



National Council for Adult Learning
in cooperation with Adult Learning Partners

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Adult Literacy XPRIZE

[The XPRIZE Foundation](#), a global expert in operating XPRIZE competitions for such world important causes as ocean health and oil cleanup, has just launched the **Barbara Bush Foundation Adult Literacy XPRIZE**, in cooperation with the [Barbara Bush Foundation](#) [see footnote 1] and the [Dollar General Literacy Foundation](#). This partnership is the result of a search by the Barbara Bush Foundation for a bold new initiative, partly in response to the sobering PIAAC assessment findings. It was announced on the occasion of Mrs. Bush's 90th birthday on June 8th.

Mrs. Bush observed that "As I celebrate my 90th birthday today with my grandchildren and great-grandchildren, I am inspired and hopeful that this

Adult Literacy XPRIZE will bring about a radical breakthrough to end the cycle of low literacy in America and that my grandchildren will grow up in a country where education is abundant and accessible to all."

In its role as Presenter, Dollar General has committed \$7 million. XPRIZE is managing the enterprise. Several million dollars are also needed over four years for operating, marketing, and communications and will be donated or raised by the Barbara Bush Foundation.

The competition aims to "incentivize" the development of mobile software applications that demonstrate a capacity to elevate the lowest-skilled adults to a basic reading level within 12 months – as measured by [CASAS](#) pre-testing and post-testing. Groups and individuals across the country are invited to participate in various ways. The ambitious initiative has several complex strands, so readers are urged to [explore the extensive guidelines, guides, tool kits, opportunities for input, and other information now available at the XPRIZE website](#).

There will be two distinct phases to the XPRIZE effort, a Team Solutions Phase and a Cities Development Phase. For the first two years, during the **Team Solutions Phase**, the competition will challenge teams of software, game, and application developers, teachers, students, colleges, and other educators, engineers, and innovators to come together to design learning-to-read software for mobile learning devices (smartphones and tablets). The effort will focus on native and non-native English speakers aged 18–64 who test at or below 3rd-grade level as measured by CASAS scoring.^[see 2] Competitors will submit proposals, and through a process of "intensive judging" five finalist teams will be selected to field test their mobile software programs, each with 1,000 adult learners. In the second **Cities Development Phase**, the field-tested models will be entered into a Cities competition, in which cities above a certain size can compete to get their lowest-skilled residents to download and use the winning programs over a period of 6 months. The city that can prove the greatest percentage of application downloads will win this phase of the competition.

Literacy assessment and scoring will be geared to CASAS' score ranges for reading as related to the NRS definitions of "Education Functioning" levels. Applications must address the realities of adult learners' lives and offer a plan that will improve reading skills by "improving access, encouraging

persistence, developing relevant learning content, and scaling nationwide." Various kinds of advisory and judging panels will be formed to guide the formative, competitive, and evaluation aspects of the effort.

\$7 million in prizes will be awarded in the competition. At the end of the first phase, a grand prize of \$4 million will go to the team that "demonstrates the greatest literacy gains of its field-test participants over 12 months as measured by the CASAS pre- and post-tests." Bonus Prizes of \$500,000 each will go to the two teams that demonstrate the greatest literacy gains from the applications they develop for native and non-native English speakers. A \$1 million Advanced Market Commitment prize will be split among finalist teams that surpass one full Educational Functioning level. At the end of the second phase, a Cities Deployment Prize of \$1 million will go to the city or consortium of cities that demonstrate "the greatest percentage of solution downloads and use by their adult residents with low literacy skills over a six-month completion period."

The XPRIZE timetable of activities runs from June 2015 to June 2019, as follows:

- June 2015 – Launch & Registration Opens
- December 2015 – Registration Deadline
- January 2016–June 2017 – Model/Solution Design–Development Begins
- March 2017 – Team Summit #1 Meeting
- June 2017 – Finalist Judging and Selection
- October 2017–January 2019 – Field Testing (5000 participants by 5 teams)
- December 2017 – Team Summit #2 Meeting
- January 2019 – Results Analyzed, First Phase Award Event, and Cities Deployment Phase Launched
- June 2019 – Judging and Cities Award Given

Note that registration for participation in the program is already open and extends through December 2015! A factor for competitors to keep in mind is that students involved in the field testing may not be involved in any other literacy programs for the duration of their involvement in the XPrize initiative. XPrize will maintain a periodic newsletter about the program. Interested parties can [subscribe to it at this XPrize website page](#).

In announcing the XPRIZE literacy award, principals of the various partnering organizations spoke about their hopes for the program:

-- Peter Diamandis, chairman and CEO of XPRIZE, said *"Existing programs require classrooms and teachers and cannot possibly scale to meet the needs of the millions of adults who need support. [This program] demonstrates a paradigm shift in how we approach adult learning globally, with educational applications that are effective, scalable, and that can be accessed anytime, anywhere."*

-- Jennifer Bravo, senior manager of prize development at XPRIZE, noted that *"Competitions are one of the tools we have in a broader tool kit for social and technological change. It's a way to get people really excited and working together toward a challenge, maybe people who hadn't thought to do that before."*

-- Denine Torr, Dollar General's director of community initiatives, said her Foundation is *"excited to support the Adult Literacy XPRIZE to help propel adult education into the 21st century and beyond."*

-- Liza McFadden, president of the Barbara Bush Foundation, observed that *"With waiting lists for some of the literacy programs it supports as long as two years, the Foundation wants to re-energize its work and help alleviate the stigma felt by many adults who can't read. [This] prize could help drive social change."*

For further information about the competition, contact Eric Desatnik at Eric@xprize.org. To help the Barbara Bush Foundation in its fundraising for the XPRIZE program go to BarbaraBush.org, and specify XPRIZE in the comments box, or send a check to Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, 516 North Adams Street, Tallahassee, FL 32301.

[1] Over the past few years, the Barbara Bush Foundation has done an extensive internal and external evaluation. While still dedicated to family literacy and the learning of children, it is now also directing its attention to advancing the basic skills of parents to help move them along pathways to employability and college. The Foundation is now a 501(c)(3) public charity and all donations are tax exempt.

[2] Ed. Note: The Adult Education field has moved away from grade-level comparisons for adults over the past couple of decades. Hopefully, CASAS standards and the use of measures from the National Reporting System will avoid school-based learning notions and language. Moreover, it should be noted that when it comes to reading--one of the core basic skills--even lowest-skilled adults have some coding and decoding skills.



NEWS IN BRIEF



The [American Academy on Communications in Healthcare](#) will hold its **13th International Conference on Communication in Healthcare** from October 25–26 in New Orleans. The event, titled *The Primacy of Healthcare Communications*, will feature workshops, symposia, and poster sessions. The keynote speakers will be [Evelyn van Weel-Baumgarten](#) of Radboud University Medical Center, President–Elect of the European Association for Communication in Healthcare (the Netherlands); [Dean Schillinger](#) of the University of California (San Francisco), Chief of the Division of General Internal Medicine and Director of Health Communication and Health Literacy; and [Martha Hayward](#), Lead for Public and Patient Engagement at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, founding member of the Women's Health Exchange, former advisor to the Patient and Family Advisory Council of Dana–Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, and Executive Director of The Partnership for Healthcare Excellence. For further information and to register [CLICK HERE](#).



The **Centre for Literacy of Canada** was closed May 28th due to cuts in government funding. Nearly two dozen other adult literacy organizations in the country are also affected. The Centre was widely considered to be Canada's preeminent literacy organization. The Centre and its Executive Director Linda Shohet are internationally recognized for their excellence. It is not clear how the Centre's work will go forward. Despite the Centre's closure, its annual Summer Institute was held June 11–12. Dr. Shohet says that a related paper and short reports will soon be accessible from the [Centre's website](#), which will remain active for several months while a suitable partner organization is found to house the Centre's publications. Dr. Shohet will offer her thoughts and hopes for the future in an upcoming NCAL Blog. Those who wish to communicate with her can do so by email to linda.shohet@gmail.com.



The [Center for Law and Social Policy](#) (CLASP), in partnership with the Lumina Foundation and dozens of other organizations, is cosponsoring a **National Dialogue on Connecting Credentials to Improve Economic Mobility**. The focus is on "how to transform our nation's highly diverse and fragmented education and workforce credentialing system into one that is student-centered and learning-based." In announcing the initiative, CLASP notes that "in such a system, all learners would be able to combine high-quality credentials--from badges and certifications to apprenticeships and certificate programs, [to] associate-and-bachelor-level degrees and beyond--to meet their needs." To learn more or to sign up as a participant, [CLICK HERE](#).



The [Correctional Education Association](#) will hold its 70th International Conference in Alexandria, Virginia from July 12-15th. The event will focus on innovations in correctional education to improve high school equivalency completion and job and college readiness for former and current inmates. Among the many workshops are aligning TABE to the new college and career readiness standards, the GED and HiSet high school equivalency programs, skills needed for employment, teaching in a correctional setting, professional development, aligning programs, and reentry challenges and tools. An array of programs and case studies will be presented, including one by Cheryl Keenan of OCTAE, to show some of the promising services being offered within correctional institutions and by outside communities. As a part of the conference, CEA will hold a silent auction to raise funds for its work. For more information or to register for the conference (it is not necessary to be a CEA member to attend), [CLICK HERE](#). If adult education and workforce skills development in/for correctional populations is important to you, you may want to consider membership or a cash or auction item donation. Cash contributions can be mailed to the CEA at the [address given in their online brochure](#). Items may be donated for the auction up to the day of the event. Send an email to conference and auction coordinator Deborah Withem, at Deborah.withem@odrc.state.oh.us, indicating what you want to donate and requesting shipment instructions. For those who like to plan ahead, CEA's Annual Conference and Training will take place from September 14-16 in Independence, Ohio. Its theme will be Pathway to Independence; among the many agenda topics will be human trafficking. Registration information and registration forms are presently available by email from Deborah Withem or

from CEA's [Ohio website](#).



FACE 2015 Conference. The 22nd Annual FACE 2015

Conference (Forum for Access and Continuing Education) will take place at the University of South Wales between July 1st–3rd. FACE works to exchange and disseminate professional information and practices in lifelong learning and continuing education and collaborates with UNESCO's Lifelong Learning Institute. The conference is designed for academics, teachers, practitioners, and students. Its theme this year is "Closing the Gap: Bridges for Access and Lifelong Learning." Attention will be given to gains achieved through partnership, routes out of poverty, part-time and full-time learning, and other topics. Keynote speakers come from The Open University, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, the Higher Education Funding Council for England, and the Welsh government. The social program will include a visit to the National Museum of Wales. Conference proceedings will eventually be available. For those with travel budgets and lifelong learning interests, more information is available by email at face2015@southwales.acuk or from the U.S., phone (011-61-1443-482002).



Gradnation has issued a new report, [2015 Building a Grad Nation Report: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic](#), May 12, 2015. The report is a mix of good news and less good. According to the report, the national high school graduation rate has hit a record high of 81.4 percent, and for the third year in a row, the nation is "on pace" to meet the goal of 90 percent on-time graduation by 2020. 32 states have made gains since 2013 ranging between 2% and 4.2%. Although graduation rates for students of color have improved significantly, they are still unacceptably low for minority, low-income, English-language learners, and special education students. Moreover, low-income students graduate at a rate 15% behind those of better economic means. The report is filled with data according to income status, variations among racial and ethnic groups and people with disabilities, and city and state size. The lead sponsor of the study is AT&T.



Moving Along With PIAAC – The American Institutes for Research is working on a new U.S. national report on the results from the PIAAC national

supplemental assessment of an additional sampling of 3600 U.S. adults. The sample includes unemployed adults (aged 16–65), young adults (aged 16–34), and older adults (aged 66–74). AIR is also working on the U.S. PIAAC Prison Study report administered in federal and state prisons from February through June 2014. This report is slated for release in early 2016. AIR has been devoting a good deal of its time in past months presenting at state education conferences and other venues. For ongoing information about PIAAC go to www.piaacgateway.com. To consider booking the group for a presentation about the findings of PIAAC, contact Katie Landeros at klanderos@air.org or 202-403-6441.



[The National Center for Families Learning](#) (formerly National Center for Family Literacy) has enriched the scope and appeal of its website over the past few years. Readers who haven't visited the site recently are encouraged to do so—to discover an array of interactive opportunities, a vibrant *News of the Week* section, and other resources. NCFL's current funding partners are Toyota, the Verizon Foundation, Dollar General Literacy Foundation, Better World Books, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The May 29th issue of NCFL's *News of the Week* told of a blog on recent research by the [U.K.'s National Research and Development Centre](#) for adult literacy and numeracy, titled "[Family literacy matters and family literacy works.](#)"



[The National Council for Adult Learning](#) is the successor organization to the [Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy](#) (CAAL). For information about its mission, operation, and Board of Directors, visit NCAL's website at the above link. Also see the website of affiliate organization, [Adult Learning Partners, LLC](#). (Note: The CAAL website at the above link remains active as a way to temporarily provide access to all of CAAL's publication. As a public service, the NCAL site also provides a homepage link to the CAAL publications.)



[The National Council of State Directors of Adult Education](#) and its affiliated **[National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium](#)** have announced the appointment of Jeff Carter as the new NCSDAE/NAEPDC Executive Director. He will replace Lennox McLendon who is retiring at the end of this month. Mr. Carter is currently president of Digital

Promise and of the National Coalition for Literacy.



[Tyton Partners](#), a firm specializing in education, media, and information, has just released [LEARNING FOR LIFE: The Opportunity for Technology To Transform Adult Education](#). Considering the high importance of deploying technology and distance learning to extend Adult Education service outreach, this is a timely report. The Joyce Foundation provided funding for the work. Tyton defines adult education as "instructional training programs that help underprepared adults develop basic skills in the areas of literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy." For the study some 1000 adult education professionals were surveyed in November 2014 and more than 50 were interviewed. This report is Part I of a two-part volume on the research findings, subtitled: *Interest in and Aptitude for Technology*. It embraces both big and little media and provides adult education program models, samples administrators and practitioners to gauge enthusiasm for more use of technology, looks at infrastructure and instructor readiness issues, and discusses the funding challenge and other issues.



[VALUE USA](#) provides a voice and leadership training to adults with low literacy skills. In cooperation with Accelerate Texas and Alamo Colleges, it will hold its 9th Adult Learner Leadership Institute in San Antonio August 11–13. Members of VALUE receive a discounted registration fee. To become a member, sponsor the event, nominate an adult learner for the Susan D. Green Memorial Award, or obtain further information, link to VALUE's website.



WIOA Regulations & Guidelines. In mid-April, the Departments of Education and Labor invited comments from the field on their WIOA Implementation Guidelines, giving 60 days thereafter for submissions to be made. Comments from the [Center for Law and Social Policy](#) (CLASP), the [National Center of Immigrant Integration Policy](#) of the Migration Policy Institute, the [National Council of State Directors of Adult Education](#) (NCSDAE), the [National Council for Adult Learning](#) (successor to the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy), and the [National Skills Coalition](#) are available at the links given here.



[2015 Literacy Leaders Awardees from the National Coalition for Literacy](#) were recognized at a Capitol Hill ceremony on May 18th. The winners were the Rep. Phil Roe (Republican co-chair of the House Adult Literacy Caucus), Mayor Michael A. Nutter of Philadelphia, WAMU Radio Correspondent Kavitha Cardoza (for her 4-part series on adult literacy), and The Adult Numeracy Network (ANN) and its late co-founder Mary Jane Schmitt. The awards event was sponsored by the Dollar General Literacy Foundation.



REPORTS & RESOURCES



From the [American Youth Policy Forum](#) -- [*The Forgotten Half – Who Are They Now?*](#), Betsy Brand, April 27, 2015.



From the [Center for American Progress](#) -- [*The Case for a Two-Generation Approach for Educating English Language Learners*](#), by Tracey Ross, May 6, 2015.



From [CLASP](#) – (1) WIOA Game Plan for Low-Income People: [Resources on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#). A selection of CLASP papers, tools, and resources. Also available: (2) [*New Opportunities to Improve Economic and Career Success for Low-Income Youth and Adults: Key Provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*](#) (Bird, Foster, Ganzglass), Sept. 2014. A wide range of other WIOA resources are available at the CLASP site. Sign up there to receive regular e-updates.



From [Education Week](#) -- [*Why Ed Tech Is Not Transforming How*](#)

[Teachers Teach](#), by Benjamin Herold, June 11, 2015, is one of several articles in Ed Week's "Technology Counts 2015: Learning the Digital Way" series. Although the series and this particular article focus on public schools, some of the issues treated are relevant for Adult Education. To access other articles and/or the full reports, it may be necessary to subscribe to Ed Week.



From [LINCS](#) -- (1) [College and Career Readiness Standards: The Instructional Advances in English Language Arts/Literacy](#), Units 1–4, Susan Pimental et al. The units cover *Connecting the CCR Standards to Key Advances*, *Selecting Texts Worth Reading*, *Identifying Questions Worth Answering*, and *Creating High-Quality Writing Prompts*. Each unit contains a facilitator's guide, PowerPoint slides, and participant handouts. (2) [Handbook for Sustaining Standards-Based Education in Adult Education](#), Susan Pimentel. (3) [Career Pathways Approaches for the Delivery of Education, Training, Employment, and Human Services, Summary of Responses to a Request for Information](#), OCTAE, February 2015, 13 pp.



From [NAEPDC](#) -- [A National Scan of Entry Qualifications and Early and Ongoing Professional Development Requirements and Offerings for Adult Basic Education Practitioners](#), by Alisa Belzero and Jessica Darkenwalk-DeCola of Rutgers University, November 2014.



From the [National Skills Coalition](#) -- (1) A brief entitled [Realizing Opportunity and Innovation in WIOA: Aligned by Design: WIOA and Adult Education](#), June 10, 2015 and (2) [Serving the Hard to Serve](#), by Brian Wilson, June 2, 2015. Many other WIOA resources are also available from NSC.



From [MDRC](#) -- (1) [Meeting the Needs of Workers and Employers: Implementation of a Sector-Focused Career Advancement Model for Low-Skilled Adults](#) (Tessler, Bangser, Pennington, Schaberg, and Dalporto), October 2014 and (2) [Doubling Graduation Rates: Three-Year Effects of CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs \(ASAP\) for Developmental Education Students](#) (Scrivener, Weiss, Ratledge, Tudd, Sommo, and Fresques), February 2015.



From the [Migration Policy Institute](#) -- (1) [Integration Key to Combating Radicalization: A Q&A with Solveig Horne, Norwegian Minister of Children, Equality, and Social Inclusion](#), interview by MPI Editor Zara Rabinovitch, June 10, 2015, (2) [Building Skills in North and Central America: Barriers and Policy Options toward Harmonizing Qualifications in Nursing](#), by Victoria Rietig and Allison Squires, March 2015; (3) [Some of Most Sought-After Current and Historical U.S. Immigration Statistics Published in Useful Compilation by MPI's Online Journal](#), press release March 10, 2015.



FROM [TEAL](#) (of the American Institutes for Research) -- Two recent fact sheets on aspects of Adult Education: (1) [Deeper Learning Through Questioning](#), and (2) [Student-Centered Learning](#), by Mary Ann Corley, Director of TEAL. Many other professional development titles, including two new teachers guides on writing and math, are also available at the TEAL website. Note: The TEAL Center (Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy), a contracted project of OVAE/OCTAE, will come to an end this month, but its website will remain active indefinitely.

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