

## Striving Readers Act of 2007

### **Problem: Middle and high school students still struggle to read.**

Most secondary students read below grade level. According to the latest NAEP scores, 71% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 65% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders read below grade level. Poor literacy skills mean that students are more likely to drop out of school and are more likely not to succeed in college. Research shows that only 70% of students graduate on time, and only 34% graduate with literacy skills needed to do well in college.

Secondary students read poorly because their teachers are not trained to teach literacy and because few resources are directed to secondary schools for literacy. Most people think students learn to read early on and continue to improve. In fact, research shows student literacy skills drop off around fourth grade and stagnate through the rest of school. Further, federal and state policymakers do not invest much in reading for secondary students so that secondary schools do not have the resources to focus on literacy or the time and expertise to train their teachers to use literacy strategies in their teaching. Because high schools don't prepare students to read and write well, they take remedial reading and writing courses in college, costing the nation \$1.4 billion every year.

### **Solution: Striving Readers can improve literacy, graduation rates, and college success.**

Better literacy skills improve achievement in all subjects, including math and science, improve graduation rates, and improve students' chances of succeeding in college. Striving Readers would improve literacy skills by helping every state, district, and school develop comprehensive literacy plans that ensure every student reads and writes on grade level. Striving Readers would also train teachers to use assessments and literacy strategies to help struggling readers, train leaders to support teachers, and provide reading materials for schools that lack them.

### **Striving Readers can benefit the nation economically.**

- Cutting the dropout rate in half would realize \$13.2 billion per year in improved wages.\*
- Graduating every student would save \$1.4 billion per year in remediation costs.\*
- Graduating every student would save \$17 billion per year in healthcare costs.\*

### **What are the basics of the Striving Readers bill?**

- **Purpose:** To improve student achievement and high school graduation and college readiness rates for middle and high school students by establishing literacy initiatives.
- **Grants:** 5 year grants to states on a formula basis. States award grants competitively to districts. Districts, in turn, provide funds to schools with the greatest need.
- **States:** States create statewide literacy programs, help improve teacher training and professional development, and track student progress and share that data with the public.
- **Districts:** Create literacy programs that help schools target help to students significantly behind, provide reading materials for adolescents, provide professional development for teachers in core academic subjects, offer extra time and help for students who need it, and use assessments to inform teaching. In doing so schools ensure they address the needs of special education and English language learner students.
- **Evaluation:** States submit two progress reports to the U.S. Department of Education. The U.S. Department of Education conducts a national evaluation of the program.
- **Funding:** Authorized at \$200 million in FY2007 with increasing funding to FY2011.\*

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\* The Alliance for Excellent Education can provide a breakdown of this data by state.