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A HALF CENTURY: The Federal Role in Adult Education

Federal Adult Education: A Legislative History 1964-2013 is a new report (95 pages) prepared to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. It is the work of Gary Eyre, one of Adult Education's most accomplished and longstanding leaders. He prepared it over a two-year period under a U.S. Department of Education contract with NOVA Research Corporation.

The report traces the federal role in adult education to 2013 (pp. 1-32), beginning in the mid-60s when "significant federal funding began for basic education of U.S. adult citizens" as part of President Lyndon Johnson's anti-poverty program. Chapter I provides a historical overview from 1964-2013. Chapter II highlights The Economic Opportunity and Adult Education Acts of 1964 and 1966. Chapter III, dubbed the Stabilizing Years of 1968 to 1978, covers legislative amendments, funding, and enrollments during that decade. Chapter IV is a Report Card on the period 1979-1990 with respect to funding and enrollment growth, and reflects a reduction of the federal role. Chapter V spans 1990-1999. During this period the National Literacy Act established the first nationwide effort to increase literacy levels and provide measurable student gains, and the National Reporting System was implemented. Chapter VI (prepared with contributions from Roberta Pawloski of Connecticut) deals with adult employment and training improvements between 1998-2000 through the Workforce Investment Act. WIA underscored the need for cooperation and partnerships and the

author presents its titles and state plans. WIA signaled "the beginning of a national reformation of adult basic education and literacy." The last chapter (2000-2013) presents information on "continuing improvements" that have to do with investing in adult education and workforce skills development for the future as well as meeting the President's 2020 goal for education.

A second section of the report (pp. 33-95) presents a variety of tables, charts, and lists--many having to do with Congressional appropriations over the years, adult education funding history, and enrollments. Readers will also find lists of U.S. Secretaries and Commissioners of Education, details on public adult education laws since 1964 and WIA reauthorization bills, and other information.

For a copy of the report, [CLICK HERE](#).

CAAL Commentary: *The history of the federal role beginning in 2014 is unfolding now, with discouraging news that the Omnibus bill recently passed in Congress contains reductions in federal funding for the state grant program at a time when the findings of the PIAAC assessment make a sobering and solid case for the opposite. PIAAC findings make it very clear that it should be a national priority to invest **major** new funds in upgrading the skills of millions of low-skilled adult Americans and better enabling Adult Education, which is operating at starvation levels now, to prepare these adults for employability and college.*

We should be alarmed that even as the need for services has been growing every year (including adult ESL), current demand is largely unmet and enrollments have been dropping. For example, according to the Eyre report, in 1969-70 enrollment was 546,613 for ABE alone. It grew to 4,020,550 in 1997-98 (for ABE, ESL, ASE, with ESL accounting for 1.9 million or 47% of the total), and dropped to 2,012,163 in 2010-11 (ABE, ESL, ASE, with ESL accounting for 42%). Consider these historical facts in light of just one finding from PIAAC, that close to 30 million U.S. adults aged 16 and above score at the lowest skills level.

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CAAL AT WORK: WIA, Workforce Skills, & Adult Education

Reports from Congress indicate that the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) has moved closer to the top in the Senate and House and is likely to be taken up as a priority in the near future.

President Obama announced in his State of the Union address that Vice President Biden would

lead a comprehensive review of programs that prepare people with the skills needed for the jobs of today and tomorrow. A major aim of the effort, called [Opportunity for All](#), will be to identify best practices that increase job readiness. Community colleges, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and adult education programs are among the many programs to be reviewed. Adult Education is often overlooked because of its still low profile. Those of us who understand the role of Adult Education programs should make sure they are recognized by Opportunity, especially their efforts and service to low-skilled adults. Adult Education is a vital part of the "training" network.

As a way to help support these initiatives, following up on the work of the National Commission on Adult Literacy, CAAL recently commissioned two new fiscal/social benefit analyses to help strengthen the case for Adult Education, the Adult Education and Economic Growth Act (which continues to provide a well-developed framework), and WIA. The data, used hand-in-hand with the findings of the PIAAC assessment, should help allies in Congress and leaders at the state level make a stronger case for a higher level of support and greater visibility for Adult Education.

The first of these two reports, the [Net Annual Fiscal Contributions of U.S. Adults Aged 18-64 by Education Attainment, 2009-2012](#), has just been released. This paper, prepared in January 2014 for CAAL by the Center for Labor Market Studies of Northeastern University, analyzes the fiscal gains to the nation and to individuals of high school and college graduation for adults aged 18-64. It also presents aggregated and state-by-state data for 15 states (those included in the National Commission study): CA, CO, FL, IL, KY, MD, MI, MN, NJ, NY, OH, OK, PA, TX, and VA. A second companion report, tentatively called ***The Impact of Education Levels on Jobs, Income, Civic Engagement, and Incarceration in America***, should be available this month. And in March or April, CAAL's second report on Return on Investment in Adult Education will be published.



NEWS IN BRIEF

▶ **Library of Congress 2014 Literacy Awards.** Applications for the second year of Library of Congress' Literacy Awards are due by March 31st. These awards are funded by David M. Rubenstein, co-founder and co-CEO of The Carlyle Group. According to the press release, the awards "seek to reward organizations doing exemplary, innovative and easily replicable work over a sustained period of time and to encourage new groups, organizations and individuals to become involved." The Center for the Book administers the awards. The prizes include cash awards ranging from \$50,000 to \$150,000. For information about last year's awardees and guidelines for the 2014 awards, go to www.read.gov/literacyawards.

▶ In January, MDRC issued [*Beyond the GED: Promising Models for Moving High School Dropouts to College*](#). This 100-page report, prepared by Elizabeth Zachry Rutschow and Shane Crary-Ross, starts from an assumption that adult education is in "critical need of reform across a number of areas if the field is to see larger-scale improvements in [high school] dropouts' academic success." It calls for significant changes in the status quo. It presents a number of promising program models for effectively serving low-skilled adults, including the much-publicized program of LaGuardia Community College. It also discusses strategies and bridging approaches that can be taken. Among other models cited as holding special promise are those suggested by the Adult Education and Economic Growth Act. Several states are highlighted for leadership in interagency integration and coordination (including Indiana and Washington). (Note: [*How to Successfully Link GED Tests and Jobs*](#) is a January 7th NPR interview by host Michel Martin with LaGuardia Community College president, Gail Mellow.)

▶ The Institute of Education Sciences of the National Center for Education Statistics has issued a new report titled [*Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 \(ELS:2002\): A First Look at 2002 High School Sophomores 10 Years Later*](#). The report was prepared by Erich Lauff and Steven Ingels of RTI International with Elise Christopher of the National Center. The paper is the third in a series of reports on the outcomes of the 2002 cohort of high school sophomores by 2012. It explores various demographic markers and patterns of living, working, and pursuing further education. The main section is 20 pages long, supplemented with about 30 pages of appendix tables and figures.

▶ The **Consortium for Worker Education** has issued its "FY2012-2013 Qualitative Evaluation Report" by Deborah D'Amico. Some of the most successful service models in Adult Education are offered by unions, and four CWE-funded programs are treated in depth in this report: The Industry Training Program (ITP) of the New York Hotel Trades Council and Hotel Association of New York City (a labor-management joint fund); the District Council 9 program of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades; and CWE partnership programs with The Osborne Association (serving job and readiness programs for formerly incarcerated adults) and the New York Communities for Change (serving vulnerable immigrant families). To obtain a copy, both Executive Summary and full-report (146 pp.), contact Deborah Buxton at CWE at dbuxton@cwe.org.

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