The Striving Readers Act (S958 & HR2289)  
A Bill to Establish an Adolescent Literacy Program

What Is Striving Readers?

The major purpose of The Striving Readers Act of 2007 (S958) and (HR2289) is to improve student achievement in grades 4-12 by establishing adolescent literacy initiatives with measurable goals and explicit action steps to achieve those goals. The Act funds locally based and locally developed initiatives through competitive grants. The funding is designated for development of curriculum materials, instructional tools, and teaching strategies; for intensive high-quality professional development for teachers, literacy coaches, and school leaders; and for support for selecting, administering, and interpreting diagnostic assessments, formative assessments, and summative assessments for adolescent literacy achievement.

Why Should I Ask My Senator to Support The Striving Readers Act of 2007?

NCTE supports The Striving Readers Act of 2007 because its purposes match the goals of NCTE’s 2007 Legislative Agenda for Adolescent Literacy and NCTE’s positions on adolescent literacy, literacy coaches, professional development, and assessment. These purposes include the following:

- High-quality, long-term, inquiry-based professional development provided for all educators in a school or district.
- Programs and practices that promote critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and innovation to ensure that students are prepared to succeed in a global economy.
- Appropriate assessment structures and instructional support for the education of English Language Learners for whom research shows that long-term support integrating multilingual resources leads to higher student achievement.
- Ongoing support for the development of literacy coaches who engage in intensive, sustained study of literacy education and best practices in professional development.
- Formative and summative assessments that enable teachers to plan for instruction based on the individual strengths and needs of diverse students.
- Research that evaluates the efficacy of adolescent literacy programs and the dissemination of findings. Note that The Striving Readers Act of 2007 is the first bill that expands the definition of research to “scientifically valid” research defined as research that employs experimental, quasi-experimental, or qualitative research methods.

Why Do We Need The Striving Readers Act of 2007?

To improve high school graduation rates for all. Only 68% of high school students graduate on time with a diploma. That’s 1,300,000 students who fail to graduate from high school every year. High school graduation rates for students of color hover around 50% as do graduation rates in urban districts. Graduation rates for ELL are particularly low. In 2004 alone these nongraduates cost the nation more than $325,000,000,000.
To improve all students’ reading and writing abilities so they can succeed in all their courses in high school and college and graduate with the necessary skills to succeed in the workforce. Seventy-one percent of 8th graders read below the proficient level on the 2005 NAEP. On average African American and Hispanic 12th graders read at the same level as White 8th graders. The 25 fastest-growing professions have far greater than average literacy demands, while the fastest-declining professions have lower than average literacy demands. Only 34% of high school students graduate with the skills they need to succeed in college or the workplace. About 40% of high school students lack the skills employers seek, and community colleges alone pay $1,400,000,000 a year to provide remedial education to students under 25 who should have learned these basic skills in high school.

What about Funding for The Striving Readers Act of 2007?

The Striving Readers program was funded last year at $29.7 million, only enough for eight competitive grants. Recognizing the need for more initiatives, S958 calls for $200 million for FY2008 which will authorize grants in every state according to a formula basis. The bill also increases the funding each year until 2011.

What Should I Do?

- Take time to write to commend your Senator or Representative for cosponsoring The Striving Readers Act of 2007 (S958 or HR2289).
- Take time to write to ask your Senator or Representative to cosponsor or support The Striving Readers Act of 2007 (S958 or HR2289).
- Take time to visit your Senators or Representatives or their aides in your home district during the Senate Spring Recess: March 30 to April 10.
- Use the NCTE Visit Your Legislator guidelines and resources for making an appointment.
- Use the Striving Readers information above as an anchor for your discussion.
- Tell your own story of what you know works or is needed to improve adolescent literacy.
- Don’t forget to send a thank you note after your visit and include any information you may have offered to provide during your visit—an email will do.