

CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION1430 N Street, Suite 5111; P.O. Box 944272
Sacramento, CA 94244-2720**OCTOBER 2003 INFORMATION MEMORANDUM**

DATE: October 9, 2003

TO: Members, State Board of Education

FROM: Karen M. Steentofte, Chief Counsel

SUBJECT: **Reading First Program**

Assembly Bill 1485 (Firebaugh) is currently on the Governor's desk and it is expected to be signed. The portions of AB 1485 relating to the Reading First Program direct the State Board of Education to send an amendment of the Reading First Plan to the United States Department of Education (USDE) that would allow the use of adopted alternate format *SRA Open Court Reading 2002* and Houghton Mifflin *A Legacy of Literacy 2003* in classes operating pursuant to Education Code Section 310 (Prop 227 waiver classrooms). Currently the only adopted alternate formats for these instructional materials are in Spanish, but AB 1485 also directs the SBE to determine if there is a demand for other translations. Until this amendment is approved by the USDE, AB 1485 would prohibit expenditure of the over \$13 million in additional Reading First funds California received for 2003-2004.

While AB 1485 would not take effect until January 1, 2004, waiting until that time to comply with the requirements of the bill would make it difficult for schools to utilize the funds in an effective manner. Therefore, a meeting of the Reading and Literacy Partnership Team has been scheduled for October 27, 2003, to review the Reading First Plan amendment and recommend Board action at the November State Board meeting. Once approved by the Board, the amendment will be sent immediately to USDE with the request that the USDE review of the amendment as expeditiously as possible.

Once the amendment is approved, existing Reading First districts will be allowed to add Prop 227 waiver classrooms using the adopted alternate format instructional materials to their Reading First Program and their 2003-2004 grant amount will be increased accordingly. The process and application for these district program revisions will be developed shortly so that classrooms can be added as soon as the plan amendment is approved by the USDE. The process and application will be limited to ensuring that any new classrooms will adhere to the program assurances in California's Amended Reading First Plan.

The California Technical Assistance Center (C-TAC) and the Regional Technical Assistance Centers (R-TACs) which provide technical assistance to potential and existing Reading First LEAs have been informed of AB 1485, its content, status and related implementation. The CDE will alert districts when the Plan amendment is approved and provide instruction on how to add Prop 227 waiver classrooms with the adopted alternate formats to their existing Reading First program. These waiver classrooms will receive the same support as other Reading First classrooms and in return they will be expected to meet all the requirements of Reading First, including using research-based strategies and materials and having children meet grade level English language arts standards by the end of third grade, as demonstrated through the California STAR program. All approved classrooms will be included in the local and state evaluations to determine future

Members, State Board of Education

October 9, 2003

Page 2

funding in years 3 - 6, so all classrooms are held to the same high expectations for improving students reading skills and bringing all students to state standards as measured by our state assessment.

Eligible school districts currently not participating in the Reading First Program will have an opportunity to apply for Reading First funding for the 2004-2005 school year. In addition, there will be a process for existing Reading First districts to add schools in 2004-2005 to their Reading First program that were not originally included based on the understanding that waiver classrooms would not receive funding. It is anticipated that the application process for those grants will begin in early winter, with notification of successful grant applicant in spring 2004. More detailed information on this grant process should be available in the next few months.