

## Issue #5, December 10, 2009

Each issue of the E-News reports on CAAL's programs and publications, including follow-up activities related to the National Commission on Adult Literacy. Occasional feature articles are offered, along with news about complementary work by other groups.

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### LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK

#### CAAL Roundtable Program in the Works

In 2010, CAAL will launch a new two-year program of invitational Roundtables on topics of high strategic importance to advancing adult education and workforce skills. The first three Roundtables are scheduled for January to June 2010 and will result in CAAL publications: *The Local Policy Perspectives Roundtable* will bring together leaders of exemplary adult-education-for-work programs to consider what state and federal policy initiatives might expand their service and enable them to reach more lower-skilled adults, with special attention to provisions in the Adult Education and Economic Growth Act and WIA reform and reauthorization. *The Roundtable on Certification and Credentialing of Adult Education Staff/Faculty* will include a survey of existing certificates and credentials and identify issues and gaps to meet developmental challenges on this critical front. *The Roundtable on Developing the Role of State and Regional Chambers* will convene a group of chamber heads, business leaders, state ABE directors, and others to examine the characteristics of exemplary state/regional chambers in the provision of 21st Century adult education and workforce skills services (in a state economic development context). This Roundtable will explore issues that bear on development of the chamber/business role nationally and develop a rationale to motivate such groups to be come more engaged on the state and national levels.

Other near-term topics under development are the *Effect of Immigration Reform on ESL Service* and *Developing Strategies to Include Low-Skilled Adults in Career Pathways Programs*.

More information about these meetings and future Roundtables will be given as the program unfolds.

## **CAAL 2009 Publications Highlights**

CAAL released three new reports in 2009 -

- [\*THE POWER OF TECHNOLOGY TO EXPAND ADULT LEARNING: Expanding Access to Adult Education and Workforce Skills Through Distance Learning\*](#) is a 65-page report by Mary McCain of TechVision 21 (October 2009, NC-CAAL11). The report's centerpiece recommendation is for a national web portal for adult learners and professional users. It fleshes out the technology recommendations made in [\*Reach Higher, America\*](#).
- [\*REBUILDING NIFL TO MEET FUTURE NEEDS: A New and Innovative Agency with a Broader Mission\*](#) is a 28-page discussion paper by Forrest Chisman and Gail Spangenberg (October 2009, NC-CAAL10). It proposes substantial revamping of the National Institute for Literacy into a new independent National Institute for Adult Learning, with broad responsibilities for adult education and workforce skills development, including leadership in technology, stronger governance, and more adequate funding.
- [\*EXPANDING HORIZONS: Pacesetters in Adult Education for Work\*](#) is a 27-page report by Forrest Chisman on the Adult Readiness Roundtable Project carried out jointly by CAAL and the National Center for Education and the Economy (June 2009, NC-CAAL9). It summarizes and analyzes the proceedings of an invitational meeting of exemplary local program providers from around the country. It aims to help inform and stimulate thinking and action at the state and local levels.

On behalf of the National Commission on Adult Literacy, CAAL also prepared an 84-side-by-side of WIA Titles I and II and related provisions to help inform the Adult Education and Economic Growth Act then under development in the House and Senate (April-May 2009, [NC-CAAL8](#)). In addition, testimony was given various times to the House Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competiveness (February - May 2009, NC-CAAL4 to NC-CAAL 6). As a participant in the Joint Advocacy Group initiative of the Joyce Foundation (coordinated by the Council for Adult & Experiential Learning), CAAL helped prepare and was signatory to [several documents](#) between January and October 2009, designed for the White House Policy Council, members of Congress, and the Departments of Education and Labor.

On November 5th, CAAL carried out a campaign, [CAAL Voices for WIA Letter](#), to encourage state and local adult education professionals to speak out on the importance of reauthorizing and reforming the Workforce Investment Act.



▶ On December 11, Cheryl King, Study Director of the National Commission on Adult Literacy and current President of Kentucky Wesleyan College, will address the Southwest Indiana Network for Education (in Oakland City) on findings of the National Commission on Adult Literacy

▶ Before CAAL, there was the Business Council for Effective Literacy. People in the U.S. and abroad frequently ask CAAL for back issues of the BCEL Newsletter saying that while much of the information is out of date, that body of work is a treasure trove of interesting and useful ideas for the present and a solid historical record for the decade it covers. The entire set of 36 issues (500 pages) has been digitalized by ERIC and is available electronically from ERIC (google BCEL Newsletters). CAAL will provide a complimentary hard bound copy of the entire set to anyone donating \$100 or more via the [CAAL website](#) by March 31st 2010.

▶ In the past few months, two members of the National Commission on Adult Literacy, Morton Bahr and Gail Mellow, have served as commissioners with the Business Roundtable's "Springboard Project." The Project's final report, [Getting Ahead - Staying Ahead: Helping America's Workforce Succeed in the 21st Century](#), was released December 9th. It focuses on federal and state public policy changes and business-led initiatives to develop the trained and better skilled workforce needed to ensure that American workers will thrive after the economy rebounds. Without the change called for -- which complements the work of the National Commission on Adult Literacy, CLASP, Jobs for the Future, and other groups -- the Project concludes that U.S. global competitiveness is threatened, that long-term unemployment will persist, and that full economic recovery will not occur. Drawing on surveys of more than 1000 American workers and over 600 business executives and other analyses, the report gives recommendations to business, government, and education on how to collaborate to help workers and potential workers, including those at low skills levels, acquire the education and training they want and need. According to the report, employers say that within four years their greatest need will be workers with more technical skills, higher degrees or certifications, and improved basic skills. And eighty percent of workers, despite income and education level, say that they are strongly interested in pursuing more training and education if barriers to program participation can be overcome. [Getting Ahead - Staying Ahead](#) makes 6 broad recommendations for which it intends to actively advocate: (1) create incentives to build a better-educated and trained workforce, (2) develop nationally recognized workforce certifications and credentials, (3) communicate timely and consumer-friendly information to workers, (4) bring 21st-century innovation to education and training, (5) unlock the value of community and two-year colleges as essential service providers and bridges to work, and (6) foster lifelong learning. Among the proactive steps it will now take, the Business Roundtable will ask its member companies to partner with at least one state, community college or postsecondary institution, school district, or nonprofit organization to help advance these goals. For more information contact Kirk Monroe at 202-496-3269.



### ALSO WORTHY OF NOTE

▶ The AFL-CIO's Working for America Institute has just released [Fulfilling the Promise of the](#)

[Workforce Investment Act: A Survey of Labor Representatives of Workforce Investment Boards.](#)

This timely 10-page document reports on an August 2009 national survey of Workforce Investment Board representatives and the District of Columbia. It also includes findings from parallel surveys in California and Pennsylvania as well as responses from members of 43 international unions, and it presents a summary of a series of Department of Labor WIA reauthorization "listening sessions" hosted in September by the AFL-CIO. [Fulfilling the Promise](#) concludes (1) that as WIA is reauthorized, business and labor need to be better represented on WIB boards; (2) that the WIB boards should include key regional economic players, function more as deliberative bodies, promote greater attention to economic development and wage growth, and put more emphasis on labor-management and apprenticeship programs; and (3) that the WIB boards should be better informed about outside program funding available. Useful forms of collaboration are highlighted in the report. WIBs have an important role in advancing the goals of adult education and workforce skills development in America, and this report aims to encourage their more active participation both directly and through reforms in WIA.

▶ In November 2009, the National Council of State Directors of Adult Education put out Volume I of [Adult Education: Supporting the President's Workforce and American Graduation Initiatives](#). The timely 76-page document is NCSDAE's response to President Obama's challenge to education providers to help adults attain at least one year of higher education or career preparation. It highlights innovations in several states to show how some state adult education services are already addressing workforce and career pathway needs. A four-page chart at the end provides a framework of "decision points" for adult educators to use in developing career pathway programs, based on Quality Elements of Adult Education for Work Programs of the National Center on Education and the Economy, 2009.

▶ [Weathering the Storm. The State of Corporate Citizenship in the United States 2009](#) is new from The Hitachi Foundation and Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship. Just for starters, this 45-page report on a survey of 800 companies indicates that large businesses are increasing their investments in citizenship and philanthropic activities despite the recession and in the midst of reducing staff. Small firms, on the other hand, while minimizing layoffs, have dramatically decreased citizenship activities. Half of the businesses surveyed are supporting skills development for employees making less than \$40,000 a year, and most are doing so at pre-recession levels or higher. Moreover, the percentage of companies offering training and development for low-wage employees rose in the past two years. Unfortunately literacy was lower in 2009 than in 2007 as an area of overall corporate community giving, down to 7 percent of total giving from 10, although large corporations dedicated some 11 percent of their 2009 corporate giving to literacy. [Weathering the Storm](#) contains a wealth of many other interesting findings.

▶ The first edition of *Transmissions*, a quarterly e-newsletter launched in November by CLASP provides updates, news, and policy findings from the Joyce Foundation's Shifting Gears project. Shifting Gears is a grant and technical assistance program being carried out by Joyce and CLASP in a network of six Midwestern states (to help low skilled workers get the education, skills, and credentials they need to compete in the labor market. Each issue of *Transmissions* will report on state policy initiatives and accomplishments including upcoming events, answers to readers' questions, and a tools-of-the-trade resource section for policymakers, advocates, program administrators, and others outside the Network. *Transmissions* is available under "E-Newsletters and Webinars" at <http://www.Shifting-Gears.org>. The next issue is slated for January 2010.

▶ The Workforce Alliance (TWA) has just issued [Job Training is Key to Success of Jobs Bill: An Analysis and Recommendations](#). This six-page document indicates that "given...a wide diversity of workers, all with different needs for workforce services and supports, it will be especially important that any job creation bill support multiple pathways for workers to obtain the skills they need to get a job initially, and ultimately, move up a career ladder. TWA cites data from a survey of The Business Roundtable's Springboard Project and from Michigan's No Worker Left Behind Program to underscore the value of training in an economic downturn. Of special concern to TWA are dislocated workers transitioning to jobs in new and current industries, low-skilled workers trying to enter the labor market, and young workers with weak labor market attachment. Dozens of other excellent papers and reports are available at [TWA's website](#).

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### PLEASE SUPPORT CAAL'S WORK

If you think CAAL is doing a good job, you can help us do an even better one. Please consider a contribution on our website at [www.caalusa.org](http://www.caalusa.org).

In the 10 years since we began, with a small budget and staff we have published 28 reports, sponsored over a dozen task force and Roundtable meetings (on ESL, community college transitions, workforce readiness, and other topics), and spearheaded the National Commission on Adult Literacy. We remain dedicated to ensuring that the recommendations in *Reach Higher, America* translate into legislation, new thinking, and innovative projects across the country. Like all nonprofits we depend solely on grants and donations, and we are affected by the same tight funding as everyone else.

Join Our Mailing List!

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