

# Foreword

**W**hen parents bring their children to the classroom door, they are entrusting our schools with this nation's most precious resource. No more important public service exists than to ensure that when children leave our schools as young adults, they are empowered with the language skills they need to be successful, contributing members of an information society that relies increasingly on the power and richness of language for effective communication. We take this responsibility seriously and invite you to participate with us as we implement a system that will ensure that every student will be reading at least by the third grade and will graduate with a full range of abilities in the language arts.

Reading has been described as emancipation because it allows the mind access to all previously recorded human thought. Its corollary, writing, allows us to communicate with the future. And listening and speaking, tools of the present, allow us to connect with people throughout the world. Without the ability to read, write, listen, and speak well, our students will find themselves lost in a world where even basic transactions assume facility with language. The importance of our responsibility to teach students to read with

comprehension and enthusiasm, to listen with understanding and compassion, to speak with conviction and effect, and to write with clarity and persuasion cannot be overstated.

To accomplish that ambitious task, we are providing a framework that offers a blueprint for implementation of the language arts content standards adopted by the California State Board of Education in 1997. Those world-class standards, comprehensive and balanced, may require changes in instructional programs, instructional materials, staff development, and assessment strategies. A standards-based system of curricular and instructional programs that accelerates and sustains the early and continued achievement in reading and the language arts by all students in California's public education system, kindergarten through grade twelve, is described in this framework. That system cannot and will not be implemented, however, without the participation and contributions of teachers, administrators, parents, students, and all other stakeholders in a literate society. Teaching our children to use and enjoy the power of language is a shared responsibility. We look forward to working with you to ensure that all students attain the highest possible levels of language and literacy.



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