

## Issue #4, October 21, 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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### FOCUS ON...

## The Power of Technology To Transform Adult Learning

Today (October 21, 2009) CAAL released [THE POWER OF TECHNOLOGY TO TRANSFORM ADULT LEARNING: Expanding Access to Adult Education & Workforce Skills Through Distance Learning \(NC-CAAL 11\)](#). This 65-page paper is the result of a nine-month project directed by Dr. Mary L. McCain, Senior Vice President of TechVision21 in Washington, D.C. The document further develops the general technology recommendations proposed in [Reach Higher, America](#) by the National Commission on Adult Literacy.

Federal and state government is the primary audience but CAAL also aims to inform private sector engagement and assist program and curriculum development by adult education and workforce skills providers at all levels. *THE POWER OF TECHNOLOGY* recommends realistic and attainable action in five major areas, all directed at scaling up to more effectively meet national needs. It calls for establishing a national web portal to serve both adult learners and professional/skilled ICT users and discusses specifications for the portal in detail. It proposes federal incentives to encourage and help states integrate technology-assisted learning into overall adult education and workforce skills planning. It recommends projects to support the development of distance learning in a variety of areas, such as distance learning certifications, performance measures that validate ICT literacy, and online learning assessment. It also recommends a sustained, serious, and well-funded

research program. And various steps are urged to foster stakeholder involvement, including the philanthropic and business communities.

The *POWER OF TECHNOLOGY* includes a primer on the tools of technology and a section on exemplary national and state technology-based program models for instruction, professional development, and program/data management purposes. It reviews and analyzes the findings of recent research on distance learning. And it provides extensive bibliographic information.

The national challenge is set forth as follows:

*"By the reckoning of the [National] Commission and others, the nation must reach many more millions of adults with effective college- and job-readiness skills programs in the next decade and beyond. We risk losing our nation's economic viability, standard of living, and core democratic principles if we do not. But we cannot bring about needed reform without deploying technology on an unprecedented scale. As the POWER OF TECHNOLOGY...makes clear, this means the extensive use of distance learning and all of the tools in our distance learning arsenal.*

*"It is not practical or desirable to abandon our current [adult education and workforce skills] service system, nor is it viable to simply continue tweaking it. We have the means and know-how for a substantial redirection of the national....effort with technology as our ally. We need wholesale change; the wider and wiser use of technology can help bring it about."*

The *POWER OF TECHNOLOGY* is available from the CAAL website at no cost and can also be purchased in bound form at \$20 plus postage from CAAL. Volume discounts are available.



## CAAL NEWS IN BRIEF

▶ Commissioner Andrew Sum and research colleagues at Northwestern University's Center for Labor Market Studies (Ishwar Khatiwada, Joseph McLaughlin, and Sheila Palmer ) have put out a new report on [\*The Consequences of Dropping out of High School: Joblessness and Jailing for High School Dropouts and the High Cost for Taxpayers\*](#). The report compares the employment, earnings, incarceration, teen and young adult parenting experiences, and incomes of the nation's young high school dropouts as compared to their better educated peers from 2006 to 2008. A major finding is that the social and incarceration problems of young dropouts are "quite severe among all gender and race-ethnic groups but are frequently more severe among men and Blacks." The daily jailing rate for young black male high school dropouts is 22 percent.

▶ The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has elected Gail Mellow, President of New York's LaGuardia Community College, CAAL Board member, and member of the National Commission on Adult Literacy, to serve on its Board of Trustees. Carnegie is addressing the extraordinarily high community college student failure rates in developmental math. LaGuardia has won numerous awards for innovative programming during Mellow's nine-year tenure so she will bring strong first-hand experience to this issue.

▶ Since December 2008, CAAL has been an active member of an informal joint advocacy group of organizations working to advance adult education and workforce skills for the 21st century economy. The activity, which is still ongoing, is being coordinated by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) with funding from the Joyce Foundation. Between January and June, the group jointly prepared numerous documents for distribution to the Domestic Policy Council, members of the House and Senate, and officials in the U.S. Education and Labor Departments. A new document is in development now. The documents deal with both legislative and non-legislative matters. They reflect high priorities for adult education and workforce development held in common by each document's signatories. Gail Spangenberg and Jim Parker are CAAL's liaisons to the Joint Advocacy Group, representing the National Commission on Adult Literacy. Items available to date have been collected into a single PDF file which is available as [The Joint Advocacy Documents](#) from CAAL's website. For more information about this activity, contact Becky Klein-Collins at [bklein@cael.org](mailto:bklein@cael.org).



### ALSO WORTHY OF NOTE

▶ In Spring 2008, John Jay Community College and the Urban Institute convened a Reentry Roundtable on Education to examine the current state of education during incarceration and reentry and to identify promising programs and new policy directions. A new report published in September 2009, [From the Classroom to the Community: Exploring the Role of Education during Incarceration and Reentry](#), summarizes the results of that Roundtable including the educational needs of people involved in the criminal justice system, the programs provided to meet those needs, and research findings on the effectiveness of education on the incarceration/reentry experience. The report closes by looking to the future and highlighting key issues and new directions in research, policy, and practice.

▶ [Working Dads](#), published by Public/Private Ventures, and written by Shayne Spaulding, Jean Baldwin Grossman, and Dee Wallace, is the final report from the national Fathers at Work demonstration project funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. About half of all children at the poverty level in the U.S. live with their mothers. Absent, non-custodial fathers were unable to play an emotional or financial role in raising their children. The Fathers at Work program worked through six nonprofit organizations around the country to offer child support, jobs, fatherhood services, and other assistance to low income and/or formerly incarcerated noncustodial fathers aged 18-30. They are the Center for Employment Opportunities (NYC), Impact Services, Inc., (PA), Rubicon Programs (CA), Support and Training Result in Valuable Employees (Chicago), Total Action Against Poverty (VA), and Vocational Foundation, Inc. (NYC). Several child support agencies were also involved. This report presents the project details and findings.

▶ [Working Learners Need Innovative Education Models](#) by Louis Soares of the Center for American Progress focuses on individuals who have entered the workforce but who require further education to get ahead. They are now served by a system that is "overly focused on crisis intervention at the point of unemployment and getting people back into jobs, and not focused sufficiently on the need for training and education." Soares writes that the existing postsecondary

system is not flexible enough to adequately serve working learners and the existing workforce system does not have its funding aligned to best serve these individuals. Soares makes a number of recommendations, including support for President Obama's recent announcement for better alignment between the Pell Grant program and the unemployment insurance system.

▶ [\*Bridges to Opportunity for Underprepared Adults: A State Policy Guide for Community College Leaders\*](#) is the final report of the multi-year Community College Bridges to Opportunity Project of the Ford Foundation, which focused on transitioning undereducated adults into community college. The project worked largely through grants to programs in six states (CO, KY, LA, NM, OH, and WA). The guide, for which the lead author is Davis Jenkins of the Community College Research Center, is designed to help state governors, legislators, and agency heads create policy changes to improve education and employment opportunities for low-income, undereducated adults. It suggests steps states can take to break down barriers for underprepared adults at community colleges, describes successful case study models, and includes toolkits developed during the project as well as an advocacy Toolkit CD attached to the front of report.

▶ **Qualifying Young Adults for Skilled Work:** The Workforce Strategy Center has released a new report, [\*Employers, Low-Income Young Adults and Postsecondary Credentials: A Practical Typology for Business, Education, and Community Leaders\*](#). This paper results from a project funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It highlights 14 model programs in communities across the country that are using new strategies successfully to provide disadvantaged young adults the technical and postsecondary education that may qualify them for skilled work.

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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 an even smaller 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.

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