

## **Adult Education and Literacy Articles/Resources – Synopsis/Key Points**

### WIOA

#### **U.S./ Dept. of Ed Memo: Vision for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA/Title II) in the Workforce System/WIOA.**

Keys points:

- Diversity of individuals who possess low skills requires a broad approach  
AEFLA/Title II of WIOA provides education services for adult learners through the one-stop system
- AEFLA assists and supports adults/ immigrants/incarcerated to become literate, learn and improve English, obtain skills for employment, strengthen skills for re-entry
- Title II: adult education alignment with one-stops
- states must commit to improve learning “in every local adult ed program”
- digital literacy/leveraging technology important and necessary job skill partnerships/linkages with employers, other education providers, DOL, one-stops are the key

#### **WIOA! What’s Going to Happen to Low-Literacy Adults?**

This blog post addresses many of the issues/concerns that volunteer literacy organizations have raised about WIOA.

Key points:

- current federally-funded adult ed system reaches fewer than 6% of the 36 million adults at Level 1 and 2 of the National Reporting System (NRS)
- some of the changes necessary to remain federally funded under WIOA (e.g., accountability) will be very difficult for many adult literacy providers
- workforce literacy curriculum is written at too high a level for adults reading at 4th grade or lower
- getting a job and transition to college not every adult learner’s goal
- partnerships essential: other ed providers, family literacy  
digital literacy, elearning, distance education – leveraging technology

#### **WIOA and Serving the Hard to Serve**

Two page article from the National Skills Coalition counters point 2 in the above article (WIOA: What’s Going to happen to Low-Literacy Adults).

Key points:

- WIOA established 6 common metrics for all six core programs (including Title II Adult Ed and Family Literacy) but expected levels of performance not the same for each
- past program performance (Title II programs) taken into consideration
- performance targets can vary according to economic conditions and participant characteristics
- if programs serve more “hardest to serve” - performance targets revised downward. If programs “cream”/ serve higher level/less hard to serve - performance targets revised upward.

## PIAAC

Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies  
2012 (International study by OECD/Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development)

### **PIAAC: Adult Education Pays**

Series produced by Marsha L. Tait (Literacy CNY) and Margaret Patterson for the National Coalition for Literacy/NCL. Key finding (in line with 2003 NAAL Survey and 1992 NALS Survey): One in six adults (17%) has low literacy skills, and one in three has low numeracy. PIAAC also found: that low basic literacy skills “are more common in the US than on average across all other countries surveyed.”

**PIAAC: Time for the U.S. to Reskill? (See: [Key Points link after article](#))**

## Literacy and Poverty

### **Adult Basic Skills Programs— A Crucial Tool in Fighting Poverty**

Steve Reder’s (Portland State Univ) main point is – research shows that “the less literate an American adult is, the greater the chances that he or she lives in poverty.” Adult education and workforce development offer a solution (on average, adults who have gone through these programs earn \$10,000 annually more than if they had not participated in such programs).

However, WIA/WIOA and workforce programs may not be suitable for the working poor or all unemployed since they do not have the minimal literacy skills

that will enable “entry into career pathway programs (like WIOA).” We need, Reder says: “innovative programs that contextualize instruction and deliver it in a culturally responsive way that enhances individuals’ dignity and potential and builds on their strengths rather than labeling them as ‘basic skills deficient’ (the unfortunate terminology still found in WIOA).”

## Adult Education/Literacy Trends

### **Past Gains, Future Goals**

The last article CAAL (Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy) published before closing in 2014 (due to loss of funding from McGraw-Hill) was Past Gains, Future Goals. CAAL “asked some two dozen state and national leaders to share their views on important recent gains and our highest priority challenges in the next few years.”

Key points: Quoted

- We can no longer afford to defer the provision of high-quality Professional Development for adult education teachers
- Influx of refugees who need adult ESL and literacy classes has increased significantly
- [Research] provides compelling evidence that the improvement of child outcomes cannot be successful without an investment in the caregiver
- Dual-generation strategies: emerging trend is excellent news for family literacy and adult education advocates and allows a broad base of funding opportunities for the future
- Adult education and business partnerships
- Technology: refining blended learning models so that adult learners are offered the most appropriate instruction at any time, at any place, and at any pace
- Technology: increasing intensity of instruction beyond the classroom
- Technology in the next decade: next decade needs to be the creation of digital systems that will adapt to each learner’s unique needs.
- Funding: state and federal funding provides services for 1 out of 20 adults with low basic skills.

- Funding and Policy needs: New technologies and creative private and employer financing; attitude shift in Congress toward reasonable and appropriate spending levels will get the nation out of crisis
- American economy is not likely to function at anywhere near optimal capacity or to achieve broadly shared prosperity without much more effective workforce development systems
- Need to: “infuse” careers throughout the program services—at the beginning reader levels... and not to throw away the student-centered learning we are doing now; but rather integrate contextualized learning
- Challenge confronting the field will be to gain recognition of what it will really cost to provide English instruction should the Congress actually settle on immigration legislation.
- Challenge for Adult Ed programs at all levels will be their ability to develop partnerships with these unusual sources: The Departments of Homeland Security, Agriculture, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Justice, as well as Libraries, Promise Zones, TANF, Public Housing
- Adult educators must explain more clearly the unique role that Adult Education plays in the overall education system. They will have to become more entrepreneurial, identify new sources of funding, and explore the possibility of public-private partnerships, pay-for-success schemes, and other options
- We must be sure to include the lowest-skilled adults in our target populations for service. Otherwise, we will fall further behind our global competitors in educational attainment and put our nation at risk.