

CREATING LIFELONG READERS

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 6, 1998

Reviewed by Board of Managers March 2009

- WHEREAS,** The fifth Object of the National PTA states, “To develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for all children and youth the highest advantages in physical, mental, social, and spiritual education;” and
- WHEREAS,** The Mission Statement of the California State PTA includes the statement, “to promote parent and public involvement in schools and communities;” and
- WHEREAS,** The United States Department of Education has stated in its publication “America Goes Back to School,” that if families, schools and communities make improving reading skills a priority, then America will become a reading, literate society; and
- WHEREAS,** The California Reading Task Force* recommends that parents and communities work cooperatively with schools to promote reading achievement, and that parent and community volunteer programs be established to support and encourage reading; and
- WHEREAS,** The EdSource *School Involvement Project* states that children are more likely to believe that reading is vital if they actually see and hear the evidence of the importance of reading at school, at home and in the community; and
- WHEREAS,** The Advisory Committee of the California State Board of Education has emphasized in its “California Reading Initiative (1996)” the importance of reading aloud to children as one of the effective methods of reading instruction; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA encourage its units, councils and districts to work with their schools, school districts and school boards to make reading a community priority; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts encourage parents to work in partnership with schools, businesses, community organizations and appropriate allied agencies to create community-based campaigns to promote reading; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA encourage its units, councils and districts to work with their schools and communities on programs or events that promote reading aloud and in any other form to children.

* *The California Reading Task Force, a 27-member cross section of California teachers, principals, school board members, parents and others, was appointed by California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin to develop a set of recommendations for improving student achievement so that “every student might leave the third grade no longer learning to read, but reading to learn.”*

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Continued on next page

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

Research has shown that children’s ability to learn to read is directly and dramatically influenced by early childhood experiences. In addition, school-aged children are more likely to believe reading is vital if they hear and see evidence of its importance not only at school, but at home and in their neighborhoods.

Failure to learn to read begins in the early grades and has harmful lifetime effects. National and state reports indicate that a majority of California children cannot read at basic levels. The urgency of this crisis resulted in the creation of a Reading Task Force by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin. The 27-member California Reading Task Force concluded that teaching children to read must be of the highest priority.

Reading aloud to children is a critically important activity. In *The Read Aloud Handbook*, author Jim Trelease cites much research to support reading aloud to children of all ages. He found that reading aloud to children improves their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and their attitudes about reading. Reading aloud awakens children’s imaginations and improves their language skills. In a comparison between classrooms, Trelease found that the students who were read to on a regular basis were more “turned on” to reading. He also notes that according to the national report, *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (commissioned and funded by the U.S. Department of Education), “The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is *reading aloud* to children. ... It is a practice that should continue throughout the grades.” In fact, until about the eighth grade, children *listen* on a higher level than they read. Therefore, children can hear and understand stories that are more complicated and more interesting than anything they could read on their own.

Reading to a child conditions the child to associate reading with pleasure. (We tend to repeat things which give us pleasure.) Reading aloud exposes the child to a positive reading role model, new information, a rich vocabulary, good grammar, the English language spoken in a manner distinctly different from that in television sitcoms or cartoons, a broader variety of books than might be chosen on one’s own, and to new experiences, people and places. By reading aloud to children, we can create “lifetime” readers.