



Newsletter Issue #8, Nov. 14, 2015

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POINT OF VIEW

Expanding NRS Data Collection

We at NCAL think that state reports required under the National Reporting System (NRS) should be more comprehensive. NRS currently requires the states to report on educational gains for both ABE and ESL, yet state reporting is primarily in terms of reading gains. OCTAE has not required documented attention to digital literacy, workplace skills, and family literacy. Yet, many programs are providing more services and "skill sets" than they get credit for, which leads to inadequate federal policy development and funding.

[NRS guidelines](#) say that "educational gain within the NRS is defined through advancement of students through 12 educational functioning levels, four levels for adult basic education (ABE), two levels for adult secondary education (ASE), and six levels for English as a second language (ESL). The six ESL levels are

beginning literacy, low beginning ESL, high beginning ESL, low and high intermediate ESL, and advanced ESL. The ESL levels describe speaking and listening skills and basic reading, writing, and functional workplace skills that can be expected from a person functioning at that level. The skill descriptors **illustrate** the types of skills students entering that level are likely to have and **are not a complete or comprehensive delineation of all of the skills at that level** (our emphasis added). Programs measure level completion and advancement by assessing students with a standardized pre- and post-test."

This issue is particularly important considering WIOA's performance and reporting requirements and the urgency of our growing adult ESL needs. It is hard to build support for Adult Education and ESL with Congress, governors, state leaders, and other policymakers when only minimal outcomes are reported.

As part of OCTAE's recent effort to seek guidance from the field on its WIOA implementation program, NCAL noted the following:

"WIOA requires states to measure the percentage of program participants who are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment. For Title II Adult Education, these should include work-readiness certification and other employability measures, skills needed to enter and succeed in job training, and preparation for successful college completion (including degrees and job-skill certification). The performance accountability system proposed by OCTAE does not directly include work-based performance measures."

"WIOA emphasizes the importance of connecting job seekers and workers with the needs of employers and the regional economy. Service to employers must include greatly increased "workplace adult education and literacy activities" in order to directly address employer needs. This could be measured by requiring that each state report the annual number of Workplace Programs funded, the enrollment of these programs, and the workplace skills attained. Programs could document positive outcomes such as reduced employee turnover, promotions, etc. OCTAE should make it clear that "workforce" means both pre-employment and the USA's 24 million lower-skilled incumbent workers."

Several research publications of NCAL and its predecessor CAAL called for improvements in the NRS reporting requirements, and OCTAE has taken some steps in that direction, but for significant changes to occur, local, state, and national leaders need to actively press for it as well.



NEWS IN BRIEF



Professional Development in Adult Education

- Building on blogs by the National Council for Adult Learning ([Moving PD Closer to the Top](#), 8/25/15) and OCTAE ([Throwing Down the Gauntlet for PD](#), 9/24/15), Jackie Taylor and David Rosen, moderators of the LINCS Evidence-Based Practice and Program Management groups, hosted a discussion recently on professional development in adult education. [CLICK HERE](#) for the LINCS-posted comments. A supplemental discussion strand gathered thoughts from subscribers on next steps and is available [HERE](#).

- The **Learning Forward 2015 Conference for Professional Development**, although focused on K-12, will include several sessions for adult educators. The conference will be held Dec. 5-9 at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center in Washington, DC. Mary Ann Corley, recently retired from the American Institutes for Research, is a member of the DC host committee. To explore the schedule of topical sessions and "thought leader" speakers, and to register for the conference, [CLICK HERE](#). Scroll down the page for a downloadable program and registration instructions. *[Note: Two principals of Adult Learning Partners (ALP), Mary Ann Corley and Randy Whitfield, are among the nation's most experienced PD development professionals. They are available as part of the ALP team (www.alpamerica.com) to carry out projects to assist states and other entities needing help to further their PD efforts.]*



Are High School Graduates Ready for Jobs and College? - A new report from Achieve, [Rising to the Challenge: Are High School Graduates Prepared for College and Work](#) (Oct. 2015), indicates that they are not. It examines whether high school graduates using some 93 different diploma options are career- or college-ready (CCR). Among the findings are that 20 states do not offer a diploma that requires students to complete CCR

requirements in ESL and math. In 26 states, multiple diploma options are offered, but at least one diploma in each state falls short of CCR expectations. In four states and the District of Columbia, the state has CCR mandatory requirements. Significant for policymakers, says Achieve, is that "a state's reported graduation rate may mask which students earned which diploma options in the state." Most states "cannot obtain useful information about who earns which diploma option and how they fare after high school-information critical for parents, students, teachers, and counselors." The paper calls for more state transparency about diplomas and course sequences and better and more accessible information about outcomes. State-by-state diploma offerings and expectations for ESL and math make up the bulk of the report.



PIAAC Update - The American Institutes for Research (AIR) will hold its second invitational PIAAC Research Conference on Dec. 10-11, in Arlington, VA. Its purpose is to present the findings of several new research papers commissioned by AIR with NCES funding. The conference will be organized according to several broad themes, such as Workforce and Education Issues, the Skills of Immigrants, Skill Gain and Loss, Numeracy, and Health Literacy. The research papers will be published in full on the PIAAC website in 2016. Meanwhile, [summaries of many of the papers](#) are currently available there.



Seeking Curriculum Input for Low-Literate Healthcare Workers - Pat Thomas, Adult Education Director of Minnesota's Southwest Adult Education Center (Marshall ABE Region) would welcome input on designing an online reading curriculum (5.5 to 8.5 grade reading level) to help low literate adults gain greater skills leading to a CNA job--with special attention to immigrants and refugees. The focus should be health care/CNA content and vocabulary. [See the online curriculum](#) she and her colleagues developed at the Marshall Online Learning Center a decade ago for the desired format for the new reading curriculum. Ideas about possible financial support to create the new curriculum will also be welcome. Write to Ms. Thomas at PThomas@starpoint.net.



Two Health Literacy Conferences Coming Up - (1) [The 22nd International Union of Health Promotion and Education](#) will be held in Curitiba, Brazil from May 22-26, 2016. Three sub-plenaries on health literacy will include oral presentations, workshops, and symposia. The conference is titled "Taking the Global Health Literacy Agenda Forward for Health Promotion - From Position Paper to Action." To learn more and register for the conference, [CLICK HERE](#).

(2) The 15th Annual IHA Health Literacy Conference will be held May 4-6, 2016 in Anaheim, California. For more information and to register for that conference, [CLICK HERE](#) to go to the website of the Institute for Healthcare Advancement.



Fighting Poverty and Other Disadvantage Through ABE Services - Adult Basic Skills Programs: A Crucial Tool in Fighting Poverty, by Stephen Reder of Portland State University, is featured in the Sept. 8, 2015 issue of Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity. The essay notes that a recent study shows that expanded funding for adult basic education programs will pay off, with adults who completed ABE programs earning an average of about \$10,000 more per year than they would without enrollment in the programs. We should look more to ABE programs as a vital tool in fighting poverty and other social disadvantage, the article indicates. In a similar vein, a recent review by Gail Spangenberg, contributing editor to the UNESCO Lifelong Learning Institute, deals with Maggie Feeley's Learning care lessons: Literacy, love, care and solidarity, which has huge implications for low-skilled adults and the need to adequately fund basic literacy programs for them. The article points to enormous "resource inequalities" in the U.S. and elsewhere and observes that unless we do far better in our funding of ABE, the U.S. (and other countries) can count on the continued existence of a large deprived underclass.



The Commission on Adult Basic Education - COABE's next national conference will take place in Dallas April 10-13, 2016. To register and to get more information about the conference, go to the [Conference 2016 section of COABE's website](#). Professional development will be an important conference theme. With **Dollar General Corporation** sponsorship, COABE is inviting nominations (due Jan. 31) for its annual National Awards, to be given at the Conference. Three awards of \$1,000 each (plus a "value package") will recognize excellence in adult education by a teacher, a student, and an administrator. Winners will be notified by Feb. 15th. Nominations will be taken from state associations and large group members. Instructions are available at the [COABE website](#).



New Pew Findings on Ownership of Handheld Devices - In light of the Barbara Bush Foundation XPrize Competition now in process, it is important to know that, according to a new report from the Pew Research Center, [Technology Device Ownership: 2015](#), some 68% of U.S. adults now own a

smartphone (up from 35% in 2011), and 45% of adults own tablets (up from 4% in 2010). However, smartphone owners are more likely to be younger, more affluent, and highly educated. Only 40% of those who have not graduated high school own a smartphone, and just 56% of high school graduates do. This compares to 75% and 81% for those with some college and those who have graduated college. Ownership findings are consistent across all major demographic groups. Tablet ownership varies significantly across demographic groups, with more pronounced differences by educational attainment levels.



Joyce Foundation - Joyce has a growing presence in adult education and workforce skills development. It has provided more than \$13 million to date for the [Shifting Gears](#) program. In an Oct. 2015 statement, President Ellen Alberding noted that an area of Joyce's interest is "knowledge and skills for disadvantaged workers so they qualify for family-supporting jobs." "Taking risks, betting on good ideas, and testing innovative solutions are among the contributions we can make to advance social and economic change," she said. In its Employment program area, Joyce recently made nearly two dozen grants ranging from \$100,000 to \$1,100,000--including support for *CLASP's* work on quality career pathways and federal policy development for low-income adult workers...for the *Council for Adult & Experiential Learning's* service to low-skilled adults...for *Brandon Roberts & Associates' Working Poor Families Project*...for Georgetown University's *Center on Education and the Workforce* to develop data systems that will better align education and workforce development systems...for the *Jobs for the Future Accelerating Opportunity* program...for the *National Skills Coalition's* federal workforce policy advocacy and state workforce technical assistance...and for *The Manufacturing Institute's* expanded use of its national skills credential. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.



Thinking About Adult Charter Schools - Adult charter schools, a concept pioneered in California, are increasing in number around the U.S. Last week, the LINCS Program Management list featured a discussion about the schools. Subscribers were invited to think about "opportunities and challenges for adult education program managers, teachers, and others who may be considering applying to become charter schools." The weeklong discussion resulted in 35 pages of questions and comments from the field. David Rosen, moderator of the discussion, will post a lengthy summary of the proceedings sometime next week, but in the meantime, [CLICK HERE](#) to access the postings in full. NCAL will give the URL for the summary in its next issue.



Call for Adult Numeracy Articles - The *Journal of Research and Practice for Adult Literacy, Secondary, and Basic Education* (COABE/Rutgers University) will publish a special issue on numeracy in 2016. Numeracy expert Lynda Ginsburg of Rutgers will be the Special Issue Guest Editor. COABE is now inviting article submissions for the issue. Final manuscripts can be sent in directly for blind peer review (due by April 1, 2016), or authors can contact Dr. Ginsburg directly at journal@coabe.org (by February 29) for a pre-submission review of their document in draft form. Those wishing to submit a paper are urged to fill out a form to indicate their intent. [Guidelines for authors are available from COABE.](#)



Highlights from the National Coalition for Literacy - (1) At the Oct. 7 meeting of the National Coalition for Literacy, Acting Assistant Secretary Johan Uvin indicated that OCTAE plans to maintain a small public Adult Education system, serving about 1.5 million people, as part of a large leveraged system with instruction available any time/any place. NCAL believes this to be a reasonable approach considering the current realities of inadequate funding provisions in WIOA and apparent lack of interest in Title II programs at the White House. (2) U.S. Rep. Don Beyer of Virginia is crafting a bill to amend the IRS code. It would give adult educators the same tax deduction that K-12 educators now get. Under the bill, adult educators would have to work 250 taxable hours a year to qualify for the tax credit. Many adult education groups will likely support this bill as it progresses, including the Coalition and TESOL and other member groups. (3) Coalition members CLASP and Proliteracy have submitted comments and suggestions on reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Act, including better alignment of the Act with WIOA and Adult Education. The comments are available at their websites. **NCAL Note:** One way to increase awareness and commitment to Adult Education is for local and state leaders to encourage their elected officials to join or follow the work of the House Adult Literacy Caucus. The Caucus is co-chaired by Reps. Phil Roe (TN) and Ruben Hinojosa (TX), and members can join through their offices by contacting john.martin@mail.house.gov (for Roe) and connie.humphrey@mail.house.gov (for Hinojosa).



NEW RESOURCES



From AIR's College & Career Readiness & Success Center -

A new brief from the American Institutes for Research, titled [Career Pathways Initiatives](#), describes major national and regional career pathway initiatives and offers insights that should help guide states developing such efforts.



From CLASP - CLASP continues to be an important presence for Adult Education on the federal policy front, as a visit to

[the CLASP website](#) will show. Many new publications are available, including copies of recent communications to federal legislators on various pending bills that affect Adult Education. One major new publication, to which CLASP contributes a chapter, is titled [Transforming U.S. Workforce Development Policies for the 21st Century](#). It offers recommendations from leading scholars and practitioners on reforming workforce policies and practices. The CLASP chapter, titled *A Career Pathway Approach in Minnesota and Beyond*, features a case study of Minnesota's FastTRAC program. CLASP has also published an analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's Sept. 16 release of its 2014 income, poverty, and health data. Among other things, the 2014 data shows that "economic struggles are pervasive for this generation of children and young adults." "Almost half (more than 4 in 10) of our young people live in low-income households below 200 percent of the poverty line." For this 3-page paper, [CLICK HERE](#). Also available from CLASP is a recent brief about implementing the Ability to Benefit provision, called [Department of Education Clarifies Financial Aid Provision that Helps Low-Income Students](#).



From Education Week - [Understanding Formative Assessment: A Special Report](#) is primarily for the K-12 arena, but some parts of it may be of interest to Adult Education professionals. In connection with this release, Ed

Week's Catherine Gewertz will moderate an online chat about the subject on Nov. 17 from 2-3pm EST. Richard Stiggins, founder of the Assessment Training Institute, will be a guest. For information about joining the chat [CLICK HERE](#).



From Emmi Solutions - The [Emmi Solutions website](#)

is an outstanding health literacy resource for both adult educators and medical personnel. Its vast collection of resources and blog postings, remarkably current in Adult Education, should be discovered by anyone interested in designing programs to improve the healthcare prospects of low-literate adults. For starters, go to the site and google Adult Education.



From the Joyce Foundation - The Foundation recently issued a new report titled [Building Career Pathways for Adult Learners: An Evaluation of Progress in Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin After Eight Years of Shifting Gears](#) (also see News In Brief item above).



From the Migration Policy Institute - (1) MPI's 12th annual conference (Oct. 29) provided analysis of many "hot" immigration topics, including the family detention system, unaccompanied child migrants from Central America, and prospects for U.S. immigration policy reform in the current national political climate. Secretary Jeh Johnson of Homeland Security and Antonio Guterres, U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, were the keynote speakers. Audio and video podcasts of the conference are [now available from the MPI website](#). Among other recent resources of possible interest to adult educators are [Ten Facts About U.S. Refugee Resettlement](#) by Randy Capps and Michael Fix and [Rethinking Emigration: Turning Challenges into Opportunities](#) (Transatlantic Council Statement) by Demetrios Papademetriou.



From the National Skills Coalition - NSC, like CLASP, is active on many legislative matters pending on Capitol Hill. It has a variety of recent new publications, analysis, and letters to federal legislators on bills pending that will affect Adult Education. [CLICK HERE](#) to review NSC's recent legislative positions, and its other activities and offerings. To highlight just one major new resource available from NSC, its October [2015 Sector Partnership Policy Toolkit](#) is now available to help guide the development of "local sector partnerships through funding, technical assistance, and/or program initiative(s)". Also available at the NSC website is an updated, comprehensive [Side-By-Side Comparison of Occupational Training and Adult Education & Family](#)

[Literacy Provisions of WIA and WIOA.](#)



From ProLiteracy - On Nov. 5, the [New York Times](#) carried a [ProLiteracy ad](#) to increase awareness of family literacy. The ad features a father reading to his child and calls for volunteers and funding for the field.



From Tyton Partners - [Learning for Life: The Opportunity for Technology to Transform Adult Education](#), by Adam Newman, is a two-part Joyce Foundation-funded series on instructional technology in adult education. Part I explores issues of readiness, access, and use in adult education as well as market opportunities, and processes of program decision-making. Part II deals with the supplier system for instructional resources.



From the U.S. Department of Education - (1) [First Ever Skills for Success Grants and Initiative to Support Learning Mindsets and Skills](#) (four grants awarded Oct. 14, totalling \$2 million). (2) [Nine Communities Chosen As Finalists for Pilot to Improve the Outcomes of Disconnected Youth](#) (9 start-up grants Oct. 29, totalling \$700,000). (3) [Fact Sheet: Department of Education Launches Experiment to Provide Pell Grant Funds to High School Students Taking College Courses for Credit](#) (Oct. 30).

FOR YOUR UPLIFT: Applauding the Students



From left to right, students, teachers, donors - Debra Watson, Haylee Million, Lynn Musick, Mark Musick, Marcella Miles, and Jane Bowlin

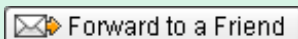
On Oct. 15, RACE 1 Regional Adult & Career Education in Gate, Virginia, awarded

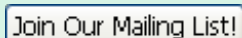
its 2015 Mary and H.L. Musick Lifelong Learning Award to two students, Haylee Million and Marcella Miles. The award program is funded by the Musick family in honor of their parents, who resided in the area for much of their lives, and who instilled in their four children a deep respect for education and earning a college degree. It aims to recognize accomplishments of adult learners in starting on their career paths.

Marcella earned her GED in 2012, while working as a Certified Nursing Assistant at Heritage Hall in Big Stone Gap. In 2013 she completed a PluggedIn VA Technology class and enrolled in Mountain Empire Community College. She is about to enter the MECC Nursing Program and plans to become a Registered Nurse. Marcella credits her Adult Education instructor with her success. "Jane Bowlin has been my inspiration, boosting my academic skills and giving me the self-confidence I needed to move ahead with my education. One of the most exciting and rewarding benefits of earning my GED is the influence it has had on my children. They understand the value of an education in a way they never have before."

Haylee completed her GED work in 2015 and recently became a pre-nursing student at MECC. She plans to go on to the University of Virginia to earn a bachelor's degree and wants to be a Nurse Practitioner and work with elderly veterans in a nearby VA Hospital. "None of this would have been possible," she said, "without the selfless and committed assistance of my instructor Debra Watson, whose help both academically and personally went above and beyond what would be expected, or without the support of my entire family. Earning my GED has placed me on the fast track to achieving my dream..."

RACE 1 adult education classes are given free of charge at 11 locations throughout the Gate's area. For information about the program, call Amy Statzer toll free at 844-697-2231, or go to www.MyRACE1.org.

 Forward to a Friend

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National Council for Adult Learning

(formerly Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy)

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and for our work to advance good policy development,
program service and outreach, and planning.**

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