

THANK YOU, BARBARA FOR THAT WONDERFUL INTRODUCTION.

I'D ALSO LIKE TO THANK PETER (*WAITE, NATIONAL LAUBUCH LITERACY RECOGNITION*) FOR THIS AWARD.

THIS AWARD HELPS VALIDATE ALL OF THE WORK WE HAVE BEEN DOING HERE TO FIGHT ILLITERACY. THANK YOU AGAIN, PETER.

THE GREEK PHILOSOPHER PLATO WROTE "THE DIRECTION IN WHICH EDUCATION STARTS A MAN WILL DETERMINE HIS FUTURE LIFE."

HIS WORDS STILL RING TRUE MORE THAN 2-THOUSAND YEARS AFTER HE WROTE THEM.

TODAY, IN THE 21ST CENTURY, WE ARE TRYING TO GET CHILDREN HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION BY MAKING SURE THEY KNOW HOW TO READ.

IT STARTS IMMEDIATELY AFTER A CHILD IS BORN. I AM AMAZED BY THE IMPACT EVERYONE IN MY FAMILY IS HAVING ON MY GRANDDAUGHTER, SOPHIE, WHEN THEY READ TO HER. THEY ARE PROVIDING HER WITH THE FIRST STEP IN HER EDUCATION.

SOON, I WILL BE HOLDING HER ON MY KNEE, AND WATCH AS SHE READS BY HERSELF.

GRANDPARENTS, PARENTS, AND CHILDCARE PROVIDERS NEED TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS WITH THE CHILDREN TRUSTED TO THEIR CARE AND READ TO THEM DAILY.

THIS WILL HELP CHILDREN AS THEY DEVELOP THEIR LANGUAGE SKILLS DURING THEIR PRESCHOOL YEARS.

THEY NEED TO DEVELOP THOSE SKILLS EARLY. STUDENTS HAVE UNTIL THE THIRD GRADE TO LEARN TO READ. FROM FOURTH GRADE ON, STUDENTS ARE READING TO LEARN.

THE STATE IS DOING ITS PART TO MAKE SURE ALL YOUNG CHILDREN HAVE THE RESOURCES THEY NEED TO LEARN.

THIS YEAR, WE HANDED OUT 10-POINT-5 MILLION DOLLARS IN GRANTS TO CREATE 18 EARLY CHILDHOOD EXCELLENCE CENTERS.

THESE CUTTING-EDGE LEARNING CENTERS WILL PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY EXPERIENCES THAT WILL SUPPORT CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND ENSURE THAT THEY REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.

Source: Marquette University Libraries; Tommy G. Thompson Collection; Series 2: Gubernatorial Speeches

THE MONEY WILL ALLOW CHILDCARE PROVIDERS TO WORK WITH OTHERS IN THE COMMUNITY TO INCREASE THE EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF STAFF AND IMPROVE THE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES OF THE CHILDREN.

THE GRANTS ALSO WILL HELP GROUPS SET UP SECOND AND THIRD SHIFT CHILDCARE PROGRAMS, ALONG WITH PROGRAMS THAT ENCOURAGE PARENTS TO READ TO THEIR CHILDREN.

UNFORTUNATELY, NOT ALL CHILDREN LEARN IN THE SAME WAY AND AT THE SAME RATE. SOME CHILDREN HERE IN WISCONSIN MAY NEED EXTRA HELP IN ORDER TO LEARN HOW TO READ.

THAT'S WHY WE NEED TO DEVELOP A SYSTEM OF ENGAGING VOLUNTEERS TO WORK WITH CHILDREN TO GIVE THEM THE ADDITIONAL TIME AND PRACTICE THEY NEED TO DEVELOP THEIR READING SKILLS.

STUDENTS NEED TO BE WORKING ON THEIR READING SKILLS ALL THE TIME – NOT JUST DURING THE SCHOOL DAY.

WE NEED TO SEE WHAT WE CAN DO TO HELP CHILDREN BE STRONG READERS IN THE OFFSCHOOL HOURS - EVENINGS, WEEKENDS, SUMMERS.

AND WHEN STUDENTS ARE IN SCHOOL, WE NEED TO MAKE SURE TEACHERS ARE DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO TEACH CHILDREN HOW TO READ. TEACHERS NEED SUPPORT AS THEY INSTRUCT CHILDREN.

TEACHERS MUST HAVE ACCESS TO THE LATEST READING RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT. THEY NEED THE CONSTANT TRAINING AND RETRAINING THAT OCCURS IN BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY.

WISCONSIN TEACHERS ARE DOING A GOOD JOB WITH A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF OUR CHILDREN. BUT WE MUST GIVE THEM MORE RESOURCES SO THEY CAN TURN STRUGGLING READERS INTO SKILLED READERS.

WE NEED TO KEEP DOING MORE TO FIGHT ILLITERACY, BECAUSE TIME AND ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY KEEP CHANGING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE LITERATE IN AMERICA.

Source: Marquette University Libraries; Tommy G. Thompson Collection; Series 2: Gubernatorial Speeches

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, LITERACY WAS DEFINED AS BEING ABLE TO WRITE YOUR NAME. IN 1936, THE MILITARY DEFINED LITERACY FOR RECRUITS AS A FOURTH GRADE READING LEVEL.

IN 1960, THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION DEFINED EIGHTH GRADE AS THE LITERACY STANDARD. HOWEVER, TODAY MOST OPERATIONAL MANUALS ARE WRITTEN ON THE 11-12TH GRADE READING LEVEL.

LITERACY IS NOT JUST A SKILL THAT ENABLES PEOPLE TO DEAL WITH ALL TYPES OF TEXT. LITERACY IS MORE THAN READING AND WRITING.

LITERACY INVOLVES UNDERSTANDING AND USING INFORMATION NEEDED TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY IN THE HIGH-TECH SOCIETY THAT WILL DOMINATE THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY.

AND LITERACY NEEDS TO BE CONTINUALLY UPDATED AS INFORMATION DEMANDS INCREASE.

THE CHANGES IN SOCIETY HAVE FORCED US TO MAKE SURE ADULTS IN THE WORKFORCE HAVE THE READING SKILLS NECESSARY TO SUCCEED IN THEIR WORK ENVIRONMENTS.

THE WORK OF OUR SERVICE LITERACY COUNCILS ARE HELPING MAKE THAT HAPPEN. THEY ARE DOING A GREAT JOB PROVIDING ADULTS SKILLS IN LEARNING HOW TO SPEAK AND READ ENGLISH, ALONG WITH HELPING THEM IMPROVE THEIR MATH SKILLS.

THE EFFORT OF OUR COUNCILS HAVE MADE A TREMENDOUS IMPACT ON THESE WORKERS, AND THEIR FAMILIES.

TODAY'S SPEAKER, TOM HARKEN, KNOWS ALL ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING HOW TO READ, EVEN IF IT DOES HAPPEN LATE IN LIFE.

DUE TO ILLNESS, TOM DIDN'T ATTEND SCHOOL MUCH PAST THE 1ST GRADE. HE DIDN'T REGAIN HIS HEALTH UNTIL HE WAS ALMOST FULL GROWN.

HE WENT BACK TO SCHOOL FOR A WHILE, BUT HE NEVER LEARNED HOW TO READ. HE DROPPED OUT OF THE 7TH GRADE AND WENT TO WORK FOR HIS FATHER.

HE BECAME A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN, SELLING EVERYTHING FROM VACUUM CLEANERS TO RV'S. NOW, HE OWNS A CHAIN OF SUCCESSFUL MEXICAN RESTAURANTS.

BUT DESPITE HIS SUCCESS, HE KEPT THE SECRET ABOUT HIS ILLITERACY TO HIMSELF.

Source: Marquette University Libraries; Tommy G. Thompson Collection; Series 2:
Gubernatorial Speeches

TOM NEVER LEARNED HOW TO READ UNTIL HIS WIFE HELPED HIM OVERCOME HIS ILLITERACY
A FEW YEARS AGO.

HOWEVER, TOM WAS THRUST INTO THE SPOTLIGHT IN 1992. THAT YEAR HE WON THE
PRESTIGIOUS HORATIO ALGER AWARD.

IN FRONT OF A DISTINGUISHED AUDIENCE IN WASHINGTON, D.C., HE TOLD HIS SECRET ABOUT
HIS ILLITERACY, A SECRET HARBORED BY MILLIONS OF AMERICANS.

SINCE 1992, HARKEN HAS GIVEN MORE THAN 500 SPEECHES ON BATTLING ILLITERACY IN
AMERICA.

HE HAS ALSO TAKEN POSITIVE STEPS TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES ILLITERACY HAS
CAUSED HIM IN HIS LIFE.

TOM HARKEN GIVES US THE HOPE THAT WITH FAITH AND STRONG BELIEF WE CAN REACH
OUR DREAMS REGARDLESS OF ANY OBSTACLES.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, MR. TOM HARKEN.