children is a fundamental value of the people of the State of Florida and instructs the Executive and Legislative branches to make adequate provision for the education of "all children" residing within the State's borders; and

WHEREAS, reading is the most powerful common denominator in education and paramount to an individual's success; and

WHEREAS, research strongly indicates that failure to read proficiently is the most compelling reason children are retained in the same grade, assigned to special education, or given long-term remedial services; and

WHEREAS, Florida's students are making progress in acquiring necessary reading skills and have demonstrated increases in reading scores in recent years; however, only about half of Florida's fourth graders read at or above grade level, only four in ten of our middle school students read at or above grade level, and fewer than four in ten of our high school students read at or above grade level; and

WHEREAS, there are a variety of existing efforts in Florida to improve reading skills and the State of Florida has taken many recent actions to improve reading proficiency, including, but not limited to: expanding the required courses regarding the reading process for freshmen entering teacher programs; appropriating \$5 million this year for the Family Literacy and Reading Excellence Center, which prepares master teachers to train their colleagues to teach reading more effectively; the Reading Adoption Process, which for the first time this fall will ensure that all Florida reading curricula and instructional methods will support the Sunshine State Standards; and continuing the Governor's Family Literacy Initiative, which has awarded over \$2 million in Family Literacy Grants to start or expand 50 literacy programs throughout Florida; and

WHEREAS, Florida's ultimate goal is that every student read at or above grade level; and

WHEREAS, parents, families, neighbors and mentors play a crucial role in helping children learn to read; and

WHEREAS, teachers need improved access to innovative, creative, and effective strategies to help children learn to read proficiently; and

WHEREAS, with a more comprehensive and coordinated effort from the State, additional assistance, and encouragement from families and communities, many more students can become successful readers, pursue their dreams, and improve the quality of life in Florida; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JEB BUSH, Jeb Bush, as Governor of the State of Florida, and pursuant to the power vested in me by law, do hereby promulgate the following executive order, effective immediately:

Section 1.

Just Read, Florida!, a comprehensive, coordinated reading initiative aimed at helping every student become a successful, independent reader, is hereby initiated.

Section 2.

The Florida Department of Education, working with local school districts, is hereby requested to:

- a. inventory and review reading programs utilized in Florida schools to provide an assessment of the effectiveness of these programs and determine the cost per student of these programs; and
- b. recommend statewide standards for reading programs based on the latest scientific research. The department will gain input from and work with successful reading teachers, the Florida Reading Association, school administrators, superintendents, parents, legislators, business and community leaders, and university researchers. These standards should support the work of successful teachers and reflect the findings of the National Reading Panel and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).

Section 3.

The Florida Department of Education is hereby requested to address and make recommendations, in consultation with the Florida Board of Education, regarding at least the following areas:

- A. early-reading instruction strategies and reading screenings or assessments for K-2 students;
- B. reading intervention strategies for students who read below grade level;
- C. reading course requirements for middle school and high school students who are not reading at grade level;
- D. reading activities in teacher preparation and professional development programs;
- E. leveraging technology to improve reading proficiency and integrating online professional development with existing and traditional training;
- F. utilizing teacher reading academies and/or schools within schools to teach effective reading strategies;
- G. planning for integration, coordination and effective investment of anticipated federal funds from President Bush's Reading First Initiative, and for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers;
- H. developing ongoing public-private partnerships aimed at increasing reading proficiency and providing supplemental books to students;
- I. recognizing outstanding reading teachers and schools at which students are making significant progress in reading;
- J. increasing parental and family involvement in teaching and encouraging reading;
- K. encouraging family literacy practices and programs through innovative integration of adult literacy and elementary and secondary school programs; and
- L. utilizing, supporting, and training mentors and volunteers to help children and adults learn to read.

Section 4.

The Florida Department of Education is hereby requested to provide to the Governor an interim report no later than December 15, 2001, and a final report no later than February 15, 2002. Such reports shall be promptly forwarded to the Speaker of the House, the President of the Senate, the State Board of Education and the Florida Board of Education.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Florida to be affixed, at Tallahassee, the Capitol, this 7th day of September 2001.