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Richard W. Riley

Secretary

Acknowledgments

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The principal authors of the *Compact for Reading Guide* are Mary Russo, Director of the Boston Annenberg Challenge; Gary Kosman of Northwestern University; and Alan Ginsburg, Susan Thompson-Hoffman, and Julie Pederson of the U.S. Department of Education.

The *School-Home Links Reading Kit* was developed by teams of teachers at the kindergarten through third grade levels. One team was coordinated by Mary Russo and Jonna Casey of the Boston Annenberg Challenge that included Margaret Sands, Kathleen Baron, and Crystal English of the Mason School in Boston. Another team was coordinated by Ellie Topolovac, Superintendent of the Solana Beach School District in California, which included Susana Baum, Janet Brice, Jaime Crowley, Rhona Grant, Deborah Hays, Cristy Maxcy, Marla Sammulu, David Topolovac, and Patricia Totina. Selected activities were adapted or reprinted with permission from *How To Tutor Your Child In Reading and Writing (1998)*, published by the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication at Indiana University and the Family Learning Center, and *Spelling for Writing (1998)*, by Carl Smith, published by ERIC and the Family Learning Center. Shira Herman, Alex Campbell, Sandra Richardson, and Azalea Saunders provided editing and formatting assistance. Alan Ginsburg and Susan Thompson-Hoffman coordinated the overall effort.

The School-Home Links in the *School-Home Links Reading Kit* are organized around skills frameworks provided in the National Academy of Sciences' report, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, and a reading frame work developed by Edward Kame'enui and Deborah Simmons of the University of Oregon.

These materials were extensively reviewed by teams of parents, teachers, and administrators and by participants at the 1998 Improving America's Schools Act and Title I Parents' Conferences.

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A Compact for Reading Guide

A Reading Partnership Action Kit



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Compact Legislation

Section 1188 (d) (Parental Involvement) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, “Shared Responsibilities for High Student Performance”:

“...Each school served under [Title I, Part A] shall jointly develop with parents for all children served... a school-parent compact that outlines how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student achievement and the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the State’s high standards.

Such Compact shall—

- (1) describe the school’s responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables the children served under [Title I, Part A] to meet the State’s student performance standards, and the ways in which each parent will be responsible for supporting their children’s learning, such as monitoring attendance, homework completion, and television watching; volunteering in their child’s classroom; and participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children and positive use of extracurricular time; and
- (2) address the importance of communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing basis through, at a minimum--
 - (A) parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools, at least annually, during which the compact shall be discussed as the compact relates to the individual child’s achievement;
 - (B) frequent reports to parents on their children’s progress; and
 - (C) reasonable access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child’s class, and observation of classroom activities.”



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Foreword

All across America, communities are pulling together to strengthen education. More and more parents, teachers, and community and business leaders are creating compacts to build and strengthen partnerships for improved student learning.

The improvement of reading is increasingly the focus of efforts among families, schools, and community organizations for better education. A Compact for Reading can help bring people together to improve reading. Compacts are written agreements among families, teachers, principals, and students that describe how all partners can help improve the reading and other language arts skills of kindergarten through third-grade children, including those with disabilities and with limited English proficiency.

The *Compact for Reading Guide* is a user-friendly handbook designed to walk your family-school compact team through the steps of building and implementing a Compact for Reading. It provides information, strategies, examples, and checklists to help parents, educators, and community members develop effective, workable compacts that can improve your school, increase family involvement, and increase student skills and achievement in reading. The handbook is intended to help and guide partnerships in forming compacts, without adding requirements. Associated with this *Guide* is a *School-Home Links Reading Kit*, which includes activities for children from kindergarten through the third grade that teachers can provide to families for at-home reinforcement of in-school reading and language arts activities. The School-Home Links Program is one way to put your Compact for Reading to work.

The *Compact for Reading Guide* and the *School-Home Links Reading Kit* are parts of a series of continuous improvement materials that highlight key issues of interest to teachers, parents, principals, tutors, and community members who want to make their schools better and work toward standards of excellence. These materials are available on the U. S. Department of Education home page at <www.ed.gov/pubs/CompactforReading>.

We welcome your comments and examples of how you implement the Compact for Reading and the School-Home Links Program in your community. We also welcome your ideas to improve these materials. Please mail your ideas or copies of your compact to the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, c/o U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Richard W. Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education

Findings from the U.S. Department of Education's *Prospects Study* (1993) reveal that students in schools with Compacts in place perform better than children in similar schools without them because of greater reinforcement of learning at home. Furthermore, effects of the Compact on student learning were stronger than effects from other forms of school-home interactions.



A Compact for Reading

Committing to Improvement

Why a Compact for Reading? Success in helping many more children read well often depends on a partnership among families, principals, teachers, and students. A Compact for Reading is a written agreement among these partners that describes how each partner can help improve the reading and other language arts skills of children from kindergarten through third grade, including those with disabilities and with limited English proficiency.* Tutors and other community members can also be partners in a Compact for Reading.

Research shows that some 38 percent of fourth-graders in America cannot read at the basic level of proficiency. Furthermore, reading scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have remained basically flat for 30 years (NAEP, 1998). Although there has been some improvement between 1994 and 1998 (NAEP, 1998), disadvantaged and minority students have the greatest difficulty with reading. In high-poverty schools, 84 percent of fourth-grade students do not read at the basic level of proficiency (NAEP, 1996). In addition, some high-poverty students lose as much as three to four months of academic progress over the summer while their higher-income peers are gaining at least a month of progress.

We know from the comprehensive report of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (1998), that we have enough research right now to be able to turn these statistics around if we put our best research into practice. We can help children learn to read who have not read before, and we can

increase significantly the proficiency of children who already know how to read.

The NAS report not only describes what works in a school environment for reading instruction, but it plainly shows that family members—mothers, fathers, grandparents, older sisters, and brothers—play a major role in helping children learn to read and in improving their reading ability.

Therefore, if families:

- Read to and with their children,
- Read themselves, and encourage their children to read,
- Keep a variety of reading materials in the home,
- Have high expectations for their children's reading achievement, and
- Help teach their children to read and respond to their children's interest in books, without a doubt their children will be better readers than children from families who do not participate in these activities (NAS, 1998).

*While special assistance may be needed to serve limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities, the vast majority of these students are not severely impaired and can be included with minimal accommodations.

Family involvement is such a strong predictor of reading and other academic success that Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—an Act that supports local efforts to help children in high-poverty communities meet challenging standards—includes provisions for the development of a family-school compact. Every school that receives Title I, Part A, funds must develop a family-school compact that describes the responsibilities of families and schools in helping children reach high academic standards.

This *Compact for Reading Guide* and the *School-Home Links Reading Kit* form Volume II in the series of *Compact* guides from the Family Involvement Partnership for Learning at the U.S. Department of Education.

The *Compact for Reading Guide* walks school communities serving children in kindergarten through third grade through the process of forming a family-school compact, as one way to help meet the requirements of Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in these schools. The Guide can be used as a stand-alone manual to help partners in your school community form a Compact (see the example following), and to identify and make a full range of commitments to improve the reading and other language arts skills of children from kindergarten through the third grade. Or the *Guide* can be used with Volume I of this series, the *Compact for Learning*, to focus attention on literacy within an overall plan

to improve learning through family-school partnerships. This Guide is not intended to add to existing requirements, but rather to be a helpful guide to forming compacts for reading.

The companion *School-Home Links Reading Kit* contains around 400 activities that teachers use may as one way to encourage home support of school reading activities for children in kindergarten through the third grade. Each *School-Home Links* activity helps to develop skills that correspond to the National Academy of Sciences' "Accomplishments in Reading" for children from kindergarten through third grade (see Appendix A). These School-Home Links may be sent home three to four times a week. A simple key at the bottom of each page provides the appropriate grade for each activity, as well as the type of reading accomplishment each activity supports.

The *School-Home Links Reading Kit* contains School-Home Links and Book Links. The School-Home Links are take-home activities that allow practice in reading across a range of skill areas. The Book Links are activities teachers can use to support the reading and analysis of "take-home" books. Through the Book Links component, families are encouraged to read to and with their children every night for 30 minutes, in addition to working with their children on developing skills associated with reading books. (Book Links are described more fully in the discussion of Step 3 below.)

All Compact for Reading products are also available through linkages on the U.S. Department of Education Web site (<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/CompactforReading>) and in hard copy from the Department's toll-free publications number (1-877-576-7734 or 1-800-USA-LEARN), as long as supplies last.

Key Players and Their Roles

Everyone has a role in the Compact, and everyone benefits from the partnerships formed when compacts are developed.

Through the Compact for Reading:

- **Students** are provided with many opportunities to practice and improve their reading skills, by families, learning partners, and teachers in schools.
- **Teachers and school administrators** get support for in-school reading activities, by motivating families and other learning partners in the community to extend these activities at home for children who most need help in reading. They can clearly describe what the school expects of students to families, students, and the community.
- **Families** will find out what is expected from the schools to read well, and what they can do to help their children succeed. For families who cannot come to the school, the Compact explains how they can help at home. Regardless of their own reading skills, parents have opportunities every day to build on the learning that takes place at school. Reading just 30 minutes a day to or with their child, for example, significantly increases the child's reading ability.
- **Tutors and other learning partners in the community** are invited to volunteer time to read to and with children, and support teachers and families by engaging children in extended-learning activities, including the School-Home Links.



Sample Compact for Reading

We, the _____ School community, establish this Compact for Reading in order to foster the improvement of reading and other language arts and to support the success of our students, so all may read well and independently. We believe this can be done with the planned partnership of parents, families, students, teachers, principals, and community members.

Parent's and Family's Responsibilities

We will:

- Make sure that our child attends school regularly, is on time, and is prepared to learn, with homework completed.
- Know what skills our child is learning in reading and other language arts classes each day.
- Do activities at home, like the School-Home Links, that continue our child's classroom learning at home.
- Read with or to our child for 30 minutes each day, five days a week.
- Get a library card for our child, and encourage our child to bring reading materials from the library into the home.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences and communicate frequently with our child's teacher, through notes and conversation, about how well our child is doing.

Student's Responsibilities

I will:

- Come to school on time and be ready to learn.
- Pay attention to my teachers, family, and tutors, and ask questions when I need help.
- Ask my family to read to me or with me for 30 minutes each day, five days a week.
- Complete my homework on time in a thorough and legible way.
- Welcome help from my family on my homework and papers.
- Return signed homework and papers to school.

Teacher's Responsibilities

I will:

- Provide quality teaching and leadership to my students and their families.
- Communicate frequently with families and tutors about my students' progress in reading and show them how they can help.
- Coordinate with other programs to make sure nightly assignments do not exceed time limits.
- Recognize that students are accountable for every assignment.
- Participate in meaningful professional development in how to teach reading, how to communicate with families, and how to work with tutors.
- Hold at least two parent-teacher conferences a year.

Principal's Responsibilities

I will:

- Set high standards in reading and other language arts by providing a challenging curriculum.
- Report publicly on schoolwide reading scores, and help teachers and parents to understand how adopting high standards can lead to the improvement of scores.
- Allocate resources to ensure that high standards are met.
- Hold workshops on standards in reading and ways to set the standards into practice at school and at home.
- Provide reading materials and training so that parents can help their children learn to read.
- Establish training workshops for tutors and families to work with children on home activities like School-Home Links.
- Provide special benefits to teachers who meet with families and tutors in extended-learning programs.
- Welcome and involve all families, especially those with low literacy skills or limited English proficiency, or those who have not been involved in the school before.

Community Member's Responsibilities

I will:

- Make a commitment to help all children learn to read.
- Keep informed about the reading standards and the performance of schools in my area.
- Find out more about my school's literacy and reading standards.
- Contact business and other community organizations that can donate resources to local schools to help them meet high standards in reading.
- Volunteer to tutor students who need help in reading and other language arts skills or support and participate in training for tutors and other partners.
- Help to open other facilities where children can go after school to read with someone or to do their homework.
- Build a community network of concerned adults, consisting of community leaders, writers, journalists, and others who can be helpful to discuss and publicize local literacy issues.



The Compact for Reading's Simple Five-Step Process

The Compact's simple process for developing and implementing your Compact for Reading through family and community involvement has five steps:

Step 1: Get Started

Step 2: Write the Compact

Step 3: Put Your Compact for Reading to Work

Step 4: Evaluate Your Compact

Step 5: Strengthen Your Compact

What to Expect as You Develop and Implement Your Compact

Writing a Compact for Reading provides an opportunity to create new partnerships in your community for better education. An effective partnership recognizes that a team can accomplish together what each partner could not accomplish alone. That is why it is the goal of a family-school partnership to connect learning at school with learning at home.

As you begin to develop a Compact, Steps 1 and 2—building your team and writing your Compact—will help parents and teachers come together to strengthen their relationship through improved communication. Parents may feel that educators talk down to them or use educational jargon they do not understand. Teachers may feel that parents need to talk more about education with their children. The Compact encourages effective, frequent communication among families, schools, and students in a language everyone can understand. And communication is essential to building partnerships.

Step 3—using the Compact to move the partnership from planning to action—is a critical next step. All the partners need to know

about the power of the Compact—what it is, how they can get involved, what their responsibilities are, and what improvements and results they can expect to see. Launching the Compact is a great opportunity to reach out to families and community members who have not been involved at the school before.

Once the Compact is launched, Step 3 will help you face one of the biggest challenges—sustaining interest in and commitment to the Compact over time. Your partners may need frequent reminders of how their daily activities—whether working with a child at home on Home Links activities, reading to a child for 30 minutes, or as teachers taking the time to contact families to discuss how they can work together to help their students progress—fulfill their commitment to the Compact and are essential for meeting the goal of improving children's reading.

When spreading the word about the Compact and gaining support for it, be patient. Identify and seek out those who are essential to making the Compact work—teachers, tutors, families, students. Remind your partners that the Compact is more than words on a piece of paper. It is an action plan for student success and school improvement.

Once your Compact is up and running, Step 4 will help you evaluate how well the Compact is working. Evaluation can show you what you are doing well and what areas need improvement. Evaluation also sends a signal that your schools and families are serious about making their Compact work. This information is needed to help all of the partners reach their highest potential.

Finally, Step 5 will help you look at your Compact to identify what you have done well and where you need to do more work. This kind of continuous improvement in the Compact process will keep your Compact powerful to meet the reading needs of your community and its children.