

November 3, 2009

Senator Patty Murray  
173 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Murray:

We, the undersigned education organizations would like to thank you for your leadership on addressing the literacy needs of all students through the introduction of the Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) Act.

As you are aware, literacy development is an ongoing process, beginning in early childhood and continuing through elementary and secondary school. Even before the beginning of formal schooling, children from low-income families are less likely than students from higher-income families to recognize letters and understand the relationship between letters and sounds. Without intervention, disparities in educational outcomes persist throughout elementary school and beyond. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, more than two thirds of all fourth and eighth graders are not proficient readers, and these students are disproportionately poor and minority. Further, researchers at ACT have found that, absent strong intervention, eighth-grade academic achievement is highly predictive of college and career readiness at graduation.

Such interventions are necessary because to be successful in the twenty-first century requires skills that an earlier generation never imagined. What students need to know and do to be ready for higher education, work, and civic life is much more demanding than it once was. Creating globally competent graduates requires high level reading and writing skills, and these skills are prerequisites for success in other high-growth fields, including science and technology. The LEARN Act will ensure that students from birth through grade twelve acquire the reading and writing skills necessary to succeed in school and after graduation.

The LEARN Act would create much-needed federal support for comprehensive state and locally led literacy programs to ensure that children from birth to twelfth grade have the reading and writing skills necessary for success in school and beyond. It would authorize \$2.5 billion to fund state and local school-based literacy programs that span from birth to grade twelve. The grants would provide dedicated funds for early childhood, elementary, and adolescent literacy programs.

The LEARN Act would provide funds for high-quality professional development that would prepare teachers to improve literacy instruction; analyze data to improve student learning; use diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to inform instruction; and effectively implement literacy intervention strategies. Teachers would then be able to provide students, including special education students and English language learners, with excellent instruction in reading and writing, including in vocabulary development, phonemic awareness, the use of diverse texts, comprehension, and the ability to communicate for multiple purposes with diverse audiences.

Thank you again for demonstrating your support for meaningful literacy instruction by introducing this bill.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Excellent Education  
International Reading Association  
Knowledge Alliance  
Learning Disabilities Association of America  
National Association of Elementary School Principals  
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools  
National Association of Secondary School Principals  
National Association of State Boards of Education  
National Association of State Directors of Special Education  
National Council of Teachers of English  
National Center for Learning Disabilities  
National Education Association  
National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform  
National Middle School Association  
National PTA  
National School Boards Association  
National School Supply and Equipment Association  
National Title I Association  
National Writing Project  
Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.  
Reading Recovery Council of North America  
Scholastic Inc.  
The Association of Educational Publishers