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The Year 2003 in Review

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INTRODUCTION

The year 2003 was one in which any small gains in adult education were noteworthy as most of the nation was focused on the war in Iraq and the state of the economy. With large tax cuts and major increases in spending on the war effort, little federal money was left for increases in education funding, including adult education. Many adult education programs were fortunate to remain at a level of funding comparable to 2002. Lawmakers and the nation were not focused on reauthorizing legislation for welfare reform (Temporary Aid for Needy Families, TANF) and the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), part of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

Despite this, there were successes in the policy arena of adult education. These included a moderate increase in federal appropriations; incorporation of field-recommended changes into the Senate version of WIA reauthorization; and, in the Senate version of TANF reauthorization, an increase in the amount of time states can count education toward meeting work requirements.

There were three national-level changes in organizations. The new Board of Directors for the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) outlined its activities for literacy across the life span. In an effort to become a stron-

ger organization, the National Coalition for Literacy (NCL) incorporated and filed for tax-exempt status. The ERIC Clearinghouses shut down operations due to changes made by the Department of Education.

Individual transitions in the field of adult education included the appointment of a new assistant secretary of education for vocational and adult education. Also, the field lost a major supporter with the death of former Senator Paul Simon.

Discussions of practice were undergirded by a greater emphasis by the Department of Education on scientifically based research and evidence-based practice. All the while, local program personnel continued debates about testing, assessment, and the National Reporting System (NRS), while struggling with insufficient resources.

POLICY

Federal Appropriations

This section covers federal funding levels for fiscal year (FY) 2003 and 2004. Federal funding for adult education under WIA should be appropriated by September 30 of one year for the following program year. The appropriation for federal FY 2003 (October 1, 2002–September 30, 2003) is allocated to the states for the program year beginning July 1, 2003 and ending June 30, 2004. Therefore, any cut in appropriations for federal FY 2003 would be felt at the local level beginning in July 2003.

2003 Appropriations. The federal FY 2003 appropriations, which should have been approved by October 2002, were still in conference committee in late January 2003 while the government continued to operate under a continuing resolution. A continuing resolution allows federally funded programs to continue to operate at the same level as the previous year's appropriation level until Congress makes the final appropriation. Whereas the Senate bill proposed to cut adult education funding by 2.9% (or \$16 million), the House bill proposed to maintain the same level of funding as FY 2002. In the end, the appropriation for adult education and literacy (including English Literacy/Civics funds) was reduced by only \$4 million, for a total of \$587.2 million, with \$571.3 million for the state grants. The President signed it into law in February 2003.

At the same time that the federal appropriation was reduced, states were also beginning to feel the impact of the 2000 census data. The federal

government allocates funds to the states based on the number of adults 16 years of age or older without a high school diploma who are no longer enrolled in school. Any shifts in population affect the allocation to the states by reducing or increasing the share of the appropriation. According to data available from the U.S. Department of Education, 20 states or outlying areas experienced an increase in their federal allocation and 39 suffered a decrease.

2004 Appropriations. Even before the FY 2003 appropriations were finalized, the President presented his request for appropriations for FY 2004. The Administration requested \$584 million for state grants (an increase of \$13 million over FY 2003 appropriations), but included National Leadership Activities in that line item. The government had previously funded National Leadership Activities as a separate line item at \$9.4 million. By November 2003, the House and Senate had passed different appropriation levels (Table 1.1) and, therefore, had to go to conference committee. In addition to working out differences in conference, Congress applied an across-the-board cut to discretionary programs, resulting in the amounts shown in the final column of Table 1.1. As with the FY 2003 appropriations, all budget figures should have been final by October 1, 2003, but were not, requiring a continuing resolution to provide for ongoing services.

Table 1.1 shows the final appropriations level for FY 2002 and FY 2003 (in millions), the Administration's FY 2004 requested level of funding, levels initially approved by the House and Senate, and the final Conference Report amount with the rescission as approved by the full House

TABLE 1.1
Federal Appropriations for the Adult Education
and Family Literacy Act and Even Start

<i>Program & Activity</i>	<i>FY 2002 Final Approp.</i>	<i>FY 2003 Final Approp.</i>	<i>FY 2004 Request of President</i>	<i>FY 2004 House Floor</i>	<i>FY 2004 Senate Floor</i>	<i>FY 2004 Conference and Cut (Final)</i>
State Grants	\$575.000	\$571.262	\$584.300	\$584.300	\$571.262	\$574.372
National Leadership	9.500	9.438	0	9.438	9.223	9.169
National Institute for Literacy	6.600	6.517	6.732	6.517	6.732	6.692
Even Start	250.000	248.375	175.000	250.000	175.000	246.910
Totals	841.100	835.592	766.032	850.255	762.217	855.143

and Senate and signed into law by the President in January 2004. The major source of local funds for adult education, the State Grants line item, reflects a slight increase over FY 2003, but is still less than FY 2002, for an overall loss in real spending power. These FY 2004 funds support the program year beginning July 1, 2004.

All these figures fall far short of the level of appropriations requested by the National Coalition for Literacy (NCL) as the level needed to adequately support the field. The NCL policy on appropriations (posted on their Web site at <http://www.national-coalition-literacy.org/>) indicates its goal as follows: State Grants \$1 billion; National Leadership \$30 million; the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) \$10 million; and Even Start \$300 million.

Authorizing Legislation

2003 was an important year for reauthorizing two pieces of legislation that greatly affect the provision of adult education and literacy services. The most important is the federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, which is Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). WIA legislation is the controlling legislation for the major funding of adult education, including the money for state grants, national leadership money for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education of the U.S. Department of Education, and the operations of the National Institute for Literacy.

There are at least four players in the development of any federal adult education legislation. One is the Administration, or office of the President, as represented by the Department of Education (USDE). Although the Office of Vocational and Adult Education within the USDE plays a major role in developing and carrying out policy in adult education, policy formulation is often directed by other policy staff within the Administration and Department of Education. Although the Administration cannot directly introduce legislation, it does work with members of Congress to incorporate Administration proposals into the bills introduced or to sponsor an Administration bill.

A second player is the Senate, and a third is the House of Representatives. The House and Senate often have different ideas about the legislation being proposed, and both have major influence in shaping it. When there are differences between the proposals from the two houses, a conference committee with representatives from both chambers of Congress resolves the differences. The Administration's policy is generally reflected in one or more of the bills drafted by the House or Senate.

The fourth player in the development of legislation is the field of adult education. The field is made up of individuals and organizations. Over the years, various organizations involved in adult literacy have worked together to present a unified voice to Congress on issues affecting adult education and literacy. One national organization whose membership is composed of these many organizations is the National Coalition for Literacy (NCL).

The Omnibus Literacy Legislation Concept Paper. In 2001, realizing that the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act would need to be reauthorized in 2003, the members of the NCL began identifying, and reaching consensus on, issues that should be addressed in any new legislation. The Coalition developed suggested legislative recommendations based on the National Literacy Summit Initiative Action Agenda developed in 2000. (For further information on the Summit Initiative, see Comings, Garner, & Smith, 2002, pp. 3–4.) The Coalition’s goal was to recommend policy to Congress rather than merely react to policy proposals from the Administration and Congress. The Coalition finalized and approved the *Omnibus Literacy Legislation Concept Paper* in January 2003. In February, the Coalition distributed their four-page policy brief to all members of Congress. This brief outlined recommendations on reauthorization of the WIA and Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) and appropriations for FY 2004. For TANF reauthorization, the NCL recommended that basic education be classified as “vocational education training” if it is part of an overall employment plan, extending the maximum time limit on vocational education training to 24 months, and limiting the power of the state executive branch in shifting funds from one service area to another under the legislation. The NCL made many recommendations on WIA reauthorization organized around the areas of access, quality, and resources. Some highlights include changes in One-Stop performance requirements, composition of workforce boards, definitions of eligible providers, funding criteria for adult education services, provisions on state leadership and professional development activities, technology use, the funding distribution formula, incentive grants, and national leadership activities. The appropriation recommendations are those cited earlier in the federal appropriations discussion as the goal of the NCL.¹

¹ These resources can be found on the NCL Web site (<http://www.national-coalition-literacy.org/>) under Policy and Legislation.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA). By March 2003, the House Subcommittee on 21st Century Competitiveness approved its version of a reauthorized WIA, The Workforce Reinvestment and Adult Education Act of 2003. The House approved the Act (HR 1261) on May 8, 2003. The House version renamed the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act the Adult Basic Skills and Family Literacy Education Act, which, as reported in a one-page National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) Policy Alert,² “requires focus on, and State demonstration of progress in, basic skills, such as reading, English language acquisition, writing, and mathematics.” The Policy Alert further states that the bill also reauthorized the NIFL, but redirected its purpose to “provide national leadership in promoting reading research, reading instruction and professional development in reading based on scientifically based research. This purpose will be achieved primarily through information dissemination activities.” The House version, therefore, also shifts NIFL’s purpose from a focus on adult literacy (including reading, writing, speaking, and math literacy) to a focus on only reading but for children, youth, and adults.

Many of the proposals in HR 1261 reflected the Administration’s policies on reauthorization. The Department of Education presented the Bush Administration’s vision to the public in June in a paper entitled *A Blueprint for Preparing America’s Future*,³ which contained many of the ideas found in HR 1261. These ideas include: focusing on basic academic skills (as opposed to life skills or employability skills), emphasizing readiness for postsecondary education, promoting practice and professional development based on scientifically based research, expanding access through technology and distance learning, and opening up the provider system to a broader array of agencies, including for-profit entities and faith-based organizations. Accountability is emphasized at both the program and state level. The House version also eliminated the role of the USDE in funding national leadership activities through grants or contracts for “developing, improving and identifying the most successful methods and techniques for addressing the education needs of adults,” and carrying out demonstration programs (Van Scoyoc Associates, 2003, pp. 34–36).

The Senate version (S.1627 The Workforce Investment Act Amendments of 2003) included the Administration’s ideas from the *Blueprint* that would require states to develop state content standards. The Senate

²The Policy Alert is available at http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/policy/updates/03_05_15.html.

³<http://www.ed.gov/policy/adulted/leg/aebblueprint2.doc>.

version also incorporated several of the recommendations in the NCL *Omnibus Literacy Legislation Concept Paper*, including, among other things, policy changes to increase state leadership funds from “not more than 12.5%” of the state allotment to “no more than 15%.” State leadership funds finance activities such as professional development, technical assistance, evaluation, and technology assistance. Another NCL recommendation that was successfully incorporated was the inclusion, under National Leadership activities, of the option of supporting grants or contracts for capacity building in private, nonprofit organizations to help them meet requirements of the Act. Such assistance could help community-based organizations and other nonprofits compete more effectively for funding at the state level by helping them build their skills in areas such as data collection and record keeping, which are needed to meet requirements of the National Reporting System.

Both the House and Senate versions reflect greater emphasis on distance learning and technology when compared to previous legislation. State leadership activities now specifically allow for the development and implementation of distance learning, and national leadership activities permit the support and development of an entity that would produce and distribute technology-based programs and materials (Van Scoyoc Associates, 2003, pp. 20, 39). Both also present a major change in the role of the National Institute for Literacy, by changing its role to include support and dissemination of research on reading for children, youth, and adults. A major difference between the two in this area is that the Senate version retains much of the previous language allowing the Institute to address all areas of literacy, not just reading, whereas the House version specifically limits its focus to reading.

The NCL took the position that the Senate version of the reauthorization is preferable to the House version in many areas and urged its members and others to contact their representatives in Congress to advocate support of the Senate version. A conference committee was scheduled to meet in January 2004 to work out the differences and present a final bill to both houses. Members of the adult education community were particularly concerned about the threat to the NIFL and its focus on adult education and literacy. Much discussion took place on adult education electronic discussion lists (particularly the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education-National Literacy Advocate [AAACE-NLA] list), and a separate Web site was established to provide information to practitioners on the proposed legislative changes to the NIFL and to suggest ways to contact federal representatives.

Welfare Legislation. The other major piece of legislation that greatly affects the provision of adult education services is Welfare, formerly TANF. The House passed their version of the reauthorization of this legislation, HR 4, the Personal Responsibility and Individual Development for Everyone Act (PRIDE), in 2003. The Senate's version passed in committee but must return to the full Senate for consideration in 2004. The NCL supported the Senate version because it has several provisions that are more favorable to adult education. One of these provisions allows states to count participation in adult literacy programs toward meeting work requirements for a period of 3 months in any 24-month period, and allows another 3 months if combined with work or work-readiness activities. The House version has a total maximum of 3 months. Although this time period is much shorter than the NCL desired, its inclusion reflects some level of success in educating members of the Senate about the need for adult literacy and English-language services for many welfare recipients.

PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY ISSUES

Despite the uncertainty concerning policy and funding, the work of the adult education field continues in classrooms and programs throughout the country. Discussions take place regularly on various discussion lists about issues of testing and accountability, often in relation to reporting for the National Reporting System (NRS). At various times during the year, a discussion of these issues, in some form, took place on the AAACE National Literacy Advocacy (NLA) List, the NIFL Assessment List, and the NIFL Equipped for the Future (EFF) List. Topics ranged from trying to find alternative assessments (as opposed to standardized tests) that would meet NRS requirements, to finding definitions for the subskills tested in one standardized test, to trying to understand the relationship of hours of instruction to progress made through the levels of the NRS. Overall, the discussions, which may or may not reflect the feelings of the field as a whole, show a general concern about the lack of adequate measures or tests of learning gain and a lack of a research base for understanding how various factors related to instruction (e.g., time, intensity, technology) affect those learning gains. These discussions reflect frustration among adult educators who feel pressured to be accountable without the resources to provide what they feel is more appropriate data.

As more programs have become involved in providing distance learning through technology, particularly video and the Internet, they are trying to address similar questions. How do you provide a standardized test to someone studying at a distance? How do you count “seat time” for someone using video or the Internet when the teacher is not there to actually view the time on task? These and other questions are being addressed by distance learning programs that are accountable for the learners they serve and must report such information to the NRS.

The number of adults served in programs is one of the easiest measures of accountability. However, there is always a significant time lag between the end of a program year and the availability of statistics on the number of learners served in that year. Although data for 2003 is not currently available, the statistics from the Department of Education for the most recent available year (program year July 2001–June 2002) show that 2,787,416 adults were served. The largest percentage (42%) of learners is English language learners (a total of 1,173,989), whereas ABE was 38% (1,067,597) and adult secondary education (ASE) 20% (545,830). Learners served under the English Literacy/Civics program are included in the English language numbers. This number reflects only those learners receiving services from programs that are funded under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act or from state funds used for the purposes allowed under the Act. Other adults may receive comparable services through organizations not receiving state or federal funds under the Act (such as some volunteer groups, businesses, Job Corps programs, etc.), but no single agency is responsible for collecting such data.

ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSITIONS IN 2003

The National Institute for Literacy

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act under WIA originally defined the role of the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). When the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 passed, and was signed into law January 2002, the role of the NIFL was expanded. As stated on the NIFL Web site (<http://www.nifl.gov>), “The AEFLA directs the Institute to provide national leadership regarding literacy, coordinate literacy services and policy, and serve as a national resource for adult education and literacy programs. The NCLB law directs the Institute to disseminate information

on scientifically based reading research pertaining to children, youth, and adults as well as information about development and implementation of classroom reading programs based on the research.”

During 2003, the NIFL continued to operate under the direction of its interim director, Sandra Baxter. President Bush appointed the 10-member board of directors of the NIFL in 2002, and they held their first meeting in March 2003. Because most board members had expertise in research and children’s literacy and little experience with adult literacy, the National Coalition for Literacy made several contacts with members of the board. The Coalition wanted to encourage board members to retain adult literacy as a priority and focus and also to let the board know that the members of the NCL were anxious to assist them.

Based on notes taken by a representative of the NCL at the first NIFL board meeting, the board decided to focus its efforts on literacy across the life span. They also planned to focus on the following activities:

- Review and assess all current NIFL activities and products to fit the NIFL’s focus.
- Conduct a search for an executive director (as required by law).
- Develop a strategic plan, starting with adult education and moving down the life span priority.
- Conduct policy analysis about literacy across the life span.
- Support the work of the Adult Literacy Research Network.⁴
- Comment on WIA reauthorization as it relates to adult education.

The NIFL has hosted a number of electronic discussion lists for the field of adult education. These have been an invaluable means of communication among teachers, administrators, and others. During 2003, many discussions centered on the proposed changes to the NIFL’s role and other proposals in the reauthorization bills. Because the government funds these lists, the NIFL was concerned about possible violations of laws prohibiting the use of federal funds for lobbying. As a result of these concerns, Sandra Baxter posted a notice to all list users in July 2003 clarifying the use of

⁴The Adult Literacy Research Network is a partnership of the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), formed to determine scientifically based reading instructional methods for low-literate adults. More information can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/news/alrn.html>.

the lists. Her notice stated that lists could be used to discuss critical issues but not to disseminate messages that could be interpreted as lobbying, that is, “that are intended to influence or cause others to influence a member of Congress to favor or oppose legislation or an appropriation by Congress.”⁵ This generated a great deal of discussion on several lists regarding censorship, freedom of speech, and the importance of legislation and appropriations in any discourse over critical issues in the field. The two electronic listservs most involved in “policy” discussions removed their lists and archives from the NIFL server and established them elsewhere. The American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) agreed to host the National Literacy Advocacy (NLA) list and a newly created broadcast list initiated by the NCL. ProLiteracy Worldwide now hosts the NCL member discussion list.

Two major long-term projects of the NIFL, the Equipped for the Future initiative and the Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS), continued during 2003, with ongoing development and involvement by many partners throughout the United States. Despite transitions at the Institute, other work, such as the America’s Literacy Directory, Partnership for Reading activities, and the Bridges-to-Practice project, continued.

The National Coalition for Literacy

Eleven national organizations concerned with adult literacy founded the National Coalition for Literacy in 1981. The NCL’s purpose was to increase public awareness of the problem of adult literacy, answer questions and make referrals through a toll-free telephone number, and raise funds to support these and related efforts. The NCL was not incorporated and was an informal coalition of concerned organizations. Because it was not a 501c3 organization, one of its member organizations served as the recipient of any funds received. There were no dues and no staff.

As the organization grew over the years to include 30 to 35 national literacy organization members, its goals expanded, as did demands on the time of an all-volunteer membership to carry out its purpose and mission. Because it was not a nonprofit organization, it was often difficult to attract funders to support any of the projects that the NCL wanted to carry out. At the past several annual planning meetings, members discussed the

⁵ See <http://www.nifl.gov/nifl-assessment/2003/0068.html>.

difficulties associated with this and suggested possible solutions. In 2002, the NCL commissioned a study of its options for the future. The report, prepared by Forrest P. Chisman of the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, was presented to the NCL membership in September 2002. Following discussions of the report, the membership voted to pursue incorporation and nonprofit status. Articles of Incorporation were filed in March 2003. The founding board adopted bylaws as a private nonprofit corporation in the District of Columbia in May 2003, and filed for tax-exempt status with the IRS. With its new status as a formal coalition of national dues-paying organizations and contributing organizations and individuals, the membership confirmed the new board of directors in September 2003. As the NCL moves forward, it is eligible to receive funds directly, hire staff, and more realistically carry out its purpose and goals.

One of the first actions the new Coalition took was to establish a broadcast electronic list, the NCL Update, to provide information updates on policy and legislation that affect adult and family literacy at the national level. Additionally, in an effort to support implementation of the Action Agenda at the local program level, the NCL received a small grant from the NIFL to gather and disseminate information on state and local efforts to help move the agenda forward in terms of access and resources. Information on the selected programs, what they did, and how well they worked is posted on the NCL Web site so other programs can benefit.⁶

ERIC Clearinghouse

At the end of December 2003, the ERIC Clearinghouse system (as it had been known since 1966) closed. As a result of a request for proposal issued by the Department of Education in the spring of 2003, starting in 2004 the Clearinghouse will function as an electronic database. This will eliminate its information and referral services and peer-reviewed educational publishing. One of the 16 clearinghouses around the country had been dedicated to providing information on adult and vocational education, and although there had been significant concerns expressed on the adult education electronic lists about the proposed change, and encouragement to respond to the draft changes, the shutdown proceeded in December 2003. A new contractor for all subject areas will be selected and initiated in 2004.

⁶<http://www.national-coalition-literacy.org/stories/index.html>.

INDIVIDUAL TRANSITIONS

U.S. Department of Education Leadership

In May 2003, Carol D'Amico resigned as assistant secretary of education for vocational and adult education. In September 2003, President Bush announced his intent to nominate Susan Sclafani to serve as the replacement. At the same time, he designated her as acting assistant secretary for the office until the Senate confirms the nomination. According to a September 3, 2003 press release from the Department of Education, prior to the nomination Sclafani served as a counselor to Secretary of Education Paige and advised him on all education issues and initiatives, including the No Child Left Behind Act. The press release also stated, "Prior to joining the Department of Education, Sclafani served as chief of staff for education services in the Houston Independent School District, where she represented the superintendent on education issues and coordinated activities of the departments directly involved in the education of children . . ."⁷

Champion of Adult Literacy

Adult education lost a great leader in December when former Senator Paul Simon of Illinois passed away. Senator Simon had been one of the few strong supporters of adult literacy and a sponsor of significant federal adult education legislation. As his obituary in the *Chicago Tribune* of December 9, 2003 related, he was modest, gracious, and willing to help ordinary citizens. In the Senate his colleagues saw him as a leader in education matters and someone able to achieve compromise on thorny issues. Many in the adult education field knew and admired him. Even after leaving the Senate he remained involved in and continued to influence adult literacy issues. He will be missed.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

According to a message from Thomas Sticht on the AAACE-NLA list August 19, 2003, the United Nations Literacy Decade was launched in February 2003, with the theme of "Literacy as Freedom." Unfortunately,

⁷Available at <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2003/09/09032003b.html>.

the popular press and media in the United States have paid little attention to this announcement despite press releases and Web sites devoted to the issue by the United Nations, and a speech in New York by First Lady Laura Bush. A few education-related Web sites, such as the NIFL and the Literacy Assistance Center, have posted some information about United Nations Literacy Decade activities. However, a search of two top newspapers, *The New York Times* and *The Chicago Tribune*, and a Google search indicate that the U.S. media seemed to pay no attention to this announcement.

Apparently unrelated to the UN's Literacy Decade, two television networks produced media programs about the issue of adult literacy. One was an NBC Special Report by Tom Brokaw in August 2003 on "Adult Illiteracy: A Reaction." The broadcast generated some lively discussion on the adult education electronic discussion lists, with some people expressing disappointment about the use of the term "illiteracy" rather than "literacy," and the narrow focus on one group of learners with only one tutor. Others on the discussion list tried to highlight the positive aspects of the program, such as the fact that adult literacy got an hour of attention on national TV, the learners were treated with respect, and it highlighted some of the struggles and joys that learners experience.

HBO produced a documentary about a maximum-security prison literacy program in New Jersey that partners with a ProLiteracy affiliate, LVA Trenton, and recruits and trains prisoners to teach other prisoners. After a private screening of the film in New York City on September 16, the film aired on Cinemax on September 24. Although there were few comments on the electronic discussion lists about this documentary, Marsha Tait of ProLiteracy Worldwide stated that ProLiteracy Worldwide had reviewed the video and found it to be "a very respectful and credible treatment of the subject."

RESEARCH

Given the current emphasis in legislation and policy on scientifically based research, it would be inappropriate not to address the issue of research in adult education. This section highlights only a few of the long-term studies underway in 2003 that are using scientifically based research approaches and presents one study released in November. We encourage the reader to view the full reports and outcomes from such studies on the appropriate Web sites.

National Assessment of Adult Literacy

During 2003, the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) assessed a national representative sample of adults in an effort to provide an indication of the nation's progress since the first national adult literacy survey in 1992. As indicated on the National Center for Educational Statistics Web site (<http://nces.ed.gov/naal>), the NAAL seeks to:

- Describe the status of adult literacy in the United States.
- Report on national trends.
- Identify relationships between literacy and selected characteristics of adults (such as gender, age, education level, language background, labor-force participation, income, welfare participation, and health).

The main data collection was conducted in 2003 with standard setting, analysis, and reporting scheduled for the period of January 2004 to May 2005.

NCSALL Lab Schools

Two research lab sites are currently part of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy's network. One is an ESOL lab site at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon; the other is an ABE lab site at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Both lab sites are conducting high-quality research, including basic and applied research using both quantitative and qualitative methods, with a goal of also strengthening professional development systems. They will be disseminating research and professional development materials locally and nationally. These projects are investigating instructional approaches, student engagement, outcomes, and other aspects of adult education program participation. Information on these studies and other research through NCSALL can be found at <http://www.ncsall.net/?id=22>.

TECH 21

TECH 21 is a project of the National Center on Adult Literacy, in partnership with the Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE) and the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium (NAEPDC). It consists of a National Technology Laboratory for Literacy and Adult Education in Philadelphia, a companion technology lab in

Sacramento, a demonstration lab in Washington, DC, seven adult education program-based field sites nationwide, and an Internet portal. As the summary on the TECH 21 Web site indicates, at each of these field sites, learners and educators are learning how to use and participate in the development of information technology models for learning, instruction, and professional development. As research findings become available, they are posted on the Web (<http://www.tech21.org>). During 2003, two studies related to ESL instruction were made available, as well as reports on teachers' use of resources for distance learning.

Project IDEAL

In 2001, 12 states joined together in Project IDEAL, a multistate collaborative effort organized by the Teaching, Learning, and Technology Program at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research (ISR). In 2003, three additional states joined Project IDEAL. Project IDEAL is developing effective distance learning models for adult learners. The staff of Project IDEAL provides technical support in the areas of teacher training, research design, data collection, data analysis, and reporting. The project has developed a *Handbook of Distance Education for Adult Learners* that shares many of the findings to date. It is available, along with other resources from the project, on their Web site: <http://www.projectideal.org>.

How Teachers Change—Final Research Report

How Teachers Change: A Study of Professional Development in Adult Education was sponsored by NCSALL and conducted in three New England states between 1998 and 2000. The study investigated how adult education teachers changed after participating in one of three professional development models. The sample consisted of 100 men and women. The findings focus on the change teachers experienced, which roles changed (as teacher, program member, learner, or member of the field), what factors interacted to influence teacher change, and whether the kind of support teachers had in their job affected the change. Researchers found that most teachers changed, at least minimally, and changes were most often seen in their role as a classroom teacher. Multiple factors interacted to influence teacher change, and teachers who gained the most were those who, among other factors, worked more hours in adult education, had well-supported

jobs, and had a voice in decision making in their programs. The full report, a summary report, and a research brief are all available at <http://www.ncsall.net/index.php?id=29>.

Establishing an Evidence-Based Adult Education System

At the close of 2003, adult education still lacks any definitive research on effective program models. An Occasional Paper published in September 2003 by NCSALL calls attention to this and offers a possible solution. This paper, *Establishing an Evidence-Based Adult Education System*, available on the NCSALL Web site (<http://www.ncsall.net/index.php?id=26/>), makes a cogent argument for an approach to developing an adult education system that rests on “a foundation of the best available empirical evidence and practitioner knowledge.” Of course, this would require substantial funding at a time when appropriations are not keeping pace with costs.

CONCLUSION

The growth and maturation of adult education as a professional field has been evidenced in many ways throughout 2003. The incorporation of the National Coalition for Literacy was finally accomplished, setting the stage for its more active involvement in policy, communications, and leadership at the national level. The Omnibus Literacy Legislation concept paper marks one of the few times the field has taken the initiative to draft legislation, rather than merely react to legislation. The support for evidence-based research and efforts in more multiyear research demonstrates the field’s desire to find answers to difficult questions that are not based on theory or experience alone and that can improve practice.

Although the field has had only moderate success in influencing legislation and appropriations, it is important that the struggle continue. Fortunately, there are many in the field who, like Senator Paul Simon, are champions of adult literacy. They will not give up easily.

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