CONFIRMS RULING—Following the recent ruling by the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta that the $500,000 settlement of the teacher testing lawsuit will be enforced, State Superintendent of Education Dr. Wayne Teague met with members of the news media at the State Department of Education to present his views and answer their questions. To Dr. Teague’s right is Dr. C. C. Baker, Assistant State

Fail-Proof Method Teaches Reading Fast

By Dr. Jack Sassér

Children in Dothan City Schools are excited about learning to read, thanks to a unique approach their school system initiated last year.

The reading program, which is based upon the philosophy that “all children can learn to read,” was piloted in the Dothan City Schools in 1985-86 and extended to 26 kindergarten and first-grade classrooms in 1986-87. This program was created by Mary and Bob Baratta-Lorton to make the process of learning to read and to write the same kind of activity-centered, child-centered, manipulative-based experience. At the same time, it is:

- language experience approach;
- phonics approach, consisting of 44 basic sounds;
- non-ability-group approach;
- writing program;
- reading program;
- language arts program; additionally, it:
- does not require a workbook;
- does not require duplicator sheets; and
- is unique.

There are no other programs presently available which approach the teaching of reading and writing in the same manner. No child fails to learn to read.

The program is represented by samples of the approach used:

- More a classroom learning environment encourages students to look for patterns and relationships in the world around them and the better children become at seeing these relationships, the easier meaningful learning becomes for the child.

The reading program places an emphasis on searching out patterns as opposed to memorizing rules.

- The program provides freedom for children to learn from one another. None of us is as smart as all of us. If we use each other to help each other, we can make maximum utilization of the knowledge possessed by each child to help another child to learn.

There are no traditional reading groups and no homogenous ability groups which convince some children they can learn and others that they cannot. A child is where he is, neither behind nor ahead.

- Once a child has learned the procedures for an activity at one level, those same procedures are used at each succeeding level. Children advance through the program with only a minimum of teacher supervision, freeing the teacher to become a diagnostician and helper of children.

(Continued on Page 6)
For Academics

Dothan Hosts First Decathlon

By Anndra Faulk*

The city of Dothan has the distinction of hosting the first Alabama Academic Decathlon, scheduled for the first Friday in December, with 11th- and 12th-graders from across the state eligible to compete in 10 events.

Although much has been written about the Greek Decathlon, the account is far from academic and provides a team competition as well as an opportunity for individual students. Each team has a boy and a girl at each of three levels—A, B, and C—since competition provides incentive for B and C students as well as for A students.

Scheduled at Wallace College, the competition includes written examinations on economics, science, mathematics, fine arts, social science, language, and literature. Students are scored on their personal essays and on final essays. The exciting and intense event, the Super Quiz, in the Wallace Gym, is the only part of the competition open to the public.

Every Child Learned To Read—100 Percent

(Continued from Page 1)

- Children learn to read and to write in a secure environment. There is no element of failure associated with the learning involved. The child will not fail in school. When a single child is reading a book successfully.
- Children are involved in a variety of activities in the process of writing their own thoughts and stories without the need for teacher intervention and before the child even knows the alphabet. Children can write what they wish using their own words, before they even learn to read.
- The program teaches children to write and read, but most importantly, it teaches them to love reading and writing, so that excitement generated by the early days of experience will translate into a desire to keep on reading and keep on writing, long after the school day or the school year has ended.

None of the program materials is consumable. There are no workbooks, no worksheets. A large number of books to read are needed, because children read a lot. In this program, children can read and write with a level of understanding and enthusiasm that is unmatched, cannot be described and must be seen.

Pilot and first-year efforts in the Dothan City Schools using the reading program have yet to experience failure for any child. The program currently is used in kindergartens, first grade and special education classes. Modification to the basal reading instructional process will occur as children exit this program as readers. The love for reading must be fostered and nurtured. The children will possess the skill and love for reading and can be kept busy reading, rather than doing worksheets and textbook reading.

Although the initial cost of the program—$327 per classroom—sounds high, bear in mind that this cost covers the entire program and includes everything needed to teach children to read. There are no textbooks or workbooks to buy and the materials can be used year after year.

For more information, write to: Center for Innovation; Reading Programs; 1925 Vineyard Lane; Saratoga, CA 95070.

(Educator of Instruction, Dothan City Schools)

In Birmingham

EFTA Chapters 1 & 2 Subject Of Hearing

State Superintendent of Education Dr. Wayne Teague testified before a congressional subcommittee on education last month in Birmingham in one of four hearings throughout the country to determine reauthorization of the federal Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 programs.

Teague and educators from other states testified that they think Congress should amend these programs or authorize new programs to aid nonpublic school students. Teague said such programs are needed to create separate safety-supported schools for the self-educated. He said that tax-cuts, reductions in and other tax and spending programs, and should reduce financial support to the existing public school systems but will dilute national commitment to the concept of common schooling in the future.

"To keep the emotional and financial support of all taxpayers, we must continually emphasize the national benefits of common schooling," he said.

- maintain parent involvement in Chapter 1 programs. Teague said it is not necessary to mandate formal, bureaucratic parental groups. The present law requires an annual public meeting and consultation with parents in the design and implementation of Chapter 1 programs.
- allow local school districts flexibility to match appropriate program service models—class projects, limited and extended pull-out projects, replacement models and add-on programs—with student needs.

Maintain a high degree of Chapter 1 services that are specific or required to be coordinated with regular education programs at the local school level.

For the Chapter 1 program, Teague said:
- strongly recommended eliminating references to antecedent programs and replacing them with specific categories which reflect national needs and complement, reinforce and strengthen local and state efforts.
- said that there should be no change in the current legislation which mandates systematic consultation with parents, teachers, administrators and others as being appropriate.
- recommended that the role and purpose of the state advisory council as presently outlined in the Act be maintained.
- stated that the present flexibility given in the Chapter 2 program is well-liked by local education personnel.

(Continued on Page 7)