

# READING

**Reading is the cornerstone of academic success.  
Reading failure is the root of scholastic defeat.**

## **FACTS:**

Twenty million American children are experiencing reading failure. The question is why is our current system of education disenfranchising millions of children from society by denying them the tools they need in order to learn to read and succeed in our text-driven culture?

Failure to read denies a child the opportunity to learn about science, history, social studies and literature. The inability to read often denies adults gainful employment because reading proficiency is required in even the most unskilled work environments; and, along with disenfranchising a person from society, it often provides an impetus to engage in activities like drug abuse and alcoholism. Chronic unemployment is also a common denominator among this group of young adults, which ultimately places a burden on society. The most important goal we must work to achieve as concerned citizens is to make sure all American children are offered the most basic education—in the hope that they are able to realize their full potential.

The National Center on Education Statistics reported in April 2001 that thirty-eight percent of our nation's fourth grade students could not read and understand a simple paragraph from an age-appropriate book. Clearly, we must join together to diminish this overwhelming statistic for the sake of under-served American children and for the future of our nation.

## **HOPE:**

Substantial research supported by government studies (NICHD, NRP, OSEP, NFS, OERI) has determined that the majority of children who enter school at risk for reading failure (whether influenced by socio-economic status, English as the second language or learning differences) can learn to read at average or above levels, if their needs are identified early and they are offered explicit and systematic instructional programs.

Currently, there is no concrete evidence or comparative analysis on which programs or methods most effectively teach our children to read. THE HAAN FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN and its partners are currently sponsoring the **POWER4Kids** Reading Initiative, which will do exactly that—provide indisputable evidence on which programs **WORK** and for whom.

Dr. Reid Lyon, Chief of the National Institute of Child Health and Development, notes that half of all children learn to read intrinsically, regardless of the program or the method. The other half needs explicit, systematic instruction to become good readers. Once we have indisputable **EVIDENCE** on which programs and methods meet the “Bar of Excellence” in producing reading results, we will then begin to “**EMPOWER THE TEACHERS**” on these methods to ensure all American children learn to read with scientifically proven programs.

Our children and our teachers are a national resource; we need to give them the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed. Once America has the **EVIDENCE**, then parents and policymakers will ensure that these programs are in our classrooms—the progression is logical, and our teachers are ready to begin.