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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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NEWS IN BRIEF



CAAL is one of numerous organizations that gave [commentary and input](#) to the Senate HELP Committee on their WIA Discussion Draft. That bill is currently scheduled for mark-up on July 13th. CAAL also sent a [letter of support](#) to the HELP Committee WIA sponsors on behalf of the National Commission on Adult Literacy. Copies are available at the CAAL website links given.



WIA and AEEGA in the House of Representatives. Rep. Buck McKeon has introduced the Workforce Investment Act of 2011 (HR2295). It is similar to bills that he, Speaker Boehner, and Rep. Guthrie have introduced in the past. Republican Committee Staff suggest that Higher Education Subcommittee Chair Virginia Foxx may produce a bill of her own or in conjunction with Committee Chairman John Kline. There are indications that Rep. George Miller is working on a House Minority version of WIA. The newly-introduced and greatly strengthened Adult Education and Economic

Growth Act (HR2226, Rep. Hinojosa) should help inform these efforts. The McKeon bill and AEEGA are available at www.thomas.gov.



The National College Transition Network of World Education (Boston, MA) will sponsor a National Conference on Effective Transitions in Adult Education November 14-15, 2011, in Providence, RI. Conference planners are inviting sponsorships for amounts ranging from \$500 to \$20,000 or more. For information about the event and guidelines on sponsorship, contact the NCTN Coordinator, Priyanka Sharma at 617-385-3788 or psharma@worlded.org.

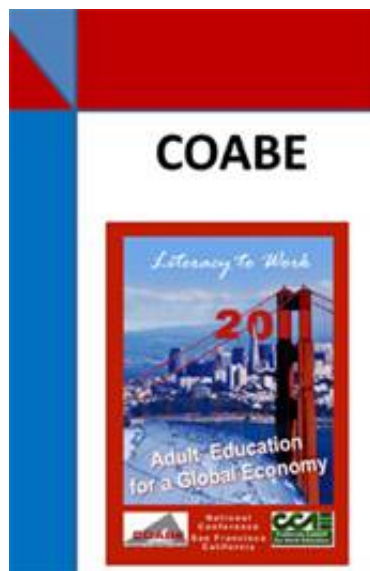


TURNING THE TIDE: Five Years of Achieving the Dream in Community Colleges was distributed in May by MDRC. The report summarizes the findings of the MDRC's evaluation of the Lumina Foundation's Achieving the Dream program. Its focus is on the first 26 colleges to join from five states involved at the outset (VA, NC, FL, NM, and TX), the so-called Round 1 colleges. A major finding is that while reforms have been generally small in scale, five years into the program, 80 percent of the colleges have "adopted some or all of the practices associated with a culture of evidence." These generally have to do with data collection, forming faculty and administrative teams to review that data, and making the process of decision-making more data driven. But outcome trends, such as course completion and persistence in programs, have apparently not changed much. Lumina is using the results to refine its program design, aiming to improve the scale and nature of infrastructure change so as to impact more effectively on students.



The National Skills Coalition announced on June 30 that at a meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI), four organizations joined in creating Business Leaders United for Workforce Partnerships, a CGI Commitment to Action effort to bring diverse business leaders together to develop strategies for national skills development to "address structural skill shortages that are putting the brakes on economic recovery and job creation." The four organizations are the National Skills Coalition, Skills for America's Future, the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, and Corporate Voices for Working Families. The Joyce Foundation will be an early supporter of this new initiative. Entry-level workforce needs and adult education will be part of the focus. For more information, contact Rachel Unruh at rachelu@nationalskillscoalition.org.

SPOTLIGHT ON...COABE



As the [Commission on Adult Basic Education](#) (COABE) enters its fourth decade, it is fitting to reflect on its history, achievements, challenges, and future goals.

"COABE is a true adult education success story." This sentiment is echoed by adult educators around the country. The Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE) is the only national adult education membership association dedicated solely to advocating for and advancing the profession of adult education. Their website gives a vivid picture of the scope and depth of activities used to achieve their mission. They sponsor annual and regional conferences, assess ongoing needs in the field, provide a forum for members to share promising research and practices, facilitate policy discussion among the members, and provide a place to network and learn about job openings, apply for awards, scholarships, and incentive grants, just to name a few activities. This year's national conference was co-sponsored by the California Council for Adult Education.

COABE began in 1981 as the Adult Education Association (AEA), a national organization representing non-public adult education programs. A separate organization, the National Association for Public Continuing Education (NAPCAE), then represented public education and literacy. In 1982, the two groups merged into a new organization, the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE), the current sponsor of the national adult education listserv dedicated to policy discussion and information in adult education and literacy. For the next 18 years, COABE was part of AAACE, and in 2000 they became officially independent.

COABE has come a long way since it struck out on its own, growing from 1,400 members only two years ago to over 7,000 today. Jodi Crandall, Director of the University of Maryland-Baltimore's Language, Literacy, and Culture Ph.D. program says, *"It's the only organization I know that is focused solely on adult education. I feel it's moving forward with a renewed sense of energy. Their annual conference is getting better and better with excellent opportunities for teachers, program administrators, policymakers and researchers to interact and learn from each other."* Current president, Renae Harrison, elaborates: *"Numerous national groups focus on specific key areas of adult education including family literacy, correctional literacy, and literacy volunteers, but COABE is the only one that broadly embraces every facet of the field."* She adds, *"When I got my Ph.D. in education, there was little research or definitive instructional materials specific to adult literacy. Thanks in part to COABE, that's changing."* To recognize its outstanding work, just before it was closed, the National Institute for Literacy gave COABE a \$20,000 achievement award.

COABE is organized into eight regions and a national office. The national office, based in Syracuse, New York, is headed by full-time manager Sharon Bonney. Each region has a representative who while holding down a full-time job elsewhere, serves as a volunteer voting board member, interacts with the head office, attends and helps facilitate COABE conferences and institutes, and uses their professional connections to further COABE's mission. The reps serve three-year terms.

Serving on the COABE board of directors are 13 voting members (including the eight regional representatives) elected by the general membership and five nonvoting members appointed by the president. In order to maximize the president's contribution, each person serves two years as president-elect, then two years as president and then two years as past president, for a total of six years. For example, Renae Harrison, previous president-elect, just became president; Jackie Taylor, current president-elect, will assume the presidency in two years; and Andy Tyskiewicz, who just concluded his presidency, will serve two more years as past president. This structural arrangement aims to provide continuity and create an in-depth training experience that benefits everyone.

The most anticipated event each year is the national conference. Even in these tough economic times, and despite a looming union strike that was settled at the last moment, some 1,300 professionals attended the 2011 conference in San Francisco. More than 65 percent of the conferees completed COABE's online evaluation form, expressing a 93 percent satisfaction rate. Leslie Johnson Tatsuta of the Metropolitan Adult Education Program in San Jose (CA) says "*the quality of the presentations was very impressive, and there were so many to choose from. This was definitely one of the best conferences I've ever attended in my 30 years in adult education.*" Melinda Lynnes, of Miles Community College in Miles City (MT) notes that "*the variety of sectionals was very broad and there was always something GREAT to attend....*" She stresses that the event was very well planned and ran smoothly.

For those who can't attend the national conferences, specific regional institutes are held based on topics local members identify as important to their area. In a recent enhancement, members can sign up for regional listservs which offer information and discussion especially appropriate to that region.

Another valuable COABE resource is the *Adult Basic Education and Literacy Journal* that COABE has co-published with ProLiteracy for the past few years. This publication, issued three times a year, evolved from a predecessor journal called *Adult Basic Education: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Adult Literacy Educators*. Based on a "double-blind" peer review process, it includes articles on the latest research and best practices by research scholars and practitioners. The journal is a benefit to all COABE subscribers.

COABE is presently building a national contact network for federal-level advocacy, modeled after the state directors' "Single Point of Contact Network." It hopes this new network, called Practitioners Advocacy Network, will contribute to the overall national advocacy movement.

In spite of COABE's impressive progress, the organization faces the same budgetary challenges as most other nonprofit organizations. Most of its funding comes from membership dues, national conference fees, magazine subscriptions, and a few small grants for mini-conferences and national awards. The Dollar General Corporation is a major supporter. Annual membership fees are modest, ranging from \$35 for an individual to \$150 and up for an organization (depending on size). COABE has a low overhead, so it keeps very little for internal administration and directs most of its budget to materials, awards, travel, and other member services. However, the group is in the process of pursuing a more active fundraising program because funds are very tight and they need more support to communicate effectively with their members, especially those who cannot afford to attend the

national conferences or regional institutes. (Note: Funding has been requested and is pending for the program of regional institutes for the coming year.)

Professional Development



COABE tries to think outside the box. They are emphasizing more regional gatherings that provide access to national presenters. But even on the regional level, states are excluding travel to other states. And private organizations that don't have to follow state rules but depend on private donations are in a worse situation. To counter this, COABE is using the internet creatively to deliver information---conference proceedings can be posted online, for example, and an online repository is available.

They are drawing on publishers and various vendors to give discounts to members for textbooks and other necessities. And COABE's website features a popular employment bulletin board where information can be posted about job openings, especially at the state and local level. This service was requested by members and has proven very popular.

Current president Renae Harrison stresses that during her tenure, the key issue she'd like to address is certification for adult education instructors. According to her, some 82 percent now work part time without benefits. Most have full-time jobs and teach night classes. As part of this, she'd like to see more full-time teachers in this field, as would many professional development leaders including CAAL. And, more generally, she strongly believes in the need for more conference opportunities at all levels, more funding for programs of the Workforce Investment Act; and more empirical research to support advocacy and practice. She hopes for COABE to have a more active involvement in addressing research needs in the field, especially through its journal.

For more information, email sharonbonney@coabe.org.

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