



National Coalition For Literacy

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education ☐ Adult Literacy Media Alliance ☐ American Council on Education, GED Testing Service ☐ American Institutes for Research ☐ American Library Association ☐ Center for Literacy Studies, University of Tennessee ☐ Commission on Adult Basic Education ☐ Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy and the Goodling Institute for Research, Pennsylvania State University ☐ International Reading Association ☐ National Center for Family Literacy ☐ National Council of State Directors of Adult Education ☐ ProLiteracy Worldwide ☐ Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. ☐ World Education

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Major Issues for the 111th Congress

1. Reauthorize the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. AEFLA was officially authorized through 2003 and has not yet been reauthorized. The field has proposed a number of changes to current law to further enhance its effectiveness in providing quality adult education services. ***We are seeking reauthorization during the first session of the 111th Congress.***
2. Increase funding for adult education programs. Currently a combination of federal, state and local funds allow us to provide services to approximately 3 million individuals. But a recent survey, the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, reveals that about 93 million adults are in need of adult education services. Waiting lists for adult education services exist throughout the United States. ***We are seeking an increase in funding for adult education to no less than \$750 million.***
3. Reauthorize the National Even Start Program. Even Start is part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and provides high quality services to families in need of literacy services, breaking cycles of illiteracy which negatively impact families. ***We support reauthorization of the National Even Start Program.***
4. Increase funding for Even Start. Over the past several years Even Start has had its funding cut from \$250 million to approximately \$60 million. As a result, families throughout the United States have lost access to services, denying parents the tools they need to support their families and be their child's first teacher and children an opportunity to start school ready to learn. ***We are seeking an increase in funding for Even Start to no less than \$150 million.***
5. Focus the work of the National Institute for Literacy on adult education and family literacy. NIFL was created to provide valuable resources to the adult education field. In recent years, its focus has been broadened to include cradle to grave literacy. While considerable resources for K-12 currently exist within the Department of Education, NIFL is one of the few resources existing for adult education. ***We seek to return NIFL to its original mission.***

National Coalition for Literacy ☐ P.O. Box 11592 ☐ Washington, D.C. 20008 ☐ www.national-coalition-literacy.org ☐ ncl@ncldc.net

6. Create a permanent research center for adult education. For many years, there was a federally funded research center on adult education. In the most recent years, it was known as the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The Institute for Education Sciences made a decision to discontinue funding for this center at the same time that there is an increased demand for instruction and practice based on research. ***We are seeking a permanent research center focused on adult education and literacy.***



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Workforce Investment Act Reauthorization

The National Coalition for Literacy places a priority on the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act, which was authorized through 2003.

Many states have not re-competed the program because of their concern that new grants may not meet the criteria set forth in a reauthorization bill. As such, some providers have not been able to access funds authorized under the Adult Education and Family Literacy.

The Coalition has developed a proposal to amend Title II of WIA. There are several new issues/activities that impacted our proposal that were not, to a great extent, in play during the 110th Congress and helped guide us in developing our proposal.

The first is the increased focus on serving our Limited English Proficient (or English Language Learner) population. The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act is the only major federal funding source for adult ESL programs in the U.S. According to U.S. Census Bureau estimates, nearly 1 in 5 adults in the U.S. speaks a language other than English at home, and more than 17 million speak English less than “very well.” The Office of Vocational and Adult Education has reported that approximately half of the students attending federally funded adult education programs are enrolled in ESL classes. Moreover, the demand for ESL programs is increasing all of the time. A recent survey among 176 ESOL providers showed that 57.4 percent maintained waiting lists, ranging from a few weeks to more than 3 years.

The second is the release of the report of the National Commission on Adult Literacy, *Reach Higher, AMERICA: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce*, which has set forth a number of recommendations for improving the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act and the services provided to program participants.

The last is digital literacy (computer and Internet access and basic technology competence). We believe the inclusion of digital literacy to be an important element for adult education (including ESOL/ESL). Access to computers and the Internet is essential for modern American life. For many entry-level jobs and training programs, digital literacy is now required. Adult education and family literacy programs need the bootstrap of federal support that libraries and public schools have had, namely: subsidized access to the Internet, help in purchasing equipment, and professional development funds for in-service teacher technology training.

Adult education programs play a significant role in providing parents the skills they need to help their children succeed in school, allowing new immigrants to achieve the language skills they need to achieve the American dream, workers the skills they need to obtain and retain jobs, and others the ability to transition to postsecondary education. But without reauthorization that allows the program improvement needed to meet the demands of the 21st Century, we cannot move forward. We need your support.



National Coalition For Literacy

Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Appropriations

What is Adult Education?

Adult education is an education program serving adults, 16 years of age and older, who are functioning below the high school completion level with emphasis on READING, NUMERACY, AND ENGLISH LITERACY. Adult educators work with each adult student to design an individual learning plan that responds to the student's needs and goals: e.g., to get a job; to help their children with homework and be successful in school; to get off welfare and achieve a family sustaining income; to learn the English language, understand US culture, and participate in society; to complete high school or obtain a GED; and/or to transfer to the community college or other training and education programs.

What is the Need for Adult Education?

There are two measures of need;

1. Of the 200,000,000 adults in America, 43,000,000 have not finished high school (US Census)
2. Of the 200,000,000 adults in America, 93,000,000 (45% of the adult population) function below the high school level (National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) –NCES 2005)

How Effective Are Adult Education Programs?

During the previous Administration, OMB rated adult education as “Effective”—its highest rating. A review of state data also demonstrates the effectiveness of adult education in serving those in need of assistance. Adult Education is a good investment.

Why is Adult Education So Important?

Because 45% of the adult population has basic skills deficiencies, adult education services are important to many sectors of society, including:

- Business: American businesses lose more than \$60 BILLION in productivity each year due to employees' basic skill deficiencies (NIFL). Furthermore, new jobs require advanced skills. Public schools produce ONLY 2% of the workforce annually. Ninety eight percent of the annual workforce members are adults.
- Children's Education: Children of parents who are unemployed and have not completed high school are five times more likely to drop out than children of employed parents. Children's literacy levels are strongly linked to the educational level of their parents, especially their mother. Adult education prepares parents to be their child's first and most important teacher.
- Public Health: 46% of American adults can not read and follow medical instructions (AMA). According to the NAAL, senior citizens have the most difficulty.
- Corrections: Participation in correctional education reduces re-arrest, re-convictions, and re-incarceration.
- Immigrants: Only 1.5 million of the twenty million limited English speakers can access adult English language and literacy instruction.
- Learning Disabled: 50% of adults without a high school diploma are learning disabled

What is the Current Budget Situation?

- The current federal appropriation (\$571,000,000) coupled with state and local funds (\$1.6 Billion) allow ONLY 3% of the 93,000,000 to access classes and other services.

What is the Impact?

Undereducated adults limit the success of many federal initiatives including job training, keeping our nation competitive, improving the academic achievement of our nation's children, providing alternatives for incarcerated individuals, improving the health of our nation's citizens, and helping individuals obtain the skills they require to obtain a job and end their dependency on federal programs. The RETURN ON INVESTMENT in adult education is significant.

What should Congress do?

Congress should increase access to adult education and literacy services over the next four years from 2.5 million to:

- 5 million served in 2010-2011
- 7 ½ million served in 2011-2012
- 10 million served in 2012-2013
- 12 ½ million served in 2013-2014



National Coalition For Literacy

William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Program Reauthorization

What is Even Start?

Even Start is a highly valuable program that gives economically and educationally disadvantaged parents the tools necessary to support early literacy and language development for their young children. This is accomplished in two key ways: (1) Even Start coordinates with early childhood education programs to provide literacy and language development services; and (2) Even Start assists parents to fulfill their role as their child's first teacher by providing them with adult and parenting education, English as a second language instruction, and structured parent-child interactive literacy activities. Even Start has been shown to be highly effective in helping low-income parents support their children's education and breaking the cycle of illiteracy.

Even Start Reauthorization Recommendations

1. Focus services on young children with continuing services to school-age children.

RATIONALE: The science is clear. The foundation for language and literacy development is established in the earliest years of life. As such, the Even Start community has sought to reach families with very young children. Today, 77% of the children participating in Even Start are ages birth to five.

RECOMMENDATION: Even Start reauthorization should allow programs to focus on reaching and providing services to children from ages birth to five and allow for the continuation of services to children during the elementary school years.

2. Strengthen program monitoring and accountability.

RATIONALE: Even Start has been criticized in recent budget proposals, in part, due to a lack of uniform, annual information on Even Start's accomplishments.

RECOMMENDATION: Even Start reauthorization should align with the federal Adult Education performance accountability system, which allows for uniform data collection across states. In the case of children, programs should be required to report to the Secretary, on an annual basis, on indicators of program quality, including, the degree to which they use highly qualified staff and scientifically valid curricula. The Secretary should be required to make all of this information available to Congress in a timely manner.

3. Allow for a longitudinal evaluation of Even Start's Impact.

RATIONALE: Given that the most recent national evaluation of Even Start (May 2003) contained serious methodological flaws, a better study is needed, particularly one that allows for comparisons of Even Start participants' gains over a longer period of time.

RECOMMENDATION: Even Start reauthorization should allow for a robust, improved national evaluation that provides longitudinal data on how Even Start affects the lives of children and adults. To achieve this, the Secretary should be required to form an independent panel of experts to guide the design and methodology of the study that includes experts from a variety of disciplines.

4. Ensure the long-term stability of Even Start by preserving the federal share of program funding.

RATIONALE: Current law reduces the federal share provided to Even Start programs to 35 percent after the eighth year of operation. This decline in federal support can often result in program closures because grantees have great difficulty in coming up with 65 percent of costs.

RECOMMENDATION: Even Start reauthorization should modify the federal share limitation so it does not fall below 50 percent of the project cost.

5. Support meaningful parental involvement and education.

RATIONALE: Even Start programs have demonstrated much success in providing severely economically and educationally disadvantaged parents with the tools to support their children's learning both at home and in school.

RECOMMENDATION: Even Start reauthorization should amend the statement of purpose to include an emphasis on supporting parental involvement to better reflect the current practices of Even Start grantees.

6. Strengthen access to linguistically and culturally appropriate literacy instruction.

RATIONALE: There is mounting research demonstrating that literacy instruction in a child's native language provides benefits (i.e., facilitating acquisition of the English language and sustaining reading gains over time).

RECOMMENDATION: The reauthorization of Even Start should require programs to outline how they will provide linguistically and culturally appropriate literacy instruction that is based on what research identifies as most effective for teaching children and adults to read and learn English.



National Coalition For Literacy

Even Start Family Literacy Program Appropriations

What is Even Start?

The Even Start program provides education and related services jointly to disadvantaged parents and their young children. The purpose of the program is to integrate early childhood education, adult basic education, and language and literacy focused parent education into a unified family literacy program. Even Start services must include adult literacy instruction, early childhood education, instruction that helps parents support their children's education, participant recruitment, screening of parents, staff training, and program evaluation leading to program improvement. Even Start serves an extremely disadvantaged population. In 2006-2007, 90% of Even Start parents did not have a high school diploma or GED and 91% of Even Start families lived at or below the federal poverty line. It is also important to note that 53% of the parents served in Even Start programs are English language learners.

What is the Need for Even Start?

Families living in poverty experience many challenges. Parents cannot find sustainable employment, and have difficulties fulfilling their and their children's basic needs for housing, food, and clothing. Their children are less likely to enter school ready to learn, having fewer language and literacy rich experiences. Research has documented the relationship between poverty and limited education. Over half of the adults in Even Start programs have not gone beyond the ninth grade in school and 90% do not have a high school credential. In addition, research has shown that parents with limited education want their children to succeed in school but have few concrete ideas on how they can help their children develop academic skills at home. *The U.S. Department of Education states that no other federal education program serves a comparable population.*

What is the Impact?

Even Start has helped parents develop basic skills they need to enter employment or training and to help their children enter school ready to learn. Participating children have made significant learning gains as well, preparing them for success in school.

- Participating families consistently make gains each year on literacy measures.
- Although they come from more disadvantaged families and score substantially lower at entry to the program, Even Start children made gains on a measure of receptive vocabulary that were comparable to Head Start children.

What is the Current Budget Situation?

The current federal appropriation is \$66.45 million. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the Even Start Family Literacy Program served 23,763 families, including 58,844 individuals (24,711 adults and 34,133 children) in 2006-2007. These numbers are greatly reduced due to significant cuts to the Even Start budget over the past eight years. Specifically, funding has decreased by 60%, decreasing the number of participating parents and children by 48%. This leaves a significant number of our country's most vulnerable families without educational services that focus on and support family learning.

What should Congress do?

Increase Even Start appropriation to \$150 million in FY 2010.



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National Institute for Literacy

The National Coalition for Literacy values the role and functions of the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) as one of the primary government agencies focused on the advancement of adult literacy in the US. This focus was diverted early in the 2000s and as a result, deprived the adult literacy field of one of its main resources.

The National Institute for Literacy (Institute) was created by the National Literacy Act of 1991, with the vision of leading a national effort for creating system(s) that would enable every adult with literacy needs to receive services of the highest quality. The National Literacy Act was reauthorized as part of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998. Both Acts charged the Institute to advance the nation's adult literacy agenda with special emphasis given to building public consensus and policy, sponsoring promising initiatives, disseminating valid information on programs and research pertinent to adult literacy, and building interagency collaboration at the Federal and State levels.

A key motivation for Congress in creating the NIFL was to end the fragmentation of programs and services for adults with multiple barriers to success across agencies. NIFL was established as an independent [freestanding] federal organization, administered under an interagency agreement between the Secretaries of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services, to assure that comprehensive literacy services were available for adults needing literacy to succeed in the workforce, help their children succeed in school, and participate as full citizens in our modern democracy. These three Secretaries make up the Institute's Interagency Group. A Presidentially-appointed Advisory Board, made up of experts in the field of adult literacy, serves the Institute by making recommendations to the Director of the Institute and the Interagency Group on the goals and programs of the Institute, and the appointment of a Director and staff.

During the first ten years of its establishment, NIFL developed and implemented major initiatives and strategies that improved the quality of adult literacy services offered across the country. These initiatives included: the development of a national technology system to link the field and to facilitate the dissemination of research, curriculum, training, and other resources, development of a research program in adult learning disabilities and a national training system to prepare teachers and tutors to assist adults with learning disabilities, and the development of content standards and an assessment framework based on the skills necessary for adults to carry out their responsibilities as workers, parents, and citizens. The hallmarks of each of these initiatives were: a) based on the best research and theory; b) results-focused; and c) created through a collaborative, grassroots design and implementation process involving representatives of all federal agencies serving adults, and researchers, practitioners, administrators, and adult learners from states across the country.

In order to re-focus NIFL's effort on adult literacy, Congress should:

1. Re-authorize NIFL with the initial charges of the National Literacy Act of 1991, where NIFL was created to lead the national effort on advancing the **adult** literacy field.
2. Designate NIFL funding solely for adult literacy and adult education efforts.
3. Re-establish NIFL as an independent federal agency administered by the three Secretaries of Education, Labor and HHS.
4. Establish rules for the selection of Advisory Board members that assure the presence of adult learners, a balance of Democrats and Republicans, and a diversity of expertise related to adult literacy services.
5. Emphasis on NIFL's key role in leading a unified national effort to improve the literacy of our country, through strategic policy planning and coordination with the Congress, federal agencies, state agencies,

national and local literacy providers as well as private sector. NIFL as an interagency organization is in a position to act as a liaison between the literacy field and the Congress and the Administration and help to shape sound policies for the literacy field.

6. Re-initiate policies and plans that will increase public and private support for the adult literacy field, especially on research and policies that focus on developing skills and knowledge needed for productive employment or to finish secondary school.
7. Emphasis on a few long term fundamental initiatives (as during the first ten years) that will have lasting impacts on the adult. i.e., emphasis should be placed on NIFL's role in leading the literacy field into the 21st century through use of technology in every aspect of the initiatives. As a pioneer organization in employing new technology, NIFL has strong infrastructure and resources to take on this important role.



National Coalition For Literacy

The Need for a Research & Development Center in Adult Education/Literacy

The need for research to address adult education/literacy issues in the United States:

In 2007, after 17 years of continuous support, the Department of Education discontinued funding for its national research and development center for adult learning and literacy, ending its ongoing research despite the urgent need for research that supports the delivery of services. While adult education and literacy can benefit from research in other education arenas, the field must address unique challenges based on the multiple barriers that its target populations face. With the increases in the number of low-literate adults, immigrants needing to learn English, high school dropouts, unemployed or underemployed workers needing education and training for new jobs, it is crucial that the field of adult education and literacy has ongoing research to identify and support best practices in the field. Funding for a research and development center for adult learning and literacy should be a minimum of \$5 million per year—or \$25 million for a five-year period.

As the new Administration begins to invest in jobs nationwide, nothing is more immediately crucial than a skilled workforce. Only by investing in adult basic and workplace skills will these new goals be achieved. Re-establishing a national center will help bring best practices to the table at a time when such investments will bring most benefit.

An Adult Education/Literacy Research and Development Center can address four critical goals:

1. **Identify and Conduct Needed Research:** Currently, adult education research is not conducted within a national agenda. A center establishes a coherent, broad-based research agenda that includes a series of research studies that build on each other so that outcomes inform practice and policy. Critical interventions need to be studied for impact, such as the following: What English language acquisition interventions are effective with adults who are literate or illiterate in their native languages? What interventions can improve family, health or financial literacy while building literacy and numeracy skills? Since adults frequently drop in and out of education programs, what program structures are most effective? What transition strategies from GED to postsecondary education and to the workforce are most effective for which populations?
2. **Conduct Complex Research Efforts:** Longitudinal research, which is almost impossible without the support of a center, is very much needed to study the impact of interventions over time. A center enables economies of scale, including shared staff and various forms of support, such as statistical and data analyses. Similarly, interdisciplinary research is more likely to produce beneficial knowledge than individual research projects. A center can more easily bring researchers from different disciplines together around a focal area in adult education and literacy. Family literacy is an example of the need for interdisciplinary research since both adults and children are affected by family literacy programming.
3. **Translate, Disseminate and Train:** Without a center, structured dissemination of research is minimal. A part of a center's role is to translate research findings for practitioners and policy makers. It is not enough to distribute research summaries and publish in research journals. Dissemination must be carefully planned so that research findings are integrated into professional development for teachers, tutors, and administrators and, subsequently, applied in practice. Similarly, policy makers need to receive research results in ways that can be used to inform and develop policy that guides programs and practitioners towards greater outcomes for learners.
4. **Provide Leadership for Other Researchers:** A center provides a synergy for research in adult education and literacy that can attract other researchers to the field. Also, it can serve as a clearinghouse for related research studies. Very importantly, a national center can assume a leadership position in training emerging adult education/literacy researchers.