

SENATE BILL 210—EARN-TO-LEARN READING INCENTIVE PROGRAM GRANTS

SUMMARY

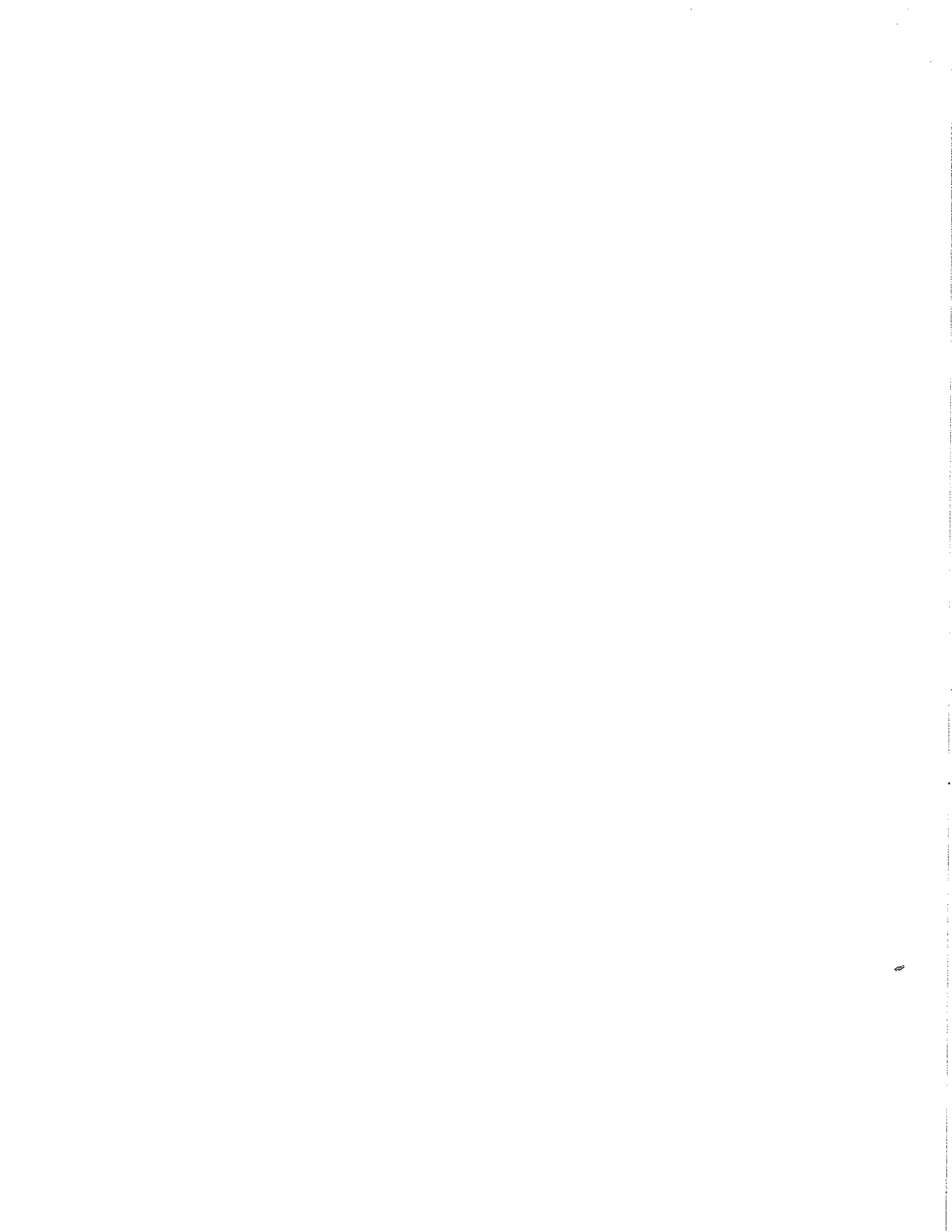
In short, this bill establishes a program through which public elementary school children in Colorado's educationally-underserved communities, including rural communities, will be paid to read outside of the classroom.

WHAT DOES THE BILL DO?

- As amended, the bill permits the **Read to Achieve Board** to award up to \$1 million annually to organizations that operate in a federally-designated Promise or Choice Neighborhood, or in another educationally-underserved community in Colorado—including rural communities.
- The designated funds would be granted to the organizations for the purpose of implementing **pay incentives for students to read books**.

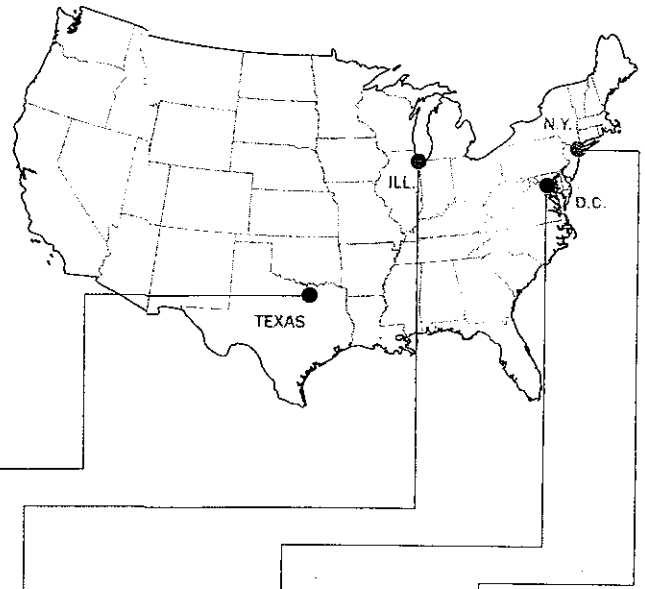
CASE STUDY

- Harvard Professor Roland Fryer, Jr. conducted one of the largest-ever controlled studies on the **effectiveness of incentivizing learning**.
 - Students in four cities were offered monetary incentives for satisfying various benchmarks related to educational attainment.
 - These included **grades, attendance, behavior, standardized test scores**, and simply **reading books**.
 - Paying elementary school students an average of \$2 per book read outside of school was, *by far*, the incentive structure **most positively correlated with improved learning**, as measured by reading comprehension scores.
 - It was as though students in the study had **attended school for an extra three months out of the year**. In addition, the pay-per-book study was by far the **cheapest** of the four, costing an average of **\$13.81 per student per year**.



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Two Dollars a Book? In four cities, 18,000 kids earned a total of \$6.3 million to do the right thing. Some incentives work better than others



	DALLAS	CHICAGO	WASHINGTON	NEW YORK CITY
WHAT STUDENTS WERE PAID FOR	Reading	Grades	Various†	87/100 Test scores
GRADES PARTICIPATING	Second-graders	Ninth-graders	Sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders	Fourth- and seventh-graders
HOW MUCH	\$2 per book	\$50 for A's \$35 for B's \$20 for C's	Up to \$100 every two weeks	\$25 (fourth-graders) to \$50 (seventh-graders) per test
AVERAGE STUDENT EARNED	\$13.81	\$695.61	\$532.85	\$139.43 (fourth-graders) \$231.55 (seventh-graders)
STUDY SIZE*	1,780 from 22 schools	4,396 from 20 schools	3,495 from 17 schools	8,320 from 63 schools
RESULTS	VERY POSITIVE Paying kids to read dramatically boosted reading-comprehension scores	MIXED Kids cut fewer classes and got slightly better grades. Standardized-test scores did not change	POSITIVE Rewarding five different actions, including attendance and behavior, seemed to improve reading skills	NO EFFECT Paying kids for higher test scores did not lead to more learning or better grades—or any other measurable change

*Not including control groups

† A combination of metrics that varied from school to school but always included attendance and behavior



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student incentive program

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I am a principal at Las Animas Elementary School. I was very interested in your Earn to Learn program when I read about it in the newspaper because we do something similar and have had outstanding results. Our current CSAP scores for a school at 80% poverty level was 93% this year for our third grade reading. We attribute our high reading scores in part to our incentive program (which is the only way we have found to get students to read AT HOME).

We don't actually pay our students, but they have an incentive to read at home and come to school and pass a computerized test to earn points. These points then allow them to earn small prizes and participate in major extra field trips of a "fun" variety – such as attending a Nuggets game or going camping. These trips are some of the only ways our kids get out of town beyond going to the Walmart located 20 miles away.

I struggle sometimes with the idea that I am "bribing" the kids to read. We are such a materialistic society anyway, and I hate to contribute to that. However, it is making a huge difference in our students' abilities TO BE ABLE TO READ. The pay off is the gains in reading achievement and the fact that I have seen the kids (so has my staff) transfer that extrinsic motivation to an intrinsic love of reading. They get "hooked" into a reading series – and I believe would continue to read that series even without the incentives. (I just haven't been brave enough to take the incentives away to find out) It's fun when I see a student leave the library and walk down the hall with the book open, reading it as they stagger along, because they want to get "into the book" before they get to class and have to move on to other subjects.

It doesn't just impact our students, it also is important to our parents. I have a school board member who shared with me that at his place of business (our local hog farm of which he is the manager) his employees sit around at lunch and brag about whether their kiddo is getting to go on our reading trips and how many points they have earned. These are parents who struggle to read themselves as indicated by their type of employment.

Good luck on your idea... Las Animas Elementary will be very interested in participating in such a program.

Libby Hiza, Principal of Las Animas Elementary (Colorado National Title I School of the Year)