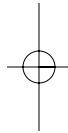
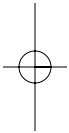




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The Years 2004 and 2005 in Review

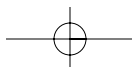
Noreen Lopez



This review covers both 2004 and 2005 because more of the public policy issues that affected the field occurred in 2005. Adult educators were challenged as never before in 2005 and successfully met that challenge. It is an important story to tell.

President Bush's Fiscal Year (FY) 2005 budget proposal included a stable level of funding for adult education, so it was a surprise when his budget the following year (FY 2006) included a devastating cut in funding. Due to the work of the National Council of State Directors of Adult Education (NCSDAE) and others, a newly formed advocacy network of adult educators used the speed of the Internet to disseminate quickly to teachers, learners, program staff, and others a set of recommendations for action. This network was highly responsive and very effective in convincing representatives and senators to maintain level funding for adult education.

The field was also involved in advocacy efforts related to authorizing legislation in Congress that would affect the National Institute for Literacy, the integrity of structure and funding for adult basic education programs, and educational services for welfare recipients. Congressional staff indicated that the concerns of those advocating on these issues had



been heard and addressed in one or more versions of the pending bills on the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and welfare reform.

Although there was a significant amount of research on adult literacy taking place, the future of new research was in doubt. The U.S. Department of Education's (USDE) Institute of Educational Sciences indicated they would no longer be funding a national research center for adult education. With the adult education field's attention focused on defeating the proposed funding cuts, many practitioners were not aware of this loss until late in 2005.

Two catastrophic hurricanes in 2005 (Katrina and Rita) dramatically changed the landscape of the geographic areas they hit and the lives of the people affected. They also caused a huge drain on the financial and emotional resources of the United States. In addition, the ongoing war in Iraq and tax cuts by the Bush administration led to an increase in the national debt. These factors had a direct effect on the U.S. economy and education policy: In February 2005, the Bush administration proposed to reduce the national debt by cutting funding for discretionary programs such as adult education and Even Start. By December 2005, the pressure on Congress to further cut funding was exacerbated by the ever-growing costs of hurricane relief. These economic and social pressures on the federal budget serve to highlight the significance of the eventual budget success achieved by the adult education field.

POLICY

Federal Budget and Appropriations

Before discussing the appropriation levels for FY 2005 and FY 2006, it is helpful to understand some basic procedures in the federal budget and appropriations process. Although the president is required by law to present his budget to Congress after the first Monday of January but not later than the first Monday of February, the process of developing the budget actually begins more than 6 months earlier. The USDE works with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) during the prior spring, summer, and fall to establish USDE funding priorities. For example, for the FY 2006 budget presented to Congress by the president in February 2005, the USDE began its internal work on recommendations for education program funding around May 2004. About August 2004, USDE submitted its FY 2006 budget request to OMB with detailed justifications. Over the

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next few months, OMB submitted questions about the budget to USDE, which then responded to the questions. Revisions to the proposed budget took place based on the latest fiscal information on expenditures from the previous year (FY 2004) and current congressional action on the FY 2005 budget. Some time in November or December 2004, the OMB notified the USDE of its final decision on the FY 2006 budget, along with any program policy changes and legislative directions. During December 2004 and January 2005, USDE prepared various materials to justify and explain the budget. The President used these materials as part of the budget document for distribution to Congress and as information for the public. Finally, in early February 2005, President Bush presented his FY 2006 budget request to Congress. This budget specified an amount for each program, rather than just a total amount for education.

Congress has its own process for developing a budget and does not have to accept the president's budget. Both the House and the Senate have a budget committee, which set their own self-imposed ceiling for spending. The budget committees further break down their budgets into spending targets for several categories of expenditures, such as education, national defense, agriculture, and so on, but not for specific programs within those categories. The budget committees must arrive at a concurrent budget resolution adopted by both houses, generally by mid-April of 2005 for the FY 2006 budget. This budget serves as the congressional guideline for spending, but does not become law. The budget committee in each house gives the various appropriations subcommittees the maximum amount they can spend on programs under their jurisdiction. For education programs, this is the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (Labor/HHS) Subcommittee in both the House and Senate.

From mid-May through June, the House acts on these bills, moving from the subcommittee level to the Appropriations Committee to the House floor. The bills can be amended at any of these stages. House floor action is supposed to be completed by June 30. Generally in July, the Senate appropriations bills follow a similar path, moving from subcommittee to full committee to Senate floor action. (It is important to remember that, unless specified by law, many of these dates are flexible and actions are often delayed for several months beyond those indicated here.) In most cases, the House and Senate appropriations are different and must therefore go to a conference committee to reconcile the differences. Later, the appropriations are brought back to both the House and Senate for final

floor action. This should be completed by the end of September to begin the new federal fiscal year on October 1. (For a more thorough explanation of the timeline for federal and state fiscal years, refer to *The Review of Adult Learning and Literacy*, Vol. 6, chap. 1.) When there is no final budget by October 1, Congress must enact a continuing resolution to provide temporary funding to allow federal programs to continue operating. In fact, continuing resolutions have almost become standard practice in Congress.

2005 Appropriations. With a significant federal budget deficit and a slow economy, the President's budget for FY 2005 recommended funding adult education state grants at the same level as FY 2004. Although 2004's level was an increase of \$3 million over FY 2003, it still did not restore adult education to the level of funding in FY 2002. Maintaining the same level of funding was equivalent to a cut because it did not keep pace with inflation. The President presented his FY 2005 budget to Congress on February 2, 2004. The amount requested for adult education was \$574.4 million, and the president proposed eliminating the Even Start program.¹ With adult education funding looking fairly secure, various adult education organizations contacted relevant committee staff and provided rationales for increasing support for adult education, but did little to involve adult education teachers, program directors, other staff, and learners in advocating on a federal level. With Even Start funding jeopardized, the Family Literacy Alliance (FLA), an initiative of the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), made a significant effort to involve local constituencies in contacting members of Congress to restore its funding. The March 2004 issue of the FLA online quarterly publication *Connecting* included more than a page devoted to advocacy efforts.² Information was also sent out on the FLA mail list. In a November 2004 policy update,³ Tony Peyton of NCFL credited the Even Start community with flooding Capitol Hill with calls, letters, and e-mails, resulting in the continued funding of the program and defeating its proposed elimination. The House had passed its appropriations bill with \$574.4 million for adult education

¹Even Start is a program that provides education and related services jointly to disadvantaged parents and their young children. Services include early childhood education, adult education, parent-child activities, and parenting skills.

²<http://www.famlit.org/loader.cfm?url=commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&PageID=15338>.

³<http://www.famlit.org/PolicyandAdvocacy/UpdatesandAlerts/108thcongress.cfm>.

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TABLE 1.1
Adult Education and Even Start Appropriations for FY 2005
(Amounts in Thousands)

<i>Program</i>	<i>FY 04</i>	<i>FY 05 President</i>	<i>FY 05 House</i>	<i>FY 05 Senate</i>	<i>FY 05 Conference</i>	<i>FY 05 Final</i>
Adult education state grants	\$574,372	\$574,372	\$574,372	\$574,266	\$574,266	\$569,672
National leadership activities	9,169	9,169	9,169	9,169	9,169	9,096
National Institute for Literacy	6,692	6,692	6,692	6,692	6,692	6,638
Even Start	246,910	0	226,910	0	226,910	225,095

and \$226.9 million for Even Start (a cut of \$20 million from the previous year). The Senate had reduced the adult education line item by \$106,000 and eliminated Even Start in its appropriation bill. The final decision came when the conference committee accepted the Senate's cut to adult education and the House's proposal for Even Start. Then, all discretionary programs received an across-the-board cut of .8% to arrive at a final appropriations level (see Table 1.1).

2006 Appropriations. Because the national debt continued to climb and the financial demands of the war in Iraq never abated, adult educators anticipated that there could be another reduction in funds for FY 2006. However, nothing had prepared the field for what was actually proposed. On February 7, 2005, President Bush presented his FY 2006 budget to Congress. His proposal once again included the complete elimination of the Even Start program, but to adult educators' dismay, it also included a devastating reduction of 66% in the adult education state grants program. At a USDE meeting the same day, held to discuss the proposed education budget, officials were asked why adult education had been cut so drastically. The response included four justifications:

1. The president's high school initiative would eliminate the need for adult education.
2. OMB had judged the adult education program as "not accountable" for its funding.
3. The budget retained the \$69 million for EL/Civics programs, thus addressing the needs of the limited-English-speaking population.

4. A proposed increase in Pell Grants would compensate for cuts in adult education.

As bad as a 66% cut sounded, it would actually be worse, particularly in the states with larger populations, because the funds are allocated in a two-step process. First, every state or area receives a base amount; second, of the remaining funds, dollars are allocated based on the number of people in the state who are over 16 without a high school diploma. As a result, individual states would lose anywhere from 54% to 76% of the previous year's funding. Large states with populations that had declined under the most recent census would be hit the hardest because they would experience a reduction in funds based on loss of population in addition to the reduction based on the funding cut.

All adult educators felt a true sense of urgency. NCSDAE had been working on establishing a single point-of-contact system for legislative action in each state, in which one person in each state is responsible for sending a "call to action" to all stakeholders in his or her state. NCSDAE quickly endeavored to finalize this system, and worked with the National Coalition for Literacy (NCL) and its member organizations to add additional contacts and further disseminate information through their organizations. As a result, adult education quickly developed a mechanism for addressing this budget crisis. Each time Art Ellison, NCSDAE policy co-chair, sent out a message by e-mail to all the single points of contact in each state and the NCL, the message was further disseminated to hundreds of adult educators, as well as to members of the organizations that belong to NCL.

One of the early messages included information prepared by the state directors to counter the justifications offered by the administration through USDE and referred to as myths by adult educators. In summary, they argued the following:

- The high school initiative would not help the adults currently in the workforce who do not have a high school diploma. Further, even if all the graduating high school seniors entered the workforce, annually they would comprise only 2% of the workforce. For the United States to be more competitive, we must upgrade the skills of the current workforce.
- The assessment by OMB rated the adult education program as "results not demonstrated" because OMB required numeric targets for key performance indicators, whereas the USDE negotiated percentage targets

with the states. Adult education has extensive performance data to document the success of its services.

- Although the EL/Civics program was not cut, it served only 12% of the English as a second language (ESL) students. Forty-six percent of the total students served are ESL students, so the 66% cut would eliminate services to many ESL students.
- Pell Grants cannot be used for adult education. They are for postsecondary education. Adult education is limited by law to instruction below the postsecondary level.

Although some messages were strictly informational, most had specific calls to action, including activities such as these:

1. Urging your member of Congress to sign a “Dear Colleague” letter regarding the level of adult education funds needed in the budget.
2. Encouraging your member of Congress to contact members of the Budget Committee to put enough in the education budget to level-fund adult education
3. Appealing to your senator or representative—if a member of the Labor/HHS Appropriations Subcommittee—to support FY 2005 level funding for adult education.
4. Urging all members of the House to support the appropriation for adult education as recommended by the House Labor/HHS Appropriations Committee.

Adult educators and students rose to the demand by generating thousands of letters, e-mails, and phone calls. National organizations involved in adult education disseminated information to the field and to members of Congress addressing the “myths” of nonaccountability and other justifications provided by the Bush administration to support the cut. When public policy staff from the NCL and NCSDAE met with congressional staff, they were told that members of Congress had been hearing from their constituents about adult education. In addition, state directors successfully secured a time slot for their NCSDAE president, Bob Bickerton, to provide oral and written testimony to the House Appropriations Subcommittee, requesting level funding and refuting the administration’s justifications for the proposed cut.

By November 2005, it was clear the campaign was successful. Despite the President’s proposed cut of almost \$370 million in adult education,

TABLE 1.2
 Adult Education and Even Start Appropriations for FY 2006
 (Amounts in Thousands)

<i>Program</i>	<i>FY 05</i>	<i>FY 06</i>		<i>FY 06</i>	<i>FY 06</i>	<i>FY 06</i>
		<i>President</i>	<i>House</i>	<i>Senate</i>		
				<i>Committee</i>	<i>Conference</i>	<i>Final</i>
Adult education state grants	\$569,672	\$200,000	\$569,672	\$569,672	\$569,672	\$563,975
National leadership activities	9,096	9,096	9,096	9,096	9,096	9,005
National Institute for Literacy	6,638	6,638	6,638	6,638	6,638	6,572
Even Start	225,095	0	200,000	0	100,000	99,000

both the House and Senate Labor/HHS Appropriations Committees recommended an appropriation of \$569,672,000, the same amount as in FY 2005. The final appropriation bill signed into law by President Bush on December 30, 2005, reflected the FY 2005 level with a 1% cut, resulting in a final figure of \$563,975,280. The 1% cut was applied against almost all discretionary federal programs to stay within the budget level set by Congress.

Even Start did not fare as well. The President proposed no funding, the House appropriated \$200 million, and the Senate Appropriations Committee recommended no funding. The final figure for Even Start was \$99 million. The final appropriations for FY 2006 are reflected in Table 1.2. The success of the advocacy campaign to save adult education federal funding was a result of the combined efforts of all the organizations and individuals that took such an active role in contacting their representatives and senators in Congress. Never before had the threat to adult education been so great, and the response so unified and strong.

Authorizing Legislation

Authorizing legislation is the legislation that establishes, changes, or continues (reauthorizes) a federal program or agency. It must be passed by the House and Senate and signed into law by the president. The primary federal authorizing legislation for adult education and family literacy is contained in the WIA. Welfare reform legislation also contains some provisions that affect adult education. Reauthorizing legislation for both WIA

and welfare was addressed in the 108th Congress, and carried over into the 109th Congress.

Workforce Investment Act. In 2003, both the House and Senate passed separate versions of reauthorization of the WIA, the federal law that authorizes funding for adult education originally enacted in 1998. The House's version was HR 1261, The Workforce Reinvestment and Adult Education Act of 2003. The Senate's version was S.1627, The Workforce Investment Act Amendments of 2003. A conference committee, scheduled to meet in January 2004 (a continuation of the 108th Congress) to work out the differences in the two bills and bring an agreed-on version for a vote before both the House and the Senate, never convened because the Senate did not appoint members to the committee. As a result, there was no action on the reauthorization in 2004.

By the beginning of the 109th Congress in January 2005, workforce committees in both the House and the Senate listed reauthorization of WIA as one of their early activities. Because it was a new Congress, they could not simply carry over the bills from 2003 and 2004. Each house had to introduce its bill as a new piece of legislation, even though much of the actual content was carried over from the previous bills. There were a few changes from the earlier versions but the Senate bill once again incorporated many of the recommendations proposed by the NCL and included in the 2003 version. As a result, the adult education community was generally more supportive of the Senate version of the WIA reauthorization.

An interesting aspect of the WIA reauthorization goes back to the President's budget release for FY 2006. In the Labor Department budget, the President stated that he would like some changes that would (a) consolidate the WIA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth and Employment Service funding streams into a single grant to states for employment and training services; and (b) give governors the option of consolidating additional federal job training and employment programs. Governors would have the option of consolidating core WIA programs with additional one-stop partner programs—such as Adult Education and the Food Stamp Employment and Training program—into a single, coordinated program funded through one funding stream. This flexibility for funding was called WIA Plus. This block grant funding has consistently led to the elimination of specific programs placed into the block grant and a significant reduction in overall funding. Adult education could be reduced or eliminated in WIA Plus. The administration indicated they would work with Congress to assure that these WIA Plus provisions were incorporated into the reauthorization of the WIA.

In addition to the struggles required to maintain level funding for adult education, there were battles to keep WIA Plus out of the authorizing legislation. Adult educators viewed WIA Plus as a significant threat to the continuation of the program. Many state directors of adult education and members of the NCL Public Policy Committee expressed their belief that governors were likely to divert adult education funds to other, more favored programs, such as vocational training or Job Corps. Adult education organizations and other concerned groups strongly voiced their positions with the House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness, and the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Subcommittee, although neither subcommittee initially seemed inclined to support the President's proposal.

Indeed, the House bill, HR 27, the Job Training Improvement Act of 2005, passed through subcommittee, committee, and the full House without the addition of WIA Plus. The Senate bill, S.9, the Lifetime of Education Opportunities Act of 2005, introduced in January 2005, was replaced in May by S.1021, The Workforce Investment Act Amendments of 2005, which did not contain a WIA Plus provision and which was reported out of committee to the full Senate in September. As of January 2006, the Senate had still not voted on S.1021. The Senate version retained many of the NCL recommendations and received the most support from adult educators. Although the Senate committee's version did not contain the WIA Plus provision, such a provision could be added as an amendment on the full Senate floor. The public policy leaders in adult education acknowledged that this was possible, but not likely. Once the Senate passes the bill, it will go to a conference committee where the members of the committee will have to develop a version acceptable to both houses.

Other pressing matters, such as filling the Supreme Court vacancies of the late Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist and Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, and the issues surrounding the response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, took up much of the Senate's time in the last quarter of 2005. WIA reauthorization was therefore carried over into 2006. Because 2006 was still part of the 109th Congress, no new legislation needed to be introduced. Congress was able to pick up action on the bills where they left off in 2005.

The NCSDAE and the NCL prepared documents for members of Congress indicating which provisions they supported and opposed in both versions of the WIA reauthorization. They shared these documents with congressional members and staff in an effort to secure the most desirable

piece of legislation. Many of these documents can be found on the NCS-DAE Web site at <http://www.ncsdae.org>.

Welfare Reauthorization. A welfare reform bill was passed initially in 1996 and reauthorization of the legislation should have been completed in 2003, but was not. The House version of reauthorization, HR 4, was passed by the House in 2003 and sent to the Senate for consideration in 2004. There were several differences between the House and Senate versions and, by the end of the 108th Congress, no bill had passed both chambers.

In 2005, new bills were introduced, based on the proposals from 2003 and 2004. The House introduced HR 240, the Personal Responsibility, Work and Family Promotion Act of 2005, and the Senate introduced S.6, Personal Responsibility and Individual Development for Everyone Act. By the end of June 2005, Congress was unable to pass new legislation but passed the 10th short-term extension of the 1996 welfare law. This extension ran through the end of September 2005 and kept the program operating under provisions of the old law, which technically expired in 2002. An additional extension passed Congress in October to operate the program through March 2006.

Although welfare legislation was not a centerpiece for the provision of adult education, it could affect adult education services. Adult educators were concerned with two specific provisions that differed in the House and Senate versions. The proposed legislation specified the length of time that a welfare recipient could spend in full-time adult education and count that time toward meeting the law's work requirements. It also authorized a "superwaiver" for states.

The superwaiver provision allowed the governor of each state to waive almost all provisions of authorizing legislation of eligible programs. (Eligible programs were those specified in the legislation.) Although the superwaiver did not allow the governor to waive the basic purposes or goals of the program, or to transfer the funds from one account to another, it did allow a state to waive application procedures, performance standards, reporting requirements, and eligibility standards. For example, under the superwaiver provisions, a governor could eliminate the competitive "direct and equitable" application process for adult education funds, and allocate funding to local one-stop centers or for-profit institutions to provide all adult education services in the state, or require that all funds be spent only for general equivalency diploma (GED)-level instruction and not basic skills or ESL.

The House version of the superwaiver included adult education as an eligible program and was available to all states. The Senate's version of the superwaiver did not include the adult education program and would only be operated in 10 states. The House version allowed up to a maximum of 4 months in a period of 24 months for full-time adult education or training to count toward work activity. The Senate version allowed an initial 3 months and then another 3 months if called for in the client's self-sufficiency plan.

Adult educators, fearful of having adult education included in the superwaiver provision and supporting a longer time for full-time adult education services, supported the Senate version of the bill rather than the House version. Garrett Murphy, NCL Public Policy Chairperson, provided written testimony to the House Subcommittee on Human Resources of the House Ways and Means Committee on behalf of the NCL and NCSDAE regarding these two provisions and other issues. The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)⁴ also supported the Senate provisions on these issues. They published several reports highlighting the research showing that the most effective welfare-to-work programs provide a variety of services to recipients, including education and training. (See the welfare policy section of the CLASP Web site at <http://www.clasp.org>.)

As of October 2005, both the House and Senate bills remained at the committee level in each chamber. In November, the House Ways and Means Committee added its welfare reauthorization to the budget reconciliation bill HR 4241. During a conference to resolve the differences between the Senate version of a budget reconciliation bill, S.1932, and HR 4241, several changes were made. The conference agreement eliminated both the superwaiver provisions and the time individuals could spend in adult education full time as part of the work requirement. It gave the Secretary of Health and Human Services the responsibility of issuing regulations to govern the welfare-to-work program, including the precise definition of each work activity that applies toward the work participation requirements. The NCL and NCSDAE have stated their intent to meet with the Secretary's representative to promote the inclusion of full-time adult education as a work activity in these regulations.

⁴CLASP is a national, nonprofit organization founded in 1968 that conducts research, policy analysis, technical assistance, and advocacy on issues related to economic security for low-income families with children.

Grassroots Activism

In addition to the 2005 grassroots efforts on appropriations through the single point of contact network, there were other notable advocacy endeavors in 2004. The first was a call to adult educators in January 2004 to take an advocacy role in saving the original legislative intent for the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). The 2003 House- and Senate-passed versions of WIA reauthorization were scheduled to go to a conference committee for resolution in 2004. Language in the House bill changed the role of the NIFL, shifting its focus from adult literacy (broadly defined to include reading, writing, speaking, math, life skills, and workplace literacy) to literacy (defined as reading) across the life span. The language in the House bill also changed the purposes of NIFL; it was authorized to promote and disseminate reading research. The Senate bill retained language from earlier legislation, which included purposes of the NIFL related to coordinating literacy services and policy, and national leadership for literacy. Concerned adult educators set up a Save NIFL Web site (<http://savenifl.org>) and urged members of the field to contact their congressional representatives to support the Senate version of WIA reauthorization. These concerned adult educators, as well as the NCL, felt the Senate provisions on NIFL were more desirable because they gave NIFL a role in leadership, policy, and coordination of services. The site included information on the issues, links to both versions of reauthorization, tips on contacting legislators, and a feedback feature called the Advocacy Hall of Honor. People from at least 27 states reported back to the Hall of Honor that they had contacted their legislators. Both the House and Senate 2005 versions of WIA reauthorization retained most of the same provisions on NIFL as they had in 2003–2004, although the House bill did broaden its definition of literacy beyond reading. The final role for NIFL will not be clear until WIA is reauthorized.

The second effort, Literacy President, began in April 2004, and was an attempt to collect questions from the field on adult education issues, submit them to presidential candidates, and solicit a response. With the presidential election coming up in November 2004, the purpose of asking candidates to respond to questions about adult education was to raise their awareness of the issues and raise the priority of adult literacy in whatever administration was elected. Through information disseminated on the National Literacy Advocacy (NLA) listserv and the Literacy President Web site (<http://www.litpresident.org>), a total of 1,467 individuals voted on the questions that had been posed by the field to arrive at the top five questions to be submitted to the candidates. Data from the survey, which

closed on June 7, indicated that respondents included practitioners, adult learners, college or university students in adult education, and others. The NCSDAE prepared additional background information for the selected questions, along with two additional questions, and submitted them to the candidates. Senator John Kerry, the Democratic candidate, responded on September 4, 2004, and President George W. Bush, the Republican incumbent, responded on October 12, 2004. Of course, both candidates claimed to support adult literacy.

Answering a question related to training and retraining, President Bush indicated that he wanted to give governors more flexibility to meet their workforce and adult education needs and that he would consolidate WIA's four major training programs into a single flexible grant to states. (This position was later reflected in his proposal for WIA Plus, discussed earlier.) Also of note was Senator Kerry's response regarding intergenerational literacy. The senator indicated his support of intergenerational programs such as family literacy and Even Start, and cited President Bush's 2005 budget proposal to cut all funding for Even Start. President Bush's response on intergenerational literacy indicated he would promote literacy programs through Head Start, Early Reading First, and Title 1. He did not mention Even Start. The full set of questions and responses can be found on the Literacy President Web site.

PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY

Despite the criticism of the OMB, accountability efforts in adult education had been growing steadily since the passage of WIA, which specified performance standards for all programs. These standards include students increasing educational functioning levels (12 levels across adult basic education, ASE, and ESL), obtaining or retaining employment, earning secondary credentials (GED or high school diploma), and transitioning to postsecondary education or other training. Each year, every state negotiates with the USDE to set the performance targets for their state. In program year 2002–2003, 43 of the 50 states met or exceeded their performance targets.

The USDE's 2002–2003 Adult Education and Family Literacy Report to Congress⁵ included data across three program years (2000–2001

⁵The full report is available at <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/resource/index.html#research>.

through 2002–2003), reflecting improved program accountability based on these standards.

With an average of 2.7 million adults served each year, over the 3 years:

- 1,509,475 adults advanced one or more education levels in ABE or low ASE (where one education level equates to a minimum of 2 years grade-level equivalency). The actual number of learners increased in each of the 3 program years and there was a modest 1% increase in the percentage of those advancing one or more education levels each year when compared to the previous year.
- 1,169,696 adults advanced one or more education levels of six English-language-acquisition levels. The number of learners increased in each of the 3 program years, and there was a 2% increase in the percentage of those advancing one or more education levels each year when compared to the previous year.
- 547,590 adults earned a high school diploma or GED. Although the number of learners with a high school completion goal who earned a high school diploma or GED decreased each year, the percentage achieving their goal increased each year, from 33% in program year (PY) 2001 to 44% in PY 2003.
- 145,845 adults enrolled in postsecondary education or training. The number of learners with a goal to transition to further education or training decreased each year, but the percentage of those achieving their goal increased each year, from 25% in PY 2001 to 30% in PY 2003.
- 421,862 adults were employed one quarter after program exit. This is the only performance measure that did not increase each year. Both the number of learners with this goal and the percentage achieving it was highest in PY 2002, with a decrease in PY 2003. The percentage achieving their goal from PY 2001 to PY 2003 moved from 31% to 42%, and then 37%.
- 587,910 adults retained employment three quarters after leaving the program. Although the number of learners with this outcome decreased in PY 2002 they increased slightly again in PY 2003. The percentage increased each year from 62% in PY 2001 to 69% in PY 2003.

Although outcome data were not available at the time of writing for PY 2003–2004, enrollment information for the adult education program was available on the OVAE Web site. The data from PY 2002–2003 and PY

TABLE 1.3
State Grant Funding and Enrollments for Program
Years 2002–2003 and 2003–2004

<i>Program Year</i>	<i>State Grants</i>	<i>Total Enrollment</i>	<i>ABE</i>	<i>ESL</i>	<i>ASE</i>
2002–2003	\$575,000,000	2,734,186	1,079,386	1,175,531	479,269
Percentage of total			39.5%	43.0%	17.5%
2003–2004	\$571,262,000	2,677,028	1,061,772	1,172,569	442,687
Percentage of total			39.7%	43.8%	16.5%

Note. ABE = adult basic education; ESL = English as a second language; ASE = adult secondary education.

2003–2004 showed a decrease in the total number of adults served, but an increase in the percentage of ESL students served. The data did not explain the decline in the total number served, which could be due to any number of factors: States may have served fewer learners, but provided more hours of instruction per learner; other approaches to improving quality may have resulted in fewer adults served; or the decline in adults served from PY 2003–2004 may be a reflection of the decline in federal support. Table 1.3 reflects data from OVAE reports on the numbers served, and USDE budget information on the federal funds allocated for state grants.

TRANSITIONS IN 2004 AND 2005

The National Institute for Literacy

On the recommendation of the NIFL's Advisory Board, the Secretaries of the Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services appointed Dr. Sandra Baxter as the director of the Institute in August 2005. Dr. Baxter had been serving as the NIFL interim director since October 2001. Dr. Baxter appointed Lynn Reddy as the Institute's deputy director. Ms. Reddy had served as the NIFL communications director since 1999.

The NIFL continued to provide a high-quality Internet-based information and communication system, LINCOS, which was operated through a network of partners nationwide. LINCOS offered a broad array of literacy-related information and research, as well as public discussion lists and technology training opportunities. Under a contract with NIFL, the RMC Research Corporation conducted a comprehensive, objective evaluation of

LINCS to determine its strengths and weaknesses, to ascertain if the NIFL was fulfilling its congressional mandate regarding an electronic database of information dissemination, and to help the NIFL chart future actions regarding the LINCS network. NIFL also offered hard copies of publications, including research-based products, through their hotline and clearinghouse. The NIFL also continued to provide their online searchable database of adult, child, and family literacy services in U.S. communities through *America's Literacy Directory*. *Bridges to Practice*, a research-based guide to improving services to adults with learning disabilities was disseminated through a system of trainers. Having invested in the Equipped for the Future (EFF) project for almost 10 years, and with the USDE adult education office initiating its own content standards project, the NIFL Advisory Board recommended that the NIFL cease investing funds in this initiative to develop adult learning standards. The continuing training and implementation of EFF now resides with the EFF Center for Training and Technical Assistance at the Center for Literacy Studies, University of Tennessee, and its EFF partners. The new portal for EFF information and resources can be found at <http://eff.cls.utk.edu/>.

Reading research continued to be a high priority for NIFL. They invested in the *Effective Practices in Reading* project discussed further in the research section under USDE, disseminated several publications on implementing research-based findings in the adult education classroom, and offered an online reading assessment tool to help adult education teachers understand their students' reading strengths and needs, along with a minitutorial on teaching adults to read (www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles). They also began new work on adolescent reading. More information can be found on these projects and services at www.nifl.gov.

U.S. Department of Education

Margaret Spellings, after nomination by President Bush and confirmation by the Senate in January 2005, took over from Dr. Rod Paige as U.S. Secretary of Education. In August 2005, Susan Sclafani, Assistant Secretary for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, submitted her resignation, having served in that position for approximately 2 years. Beto Gonzalez, who had joined the Department as Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education on August 5, 2005, was named acting Assistant Secretary to replace Dr. Sclafani in late August. Mr. Gonzalez has experience teaching Spanish and ESL in high schools,

as well as ESL in adult education. He also has experience at a community college and the U.S. Department of Labor.

National Coalition for Literacy

Having incorporated and received nonprofit status by the fall of 2003, the new Board of Directors of the NCL, under the leadership of their president, Dale Lipschultz, accomplished several notable goals in 2004 and 2005. The NCL developed its first short-term strategic plan, and then a multiyear plan; received financial support from Harold McGraw, Jr.; and secured funding from Verizon. The Board hired its first staff, a part-time interim director and a part-time public policy director. Along with the challenges of starting a new organization, the NCL was soon faced with the challenge of addressing the major budget cuts proposed by the President in January 2005, and seeking publicity for the findings of the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) released December 15, 2005.⁶ Having hired a communications firm to assist in disseminating information on the NAAL, the NCL held a press conference and conducted numerous newspaper and media interviews to call more attention to the issue of adult low literacy levels identified in the NAAL. More information on the NCL actions taken around the NAAL can be found on their Web site at <http://www.national-coalition-literacy.org>.

RESEARCH IN ADULT EDUCATION

Fortunately, the research funding in adult education held steady during 2004 and 2005, even though it was small compared to the level advocated by the NCL and state directors for FY 2005. These organizations had recommended combined funding of \$40 million for OVAE's National Leadership Activities and NIFL. Although all of this proposed funding was not only for research, much of the \$24 million increase over FY 2004 actual funding was tied to research. In 2005, the NCL and state directors became more concerned about the future of research as they realized that there would no longer be a national research center for adult education and saw the level of funding for National Leadership and NIFL decline slightly.

⁶The NAAL is discussed briefly in the research section. Information is available at <http://nces.ed.gov/naal/>.

This section identifies some of the adult education research released or in progress during 2004 and 2005, and points the reader to sources for more information. The USDE promoted scientifically based research as the standard for accepting research findings and funding research projects. They define scientifically based research as rigorous, systematic, objective, empirical, and peer-reviewed; relying on multiple measurements and observations; and preferably conducted through experimental or quasi-experimental methods.⁷ Evidence-based practice, defined by the USDE,⁸ is “the integration of professional wisdom with the best available empirical evidence in making decisions about how to deliver instruction” (professional wisdom is the judgment that individuals acquire through their experience or consensus views, and it includes the effective identification and incorporation of local circumstances into instruction).⁹ Not all of the research listed here would be classified as scientifically based, but the field attempted to move in that direction.

Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy

CAAL’s focus in 2004–2005 was on adult literacy and the community college. All of the following reports are available on their Web site at www.caalusa.org.

- *To Ensure America’s Future: Building a National Opportunity System for Adults*. Eight separate community college studies provided the information for this final report on adult education and literacy in community colleges.
- *Study of Adult ESL/Literacy Instruction and Faculty Development in Selected Community Colleges*. This study examined instructional strategies and staff and faculty development activities at six institutions, as well as contributions or barriers to the creation and success of these strategies and activities.
- *Study of Impact of Corporate Giving on Adult Literacy*. This study examined the impact of corporate philanthropy in the adult literacy field.

⁷See <http://www.ed.gov/programs/compreform/guidance/appendc.pdf>, Appendix 2.

⁸Speech by Institute of Education Sciences Director Whitehurst, “Evidence-Based Education” in October 2002, available at <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/methods/whatworks/eb/edlite-index.html>.

⁹See <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/methods/whatworks/eb/edlite-slide004.html>.

National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL), the only USDE-funded research center focused exclusively on adult education, was in its third and fourth year of its second phase of funding, so most of its current research was not yet completed in 2004 or 2005. However, three studies were available on the NCSALL Web site at www.ncsall.net:

1. *One Day I Will Make It: A Study of Adult Student Persistence in Library Literacy Programs*. This is the final report of a study in library literacy programs that examined the implementation and effects of various strategies to improve student persistence. (This was a joint study by MDRC and NCSALL.)
2. *The Relationship of the Component Skills of Reading to Performance on the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)*. This study looked at levels of proficiency in reading skills of students at Levels 1, 2, and 3 of the IALS and tried to determine whether levels of proficiency could be used to describe strengths and needs in reading and therefore be useful to guide assessment and instruction.
3. *Evidence From Florida on the Labor Market Attachment of Male Dropouts Who Attempt the GED*. This study looked at the differences in various employment outcomes between men who took the GED and passed and those who did not pass.

USDE

The USDE sponsored several broad studies of adult literacy, including three that released data by the end of 2005. Information is available on the National Center for Education Statistics Web site at <http://nces.ed.gov/>. These studies include the following:

- *The 2003 International Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey (ALL)*. This was an international comparative study of the skills of the participating adult populations.
- *The Adult Education Program Study*. This study provided national-level information about adult education programs and their participants.
- *The 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL)*. This was a nationally representative assessment of literacy skills of adults aged 16 and older.

The OVAE funded several other initiatives in research, ranging from case studies to experimental designs, and translating research findings to practice. The OVAE Web site, at <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/proginit.html#adulted>, has more information on most of these projects, or visit the Web sites listed here. These initiatives included the following:

- *Adult Education to Community College Transitions Project*. This initiative identifies programs, practices, and policies that help adult basic education or GED graduates to enroll and succeed in community college programs (<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/hs/factsh/cctrans.html>).
- *Effective Practices in Reading*. This is a 5-year project, begun in 2002, in cooperation with other federal agencies, including NIFL, to fund an Adult Literacy Research Network comprised of six institutions that received reading research grants. The grantees use rigorous methodology to test various approaches for increasing reading comprehension in adult education and family literacy programs (<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/readingabs.html>).
- *National Technology Laboratory for the Improvement of Adult Education (TECH21)*. This initiative developed a system to analyze and implement high-quality instructional technology applications in learning and instruction in adult education (<http://www.TECH21.org>).
- *Project IDEAL: Improving Distance Education for Adult Learners*. This initiative enables states to participate in experiments using technology-enabled or Web-enhanced distance education to deliver instruction to adult learners who chose not to attend classroom-based programs (<http://projectideal.org>).
- *Student Achievement in Reading Program (STAR)*. This initiative is a partnership with six states to translate and disseminate evidence-based reading practices through training and technical assistance to states and to adult basic education reading teachers and programs (<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/reading.html>).

CONCLUSION

Adult educators and the organizations that represent them faced a number of challenges in 2004 and 2005. They addressed those challenges by taking

an active role in shaping public policy in several areas: defining the role of the NIFL, promoting adult education services for welfare recipients, fighting for level funding under pressures to cut funds, and opposing attempts to consolidate programs. We know the field was successful in retaining level funding and in having the Senate include favored positions in WIA reauthorization and welfare reform. At the time of this writing, we still do not know the final outcome of the efforts for reauthorization.

The challenges posed in 2005 helped forge a stronger bond among all the national organizations, and united them and the field as never before in defeating the President's dire budget cuts to adult education and winning the support of Congress. The NCSDAE established an effective network for advocacy across all the states, and the NCL developed into a viable national organization poised to provide significant leadership in policy and communication.

As 2006 unfolded, the public policy committees of the NCL and state directors had already identified unfinished and new business that needed attention. This included the loss of a national center for research in adult education, the reauthorization of WIA, the rules to be promulgated for welfare reform, the dissemination of information on the NAAL and its policy implications, and the 2007 appropriations for adult education and Even Start.

What the future holds is impossible to predict. It is likely that the economic strains of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the subsequent rebuilding efforts, along with the federal deficit and the costs of the war in Iraq, will place pressure on the President and Congress to find other areas in the budget to cut. Too often in the past, those areas have included funding for adult education. However, a strong case for support was made in the 2006 appropriations battle, and Congress may be ready to recognize the important role that adult education plays in the economy.

Many in the field hope that the experience of fighting for FY 2006 appropriations for adult education will keep adult educators and learners united, and spur them on to greater action on the FY 2007 budget and beyond, to move rapidly toward the goal of increasing funding to a minimum of \$1 billion for adult education state grants.