



March 20, 2009

To whom it may concern:

If America truly expects to improve student achievement, then it must face the stark reality of the calendar and clock — each year a child is in school for 900 hours and outside of school for 7,800 hours.

By improving the curriculum of the *home*, the chances of improving the child's *school* performance are six times greater than if we change only the classroom. How families spend that 7,800 hours can make a big difference. Jed Gaines' Read Aloud America has parents reading to their children more and watching less television. Now *there* is a curriculum change!

Of the four other state-wide read-aloud campaigns (Virginia, West Virginia, Nebraska, and Delaware), none has garnered the parent response that Gaines has achieved in the last decade, drawing parents in Hawaii with numbers that are nothing short of extraordinary for a non-athletic school event. Further-more, none of the other states has the demographic and geographic obstacles to overcome that Gaines has conquered.

What sets his Read Aloud Program (RAP) apart from the usual school-parent event is that it shows parents the simple but effective behaviors they can use to change their child's reading attitudes and skills. This helps not only the child, but also the parent's self esteem and attitudes toward education. It's like winning a double-header in education!

If there is a "traffic jam" on the road to school improvement it's been at the "bridge" between home and school. Too often a school's best intentions are undone by poor communication between educators and parents. It may not even be the school's fault. The mistrust or discomfort that might have started back when the parent was a student often persists into adulthood and parenthood. Anything that changes that, convincing home and school to work together in behalf of the child is a boon for the community.

Moreover, the work of community volunteers in RAP as they visit classrooms and schools to read aloud with children is a step in the right direction in lowering the home-school barriers. Children seeing someone other than a "teacher" in the act of reading begin to think of reading as more than a subject on the report card. Those students as not just today's children but also tomorrow's *parents*.

By changing attitudes about reading from negative to positive, Jed Gaines' RAP takes a giant stride toward changing the future of child, family, and community. It's a model the rest of America would do well to imitate.

Sincerely,



Jim Trelease