Hello, CALIFORNIA!! MEET Pearson.

Our Commitment to Fighting 'Word Poverty' in California
A Partnership for Literacy

March 7, 2008

Dear California Educator,

Pearson, the world's leading education publisher, has been providing educational materials to California schools dating as far back as the 1800s. You may know us individually as Scott Foresman, Prentice Hall, Longman, SuccessMaker, NovaNet, AGS, Pearson School Systems, Pearson Assessment, Learning Teams, Achievement Solutions, and so many more – names in education that are recognized and respected across the State and the globe. In fact, most teachers in California have learned their profession by studying with Pearson's Merrill or Allyn & Bacon textbooks, and many have benefited from our professional development programs. Now, Pearson looks forward to bringing our world class programs – Reading Street for California and Pearson Literature for California – to the Golden State.

As California prepares to review new reading programs this Spring, I'd like to introduce you to Pearson, the publisher of the new *Reading Street for California* program. Though you probably are familiar with our Scott Foresman and Prentice Hall materials for other disciplines, it's possible you do not know of our parent company, Pearson. While Pearson is the largest education publisher in the world, this will be the very first time Pearson will be submitting an elementary reading program in California. We are enthusiastic about this great opportunity and are looking forward to showing you all the exciting and innovative components of our *Reading Street for California.*

Pearson is also introducing *Pearson calle de la lectura*, our parallel reading/language arts program in Spanish; and for middle and high school students, we have published *Pearson Literature for California.* Both programs include a separate *Pearson Language Central* component for intensive English-language development. Instruction is built from Grant Wiggins's *Understanding by Design* concepts – and we know California's teachers admire and respect the important work of Dr. Wiggins.

Research tells us that elementary school children should be increasing their vocabulary at the rate of seven words per day on average – meaning they should know at least 8,000 words by grade three, and an average of 45,000 words by high school graduation. Unfortunately, statistics confirm that struggling students are often not even learning one new word each day. There is a huge gap…the vocabulary gap, or what we call "word poverty." This critical component to reading comprehension is a key focus of our new California programs.

The statistics below are directly related to the reasons why Pearson focuses so strongly on vocabulary – these are issues that we can address together:

- Without intervention, by first grade, a child from a low-income community will have one-fourth the vocabulary of their mid-income peer – this is significant because reading ability at age 7 is one of the best predictors of success in high school.
- Reading tests for the last 30 years show boys consistently scoring lower than girls in every age group.

- English learners lack the academic vocabulary needed for success in classroom assignments and state-mandated standardized tests.
- Children with restricted vocabulary by grade three have declining comprehension scores in the later elementary years.
- By fourth grade, many children experience a "slump" in reading comprehension caused by below grade level vocabularies.

Together, we can intervene and transform the dismal forecast of these statistics into a bright future for our at-risk children. California's own Dr. Connie Juel, Education Professor at Stanford University, is one of the chief architects of vocabulary instruction in *Reading Street for California*, and she reminds us, "The chief culprit behind the reading achievement gap is a language gap." This is why vocabulary building is such a key focus in all grades of the *Reading Street for California* series. Students will master the skills they need to move on to middle school where the *Pearson Literature for California* program will continue an intensive focus on vocabulary and language arts development through high school.

Pearson is 100 percent committed to working with the schools and teachers in California to address the issues around "word poverty." We are doing this not only through our new reading/language arts programs, but through the philanthropic work of the Pearson Foundation, which is equally dedicated to programs which build vocabulary and set children on a path toward a lifetime love of reading. These initiatives include: the Read for the Record program, Family Book Nights and Book Give-Aways, the Pearson Teacher Fellowship Program, Jumpstart for Young Children's College Corps, The One Million Word Challenge in Los Angeles, and many other global literacy programs.

Our Pearson California team looks forward to partnering with you to address "word poverty" in California, and to providing our students the reading foundation they need to be successful in school and in life.

Sincerely,

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