



The Condition of Education, an annual report by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), recently released the most recent National education enrollment and performance trends. As the *Washington Post*, noted:

- ✓ Children born in 2001 and living in poverty are less likely to have someone read to them, tell them stories or sing to them. About 36 percent of 9-month-olds in families at or above the poverty line were read to each day, compared with 22 percent of those in the poorest families.
- ✓ Mothers who had completed higher levels of education were more likely to read to their children. More than 60 percent of 4-year-olds whose mothers had at least a bachelor's degree were read to each day, compared with 20 percent of 4-year-olds whose mothers had not finished high school.
- ✓ At age 4, children in families at or above the poverty line are becoming better able to recognize letters, numbers and shapes.

These facts are recited to underscore the importance of effective family literacy programs and the need for continued funding for Even Start at a sufficient level to improve the parenting skills and reading ability of our Nation's poorest parents and for their children.

As you know, Even Start is unique by offering a comprehensive one-stop family literacy intervention that includes adult literacy, adult basic education, GED preparation, and English as a Second Language; early childhood education for the children; and training for parents in how to be the primary teachers for their children and full partners in their education. In addition, teachers supervise and support parents as they work with their children in literacy activities so that parents will learn how to foster their children's literacy at home. Over the last six budget cycles, each Administration has proposed eliminating Even Start. Today the funding stands at \$66 Million. This amount is the result of decreases totaling \$184 Million or almost a 75% across-the-board reduction in federal funds. That has led to massive decreases in program funding and cuts services to more than 20,000 families.

The results of these ill-advised funding cuts are that fewer and fewer at-risk families are receiving the services and support they need to be successful in school, in seeking employment, and in their communities. Therefore, for the 2010 fiscal year, funding should be increased above the \$66 Million amount set by the House Subcommittee.

With one victory now pending in the House as the education appropriations works its way to completion, we must also turn our attention to the Senate. According to current scheduling, the Senate Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education will decide in about one week the fate of Even Start and other important programs. Your continued involvement, and those of our other supporters, will determine if we ultimately can involve more families in this vital program or watch as it fades away. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill".

Bill Goodling
Former Chairman
Education and Workforce Committee