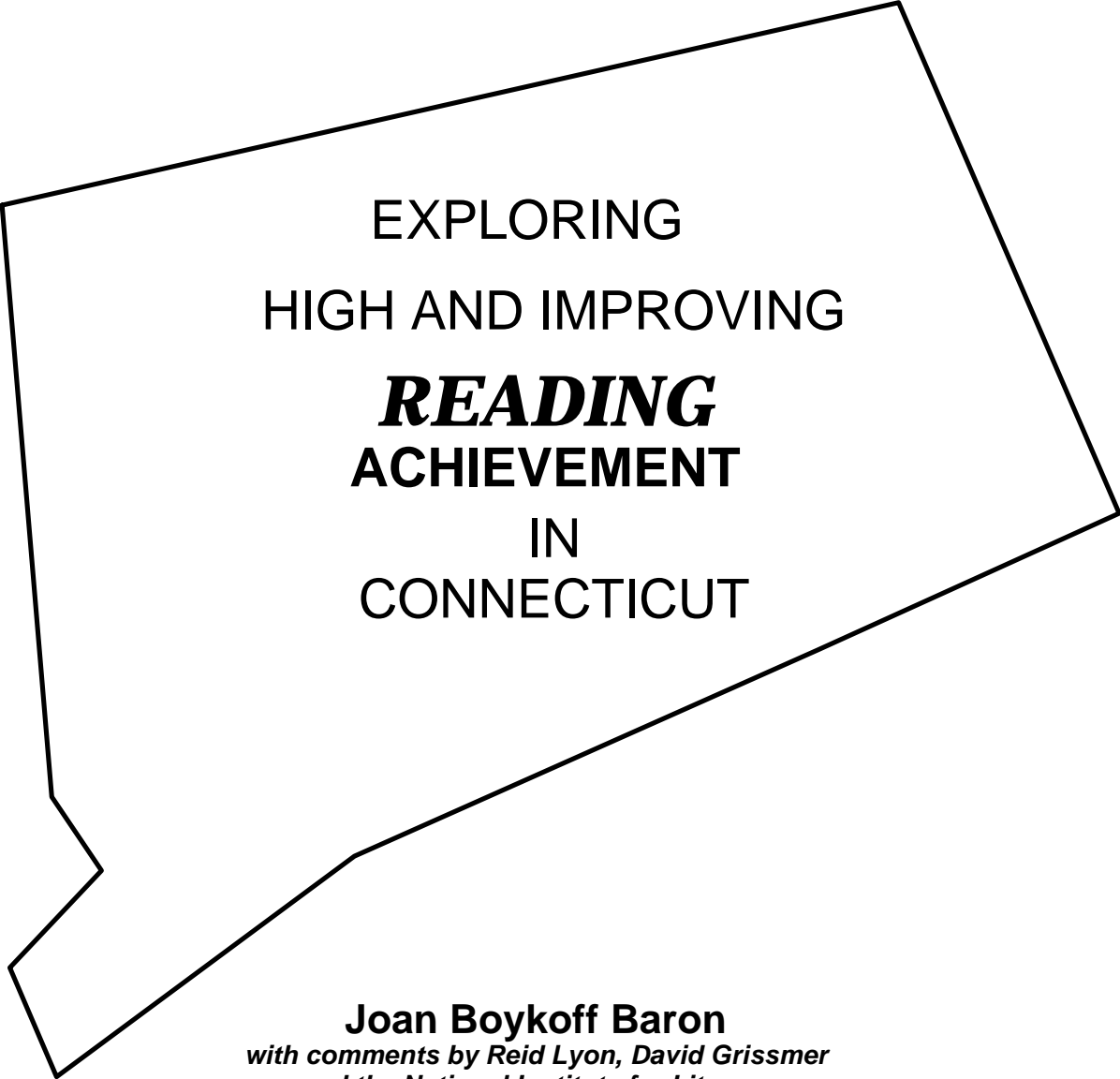


NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS PANEL



EXPLORING
HIGH AND IMPROVING
READING
ACHIEVEMENT
IN
CONNECTICUT

Joan Boykoff Baron

*with comments by Reid Lyon, David Grissmer
and the National Institute for Literacy*

October, 1999



Lessons
from the States

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**EXPLORING HIGH AND IMPROVING
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Joan Boykoff Baron



National Education Goals Panel

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EXPLORING HIGH AND IMPROVING *READING* ACHIEVEMENT IN CONNECTICUT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Connecticut Reading Achievement: (Section 1, pp. 5-20)

- On 1998 NAEP, Connecticut reading achievement is the highest and, since 1992, the most improved in the country. White, Black and Hispanic students in Connecticut each perform better than their counterparts in other states.
- On Connecticut's state test, CMT, there is a significant gap in reading between poor districts and rich, but scores for all socioeconomic groups have improved from 1993 to 1998. Districts with the highest improvement include districts that are rich and poor, rural and urban, and are spread across the state.
- Connecticut's wealth and high parental education are associated with its high student reading performance, but do not account for improvement between 1992 and 1998. These demographic variables did not change during this period. Instead, state education policies and local policies and practices are associated with the state's continuing improvement.

State Education Policies and Practices: (Section 2, pp. 21-32)

- Educators in the communities that have made the most improvement on the state test (CMT) report they were helped by 3 state policies:
 - Detailed information on student performance is provided to districts, schools, teachers, parents and newspapers, and is used by principals and teachers to monitor performance and help improve instruction;
 - Additional resources are provided to the State's neediest districts (i.e., poorest and lowest achieving); and
 - An infrastructure is in place to encourage quality teaching, including high salaries, continued professional development, and support and assessment of beginning teachers.

Local District Policies and Practices: (Section 3, pp. 33-56)

- Local organizational policies among the ten districts making the greatest progress in reading include: special analyses of CMT results, linking school improvement plans and teacher evaluations to student reading achievement, providing extra time for reading, and making available professional development opportunities for administrators and teachers to learn the skills required to improve students' reading.
- Classroom teaching approaches used in the most improved districts include instruction in phonemic awareness, the use of different kinds of reading materials for varying instructional needs, a balance of word attack skills and comprehension, the reciprocal reinforcement of reading, writing, and spelling, continual assessment, the early identification of students with delayed reading skills and the provision of intensive interventions for these children by the end of first grade.

