

Issue #6, January 26, 2010

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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A MESSAGE FROM CAAL'S PRESIDENT



On November 5th I posted a [letter on adult education listservs and elsewhere](#) urging local and state-level professionals to contact their federal House and Senate representatives about the importance of reauthorizing and improving WIA. I suggested referencing the Adult Education and Economic Growth Act (AEEGA) though not necessarily any specific provisions.

No one knows for sure when action on WIA and AEEGA will occur, or what impact, if any, the President's soon-to-be-announced freeze on some domestic spending programs might have on WIA. But even though we can't be sure, we'd be smart not to leave anything to chance. Thus, I want to stress again how important it is for you to contact your federal elected officials. What's needed is to impress upon them the high value you place on a reformed WIA and the AEEGA. Also, if you think your representatives might want to join as co-sponsors of the House or Senate

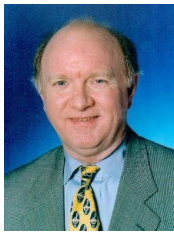
version of the AEEG Act (H.R.3238 and S.1458), you can suggest that they contact the respective Legislative Aides -- Rosa Garcia and Rachel Bisi for Rep. Hinojosa and Rep. Kennedy in the House (rosa.garcia@house.mail.gov and rachel.bisi@mail.house.gov) and Maribel Ramos and Moira Lenehan for Senators Webb and Brown in the Senate (maribel_amos@webb.senate.gov and moira_lenehan@brown.senate.gov).

We need your voice and the understanding and commitment of your federal representatives. You can make a big difference.

With warmest regards,



POINT OF VIEW: LET'S GET REAL WITH THE GED



by Mark Musick

President Emeritus, Southern Regional Education Board; James Quillen Chair of Excellence in Education and Teaching, East Tennessee State University; member, National Commission on Adult Literacy

"I already don't do half as good as I know how."

This prophetic line is a farmer explaining to an agricultural extension agent why he isn't interested in knowing more about better farming practices. That farmer's words could describe America's efforts to reap the benefits of the GED program. When it comes to the GED we collectively as a nation and individually in our states are not doing half as well as we need to do or as we know how to do.

When about 1 of 60 adults in America without a high school diploma earned a GED last year, we did not do even half of what we needed to do nor half of what we know how to do with the technologies we have today.

We are not falling short on success with our GED efforts because of a lack of dedication of adult educators. We simply can't prepare, or realistically support, enough educators to do the job with the system we have. That is, if we can call what we have today a "system".

The National Commission on Adult Literacy has urged us by the end of this decade to more than quadruple the number of persons earning a GED. This goal of awarding 2 million GEDs a year should be seen as a necessity not a nicety or worse yet "unrealistic." What is "unrealistic" is that as a nation we have fewer persons earning GEDs now than 15 years ago. We have millions more persons needing a GED today than in 1995 and fewer persons earning one. One does not need to

know much more than this to know that we have a serious problem.

What will we do about it? In 2009-2010 we are cutting state funds for adult literacy, usually in larger proportions than other cuts in education, or in other areas of government for that matter. But it is not just about money. We will not have the money - not enough money - to reach the goal of 2 million adults earning a GED by simply doing what we are doing now.

Yes, this means working to create a better "system" for adult literacy including the GED. No business, no 50-state business, in America is run like our adult literacy or GED "system." Successful businesses in this day and time use technology much more efficiently than we do to deliver adult literacy/GED services.

We know that "[The Power of Technology to Transform Adult Learning](#)" is a reality (as well as the title of the latest report from the Council for the Advancement of Adult Literacy).

The "Power of Technology..." is further proof that "we already know how to do better" than we are doing. It's time we did. For millions of adults. It's time.



CAAL NEWS IN BRIEF

- ▶ On January 6th, Study Director Cheryl King used the work and final report of the National Commission on Adult Literacy as a basis for moderating the "Understanding and Reaching Adult Students" panel of the 2010 President's Institute of the Council of Independent Colleges in Marco Island, Florida. The session attracted some 60 private college presidents.



ALSO WORTHY OF NOTE

- ▶ Jobs for the Future received an \$8 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to launch a Green Pathway Initiative for 1,130 unemployed and disadvantaged people in five cities hit hard by the economic downturn. Working with the AFL-CIO, Wider Opportunities for Women, and the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, the project will expand education, training, job placement and retention in green industries in Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Milwaukee and Philadelphia. For more information, contact JFF Vice President, Maria Flynn at mflynn@jff.org.
- ▶ New York State's Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy recently released a report [Getting Serious About the GED: How New York can Build a Bridge from High School Dropout to Postsecondary Success](#). New York has the highest access to GED in the country, yet the majority of students who take the test are not prepared for it. For example 57,000 took the GED in 2008 but only 31,075 passed and of those, only 7,100 went on to college. The chief reason for these dramatically poor results is the lack of available test preparation. *Getting Serious About the GED* makes key recommendations for turning this situation around.

▶ The Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) of the U.S. Department of Education has chosen eight states to take part in a new \$1.8 million project, "Policy to Performance: Transitioning Adults to Opportunities." Alabama, California, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin will receive technical assistance and coaching customized to meet the particular needs of low-skilled adult learners in each state. The seven-month project begins in February 2010.

▶ The Manpower Development Research Corporation (MDRC) recently released a report showing that help to formerly incarcerated people can promote successful reentry into society and reduces recidivism. [Transitional Jobs for Ex-Prisoners: Implementation, Two-Year Impacts, and Costs of the Center for Employment \(CEO\) Prisoner Reentry Program](#) presents evidence based on a rigorous evaluation of the New York City-based CEO's employment program for 977 ex-prisoners from 2004-2005. Funded by the Joyce Foundation, the program is administered by MDRC with two research partners, The Urban Institute and the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy. On a related front, results of a study testing employment programs for former prisoners in Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee, and St. Paul will be released in the summer of 2010.

▶ Edward E. Gordon, President of Imperial Consulting, delivered the keynote address, "[The 2010 Jobs Crossroad: Meltdown or Resurgence](#)," at the Federal Reserve Bank's 23rd Annual Economic Outlook symposium December 4, 2009 in Chicago. He stressed the need to revitalize America's outdated education-to-employment system and offered specific suggestions on how to create an economic boom based on his case studies and labor research on rebuilding the talent pipelines to create more jobs at the federal, state, and local levels.

▶ The Working Poor Families Project just published a new report, [Building Opportunity: How States Can Leverage Capital And Infrastructure Investments To Put Working Families On A Path To Good Jobs](#). The report shows how states can develop policies and programs that will boost the supply of skilled workers by connecting low income, low-skilled adults to skills development construction programs. It also discusses how doing so increases employer commitment for hiring these better-skilled workers and paying them family-sustaining wages.

▶ The Workforce Alliance (TWA) has a new name, The National Skills Coalition. It also has a new website and several new staff members. Check out their revamped site and check out numerous publications on workforce skills development at www.nationalskillscoalition.org. Through its website, the National Skills Coalition is an excellent source of information and analysis on workforce skills development, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), WIA Title I, the Sectors Act, and other legislation that bears on workforce development.

▶ The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) recently issued [three brief publications](#) having to do with the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). *Earning & Learning: Options under the Workforce Investment Act* (September 2009); *Adult Education: Recommendations to Refocus WIA Title II on Career and Postsecondary Success* (November 2009); and *WIA Reauthorization: Proposal to Create Career Pathways State Policy Leadership Grants Programs* (December 2009).

▶ On January 4, 2010, the Council for Adult & Experiential Learning (CAEL) circulated to the

Assistant Secretary of OVAE its ["Recommendations for the Reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act."](#) The Comments draw in part on the work of the joint advocacy group project coordinated by CAEL over the past year. ([See Issue #4, CAAL E-News, News in Brief, October 2009.](#))

PLEASE SUPPORT CAAL'S WORK

In the 10 years since CAAL 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), carried out several major study projects, 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. [We hope you will consider contributing to CAAL.](#)

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