IN A TIME OF SCARCE RESOURCES

Near Term Priorities in Adult Education

**by Forrest Chisman
and
Gail Spangenberg**

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Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy

ABOUT THIS REPORT

In a Time of Scarce Resources highlights the best thinking of key leaders in adult education, and prompts us all to focus on the issues of curricular intensity, staff development, and technology if we are to serve the adults who so need our services. This is a must read for practitioners to help us collectively gather momentum, concentrate our efforts, and improve outcomes for our students. CAAL continues to provide important, insightful, and substantive leadership to advance the adult education and literacy community.

—Gail O. Mellow, President, LaGuardia Community College

Apollo 13 and Adult Education 2012! You may say "What?" But that was my initial thought about this timely report from CAAL. Sometimes we have to solve problems or move ahead with only the scarce resources we have (in adult education at present, or in 1970 in the Apollo 13 capsule with the few materials available to the crew). In this project, CAAL and a host of well-informed adult educators took an Apollo 13-type focused, pragmatic approach to define positive actions that can be taken even with limited resources. CAAL does not sugarcoat the challenges but it lays out actions that can be taken...now. The report also challenges us by reporting that among a diverse group of educators there is virtually complete agreement on the critical importance of expanding the use of technology in adult education while noting that there is "general agreement that we know too little" about the most effective ways to use it, ways that we know for sure help adults learn. When we have even close to complete agreement in any area, we need to act, and among other things, the project respondents urge us to find solutions through partnerships of all sorts. Focused and pragmatic actions can be important when there are plenty of resources. They are absolutely critical in this time of scarcity.

—Mark Musick, James Quillen Chair of Excellence in Teaching and Learning, East Tennessee State University; President Emeritus, Southern Regional Education Board; Chair, Board of National Assessment of Educational Progress under three presidents

In A Time of Scarce Resources makes the case for improving the design, management, and operation of the nation's adult basic education system in a comprehensive but straightforward manner. Among the major changes proposed are those that would increase the intensity and management of the services provided to participants, improve the capacities of existing ABE teachers to deliver more effective services to learners, and harness the use of new technologies by teachers and students to increase instructional quality and participant learning gains. Other suggestions include closer integration of ABE services with those of the local workforce development system, workplace literacy programs, and postsecondary educational programs to promote the economic mobility of participants. At a time when the changing national economy is imposing additional hardships on those adults with limited education and literacy/numeracy skills and on society as a whole, the need for such actions is greater today than heretofore.

—Andrew Sum, Director, Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University

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A. CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW

1. <u>INTRODUCTION</u>

This report is an extension of CAAL's commitment to support recommendations of the blue-ribbon National Commission on Adult Literacy. The Commission's report, <u>Reach Higher America</u>, issued in 2008, makes the case that the United States cannot fully meet its economic and social needs in the 21st century unless and until it transforms the present adult education system into a more effective and coordinated adult education and workforce development system. To that end, the Commission set forth a comprehensive agenda for major changes in policy and practice in adult education and related fields.

Considerable progress has been made on that agenda at all levels. One notable example is the introduction in Congress of the Adult Education and Economic Growth Act (HR 2226, S 2117), which embodies most of the Commission's recommendations for change in federal policy. At the state level, significant strategic planning is underway in a number of states to achieve at least some of the goals set forth by the Commission, and in many states major changes have already been implemented. At the program level, local leaders have also found impressive ways to enhance service in a number of areas in which the Commission made recommendations.

It is clear that conventional wisdom about the future direction of adult education has changed in many ways over a fairly short period of time and that the transformative change envisioned by the Commission has gained momentum. Indeed, demand for the Commission's report is still strong.

As everyone in the field knows, adult education has always been grossly underfunded to perform even its traditional functions. And it has never reached more than a fraction of the populations needing help. Commission members knew it would take time and substantial new resources to truly transform the American adult education system to meet 21st century needs. And they estimated that fully implementing its ambitious agenda would require a progressive increase in funding many times the 2008 levels.

But continued progress in this field, as in many others, must now be made against heavy head winds from the national economic emergency that became apparent shortly after the Commission issued its report. Due to fiscal stringency at all levels of government, federal support for adult education has stagnated for the last three years, and funding has decreased in most states. This situation is not expected to improve in the next few years. Thus, because federal and state appropriations comprise the lion's share of adult education dollars there may seem to be little prospect for investment in systemic change. Policy improvements that will create a foundation for advancing the agenda are obviously a first priority, and it should be possible to lay that

foundation, but it will be very difficult to *implement* many of the most important policy changes on a nationwide basis without a large infusion of new funding. At best, progress may be limited to a patchwork of innovation by leading-edge programs, rather than to a new paradigm for meeting the needs of low-skilled adults.

But this view is probably too pessimistic. The fact that it is not possible to move forward on all fronts in the near term does not mean that we cannot move forward on any of them. Adult education programs have always had funds set aside for innovation. Moreover, all levels of government, and local programs as well, can generate funding for new directions by investing less in some traditional goals and more in innovative services, by finding more cost-effective ways to deliver services, and by forming closer alliances with new sources of funding.

The key to progress in an environment of limited resources is to establish clear priorities for change. If adult educators and other stakeholders in the field can focus the resources they have on a discrete number of fairly specific measures, they should be able to "move the needle" toward comprehensive change. If everyone is pulling in more or less the same direction, it should be possible to move fairly heavy loads. Ideally, near-term priorities for the field should be measures that advance the larger agenda set forth by the Commission and others, that are understood well enough to be implemented nationwide in the near term, and that can be adopted at a modest net cost. They should also include steps that will have the greatest impact on increasing the effectiveness of adult education service in both the near-term and the long run.

2. **THE CAAL SURVEY**

Programs, states, and the federal government are exploring a fairly wide range of innovative approaches to adult education, and reasonable people may differ on what these priorities should be. The Commission, CAAL's work over the last decade, and work by others in recent years have explored quite a number of possibilities. Drawing on that collective effort, CAAL recently asked a group of highly regarded adult education leaders what they believe the top priority actions in the near term should be. We sent a questionnaire (see Appendix I) asking them to indicate their top 2-3 priorities for near-term action, in the context of several thematic areas identified by the Commission as central to progress in adult education. These are: strengthening and targeting program services, stronger planning and collaboration, research and data collection, tapping the potential of technology, and developing new creative funding sources. In some of these areas, questions were asked about specific measures that might be adopted—either because they were suggested by the Commission or because participants in various other forums suggested them. In responding to the survey questions, we asked them to be guided by a few assumptions, which are also indicated in Appendix I.

The purpose of our questions was to stimulate thought, not to advocate any particular measure. Respondents were encouraged to go beyond the suggestions given to propose other priorities for near-term action if they wished to do so. We sought their views in as much depth as possible. The questionnaire included 11 specific questions about priorities in the various thematic areas.

Together with explanatory materials, it was sent to 27 authorities in adult education and related fields. They have a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives on adult education—researchers, administrators, practitioners, and policy leaders at the federal, state, and local levels in all parts of the United States. Two invitees dropped from participation due to personal emergencies, and one did not return a usable response. The remaining 24 returned completed questionnaires. Their names and affiliations are listed in Appendix II. In the survey and subsequent communications, they were thorough, thoughtful, and generous in the time they devoted to the exercise. CAAL hopes it has done justice to their effort.

We got strong convergence or near-convergence of opinion in four areas of questioning, some on measures that we expected to be controversial. The respondents called for much more high intensity-managed enrollment, professional development, and technology use, as well as adopting fees for service under certain carefully controlled circumstances. Our discussion of these matters is presented in Part B of the paper, the main and most significant part of this report. Perhaps the single most important recommendation is for a new paradigm for adult education in the near term.

In contrast, there were other issues where we expected the respondents' views to be more fully formed but where they seemed uncertain—especially those related to the future of the GED and to the research priorities. These are presented in Part C as a menu of ideas that merit further consideration by various parts of the adult education enterprise.

CAAL offers a few concluding comments in Part D. Appendices I and II give the survey questions and participants. Appendix III contains brief bios on the authors.

B. AREAS OF CONVERGENCE

1. <u>HIGH INTENSITY & MANAGED ENROLLMENT</u>

By far the strongest, clearest, and most actionable recommendation was that the dominant instructional model in adult education programs should undergo a major change. At present, the dominant model is open-entry/open-exit classes which meet 3-4 hours per week. Almost all of the respondents advocated that ***the dominant model should become managed enrollment classes that are "high intensity"*** in the sense that they meet many more hours per week. One respondent, mirroring the views of almost everyone surveyed, wrote:

> *I am in favor of adult education programming that has a "managed enrollment" structure and does not allow open-entry/open-exit student attendance. It is clear that an emphasis on high intensity yields greater and faster positive results. By organizing instructional delivery around managed enrollment modules, a program will be pre-selecting the type of student that enrolls – that is, a student that has a stronger commitment and a more regular, consistent attendance schedule. These student characteristics are predictors for greater success in adult education programming and given the limited resources in adult education, is a cost-effective model. Such a change, either in whole or part, would certainly be justified from a limited resources and greater Return on Investment (ROI) perspective. Adult education programs in my state are encouraged to convert as much programming as possible to the managed enrollment model, and those that have are generally seeing higher student success.*

Note that this and similar recommendations from nearly all of the respondents relates these two components: high intensity instruction and managed enrollment. Although each might be adopted separately, they are usually joined together—not just in responses to this survey but also in programs observed by CAAL and others. The reason is that *the model's purpose is to accelerate learning gains*. By itself, high intensity instruction might accomplish this, because it would make more "time-on-task" possible for students who take advantage of it as well as a more linear sequence of instruction. But offering additional hours of instruction each week or term will have little benefit unless students attend classes for those extra hours. Managed enrollment is a means of ensuring that students will do so. Taken together, these two components address the finding repeatedly documented by data on adult education that the overwhelming majority of students achieve very limited learning gains in any year during which they are enrolled. The model also intends to address the finding that few students enroll for very many years. Many leaders of the field believe the high drop out rates are due to the fact that students become discouraged by the slow rate of progress and/or find that adult responsibilities prevent them from attending classes of any kind for more than a few years.

<u>How "Intense" Should "High Intensity" Programs Be</u>? Most respondents did not offer an answer. The available evidence indicates that most existing "low intensity" programs meet 3-4 hours per week. By most commonly used assessments, it takes students 100-120 hours of

instruction to advance an ABE or ESL level. As a result, if students were to attend all of the available hours in conventional programs, it would take them 25-40 weeks of continual attendance to advance one level. Because students often skip classes, and programs often do not operate during the summers and holiday break periods, it is not surprising that students who persist for a year or longer usually advance at the rate of about one level per year, at best. To accelerate instruction, classes would have to meet many more hours each week. A number of respondents suggested that this should range between 12-20 hours. CAAL has observed successful high intensity programs that meet between 9 and 20 hours. *"High intensity" instruction therefore means at least double and possibly as many as five times the intensity of most existing programs.* Instruction at these intensity levels may allow students to advance several levels of proficiency in a year.

At a minimum, managed enrollment means establishing classes in which students are at the same level of proficiency, as well as a start date for each class and a cut off date (usually early in the instructional period) after which students may not join the class. It also means dropping students who do not attend on a regular basis or complete class requirements (such as homework). Managed enrollment is effectively a contract between the program and the student, in which the student agrees to take full advantage of the instruction provided. It differs greatly from "open-entry/open-exit" instruction where students are placed in an ongoing class soon after enrollment, and may attend as frequently (or infrequently) as they wish. Usually, managed enrollment classes have more students at the start date than open-entry classes to allow for attrition as students are dropped.

But managed enrollment is about more than managing attendance. It usually includes a different pedagogy than is customary in adult education. In open-entry/open-exit classes the teacher is never sure which students will attend any given session. Although they may all begin at the same proficiency level, the number and content of lessons they actually attend differs greatly. Adult education teachers have been ingenious in dealing with this problem, by repeating lessons several times during the term (or the instructional components included in them), breaking classes into small groups, providing individual tutoring, peer mentoring, and other means. But this is an inefficient method of instruction. *Managed enrollment allows for more linear instruction in which lessons build on each other without the need to backtrack.* The class can be treated as a learning cohort in which most members move at more or less the same pace. Of course, some managed instruction students will learn more quickly than others and require special assistance. But teachers familiar with this model believe that the interventions required are more apparent and easier to implement if there is a clear expectation of where the class as a whole should be. Teachers also believe that managed enrollment allows them to develop and deploy improved lesson plans and individual student learning plans because they know who the students in each class will be as well as their particular needs.

CAAL survey respondents said that they believe managed enrollment greatly accelerates learning through the combination of more time-on-task from high intensity instruction and greater instructional efficiency. It also makes other program improvements possible. For example, the greater number of contact hours makes it possible to devote more time to developing individual

student learning and career development plans, to monitor progress, and to provide specialized assistance where necessary, while still having ample time for instruction. More contact hours also make it possible to offer more *contextualized* instruction, active learning (such as student projects), and workforce skills (through both lessons and group activities). In fact, a number of respondents noted that, by virtue of their design, high intensity managed enrollment programs provide training in a number of the workforce skills employers most often say are important— e.g., punctuality, reliability, time management, and the problem-solving skills required to keep a regular schedule.

In short, programs of this kind make it far easier to implement many of the improvements adult educators have been advocating for years. Respondents believe that expanding the quality and scope of instruction would accelerate learning gains even more than increased time-on-task by itself would.

Barriers to High Intensity Managed Enrollment. Respondents recognized that efforts to implement high intensity managed enrollment programs would face two difficulties: barriers to attendance, and the cost and number of students who can be served.

Concerns about attendance barriers are a major reason why the open-entry/open-exit model has been the dominant form for adult education. Adult educators have assumed that the demands of work, family, and daily living make it difficult for adults to attend classes for more than a few hours per week, and then on an irregular basis. As a result, most students with limited basic skills may not be able to meet the demands of a high intensity program. A few survey respondents expressed this concern, and some doubted whether high intensity programs could thus become the dominant method of instruction.

However, most respondents think the problem can be overcome. Adult education researchers and practitioners have felt for years that motivation is one of the most important factors affecting attendance and learning gains. Students with low basic skills can be remarkably adept at overcoming attendance barriers if they think they are receiving instruction that has value to them. A number of respondents said they believe high intensity-managed enrollment classes *increase* motivation because students experience substantial learning gains in fairly short periods of time.[1]

In addition, classes of this kind often contain components that enhance students' sense of achievement—such as individual learning plans that allow them to track their progress toward various goals, contextualized instruction that allows them to see the relevance of what they are learning, and workforce skills that can have immediate practical benefits.

Most respondents suggested that other improvements in program structure can overcome barriers to attendance. For example, several suggested that classes should be divided into short

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[1] A first major study on managed enrollment was issued in 2005 by Sylvia Ramirez at California's Mira Costa College. Its findings are available at http://www.miracosta.edu/instruction/continuingeducation/esl/managedenrollment.html#RESULTS.

"modules" of 5-6 weeks, rather than follow the usual academic calendar of meeting for a quarter, semester, or longer. It may be easier for students to arrange for longer attendance hours if those arrangements are not for such long periods of time. Students who have to "stop out" after one or more modules could pick up where they left off when they are next able to arrange their schedules. To this end, one respondent envisioned a modularized system as follows:

> *Each module would address specific academic or workforce preparation skills (or integrated education and training – IET) with a specific scope and sequence of instruction. Based on a student's placement test results, interests, and stated goals, a series of academic modules would be prescribed for each student, thus creating an identified academic (and career) pathway. There would be built-in flexibility that allowed students to complete all of the required modules over a multi-year period. Counseling services would be a part of each student's education plan so that the student is aware of his/her progress…. At the completion of each module (with demonstrated proficiency at a minimum acceptable level), the student would receive a certificate—one that is portable no matter where the student should enroll to take subsequent modules. This would allow the student who needs to "stop out" to re-enter at the appropriate level and resume his/her academic pathway.*

Finally, nearly all respondents felt that the majority of instructional hours need not be given in face-to-face classroom settings. They advocated a much larger role for distance learning via technology in adult education classes of all kinds (see subsection 3 below). This should allow adult learners to study for additional time whenever and wherever it is convenient for them to do so. The respondents also suggested other forms of learning outside the classroom, such as special student projects. And they suggested scheduling classes at times more convenient for students— including more summer and vacation time instruction—as well as referring students to individual tutoring if they have difficulty with particular elements of the curriculum.

In short, the respondents believe that high intensity-managed enrollment classes are inherently more "student friendly" than traditional classes in some respects and that they can readily be adapted to student needs in a variety of ways. Although this will not overcome barriers to attendance for all students, it should make it possible to greatly expand this instructional model.

The second major challenge is that this model is considerably more expensive on a per-student basis than the open-entry/open-exit model. It is a matter of simple arithmetic. In adult education programs, the largest single cost is for reimbursing teachers for hours of instruction. Thus, if high intensity classes meet each week three to four times more often than traditional classes, they will cost three to four times as much on a per-student basis. Some of the instructional features that often accompany high intensity instruction (such as distance learning) may reduce costs somewhat, but others (such as greater attention to the special learning needs of individual students) may expand the teachers' required time commitment well beyond classroom hours. At a time when funding for adult education is stagnant or falling, devoting greater instructional dollars to each student inevitably means that fewer students will be served. *As a result, programs contemplating a change from open-entry/open-exit to high intensity-managed enrollment as the*

dominant form of service <u>must</u> make a choice between the quantity of students served and the higher quality of service most respondents believe the latter will provide.

While the survey respondents acknowledged that programs would face this financial trade-off if they implemented more high intensity-managed enrollment classes, they differed on how great it would be. Regardless of their estimates, however, nearly all of them advocated a change in the dominant form of service provision, giving various reasons for it. Primarily, they believed *high intensity-managed enrollment provides the best hope for overcoming low attendance levels and learning gains that are found in most traditional adult education programs*. If the tradeoff is between a system that serves smaller numbers but produces high learning gains and the existing system that serves greater numbers with much lower learning gains, they opt for the former. Some respondents expressed concern that different kinds of students might be served by high intensity managed enrollment than current adult education programs serve. They suspect that students most likely to enroll and succeed in high intensity classes are those who are highly motivated and have clear learning goals and possibly those at higher levels of proficiency (who require a fairly small number of instructional hours to complete programs).

There was some concern that students with multiple barriers to attendance and especially with very low-level proficiency would be less likely to make a commitment to such programs. On the whole, these students are the hardest to serve by any means and they require a great deal of individualized instruction. Some respondents believe that low-level learners would find it hard to meet high intensity class demands because it would take so long, probably several years, for them to become highly proficient and/or make transitions to postsecondary education or vocational training, or to achieve significant improvements in their earning power. But other respondents pointed out that *when managed enrollment is combined with high intensity classes, it provides precisely the additional instructional time and flexibility in teaching styles that lower level learners need*.

CAAL is not convinced that giving greater emphasis to this new program model would necessarily affect the types of students served. It is certainly true that highly motivated, higher-level students might enroll and persist in high intensity-managed enrollment classes more often than low-level students with multiple barriers. But this pattern is also the case in open-entry/ open-exit programs, and it may be that a program model in which all students learn more would in itself greatly affect the types of students served. Moreover, perhaps it would be prudent to adopt a "fail safe" policy, as suggested by one respondent, in which states or individual programs establish quotas for the percentage at each level who must be served in a particular year.

Some respondents stressed that it would take time for teachers and program staff to develop instructional sequences and student management systems that are suited to serving most students with high intensity-managed enrollment classes. They pointed out that teachers would have to learn new techniques for both linear and contextualized instruction as well as greater use of technology and other forms of learning outside the classroom.

The Importance of Guidance and Counselling. It was made clear that this type of instruction works best if students are given thorough orientation and assessment before they reach the classroom. That is, they are likely to make the best use of managed enrollment if they understand its expectations and can make plans to overcome barriers to attendance *before* they enter classes. They will also make the best use of high intensity instruction if they have the time to develop and understand individual learning plans. That is, *before* students select learning plans, their basic and workforce skills should be thoroughly assessed, and they should understand both the various goals they can attain (e.g., GED completion, transitions to postsecondary education, occupational training, and life skills) and the sequence of instructional modules required to attain them. Based on this information, they are more likely to select learning plans that meet their needs—and these plans should be shared by students, teachers, and administrators.

Moreover, learning progress should be recorded on a regular basis so that students can see and feel a sense of accomplishment. And so that teachers/administrators understand what learners have achieved as well as their next-step instructional needs as they move through the program. Also, students need the flexibility to alter their goals and plans if their circumstances or aspirations change.

Most respondents stressed repeatedly that well-developed instructional plans are <u>essential</u> for success in adult education. Together with thorough orientation and other guidance activities, they said, these plans create "transparent programs" in which students, teachers, and administrators share the same information and can make the most effective decisions. This system of program management gives everyone involved an effective way to deal with problems that can arise if students "stop out" for one or more classes or if they change teachers or move on to more advanced modules. Well-developed transparent instructional plans can result in a portable record of achievement that makes it easier for teachers to help students resume instruction where they left off.

Better Counselling is Needed Despite the Cost. The field has long known that an important element of a good guidance program is to help students find assistance in overcoming attendance barriers (such as child care or transportation services). But few existing adult education programs come close to providing the quantity or quality of support that students need to succeed in open-entry/open-exit systems of instruction, let alone the more demanding high intensity–managed enrollment systems. To do so would add to per-student-cost, and because so little support is given now, it is hard to establish benchmarks on what the costs for these new programs would be. Nevertheless, most respondents believe that if we are to improve program outcomes, it will be vital in any economic climate to provide the investments needed to expand guidance and counseling services.

One likely benefit of greater investment in pre-instructional services would be to reduce instructional costs for students not yet ready for adult education. The respondents, along with many other adult educators, think that a substantial percentage of students now enrolled in programs are not ready to make the commitment that adult learning requires. According to NRS data, about 34% of low-level students "separated before a level was completed" in program year

2010-11. And some state data suggests that 20-30% of low-skilled adult education enrollees do not attend more than a few weeks of instruction per year. It may be that the students do not understand what the nature of that commitment is, or feel a strong enough need to improve their basic skills or attain other educational goals. Perhaps they have insuperable barriers to attendance, or suffer from learning disabilities that programs cannot diagnose or treat. Or there could be other reasons. The fact is, *we know very little about these individuals because little research has been done on them*.

What we do know is that the cost they impose on programs is not trivial, because students consume administrative time in enrollment, accountability, and other ways, and they fill a limited number of places in classrooms or other learning venues. Some respondents suggested that an initial investment in improved guidance/counseling might save considerable cost if it helped these kinds of students recognize that they are "unready" to enroll in adult education as well as when they are "ready." In fact, the respondents said, the costs saved by deferring service to unready students would offset at least some of the cost of expanded guidance and counseling.

A few respondents noted that more extensive pre-instructional services would create a delay between the first contact adult learners have with a program and their enrollment in high intensity-managed enrollment programs. Some suggested that programs should maintain at least a few open-entry/open-exit classes—either in a classroom format or online—into which students could be enrolled immediately. These would keep low-skilled individuals involved in adult education after they have taken the often difficult step of seeking to enroll, and they could provide a sample of basic skills instruction to help them decide whether they are "ready" for more demanding classes.

Most respondents think there will be a place for open-entry/open-exit classes for some time. While they believe that high intensity/managed enrollment should become the dominant mode of instruction, they acknowledge that it will take years to implement the managerial, instructional, and guidance/counseling systems to accomplish this. Moreover, some pointed out that it will be important to remember that many students have learning styles best suited to the open-entry/ open-exit approach. And one observed that managed enrollment is also possible in "low intensity" classes. *The respondents believe that the transition to high intensity-managed enrollment should be a carefully planned and <u>gradual</u> process that allows ample time to identify and solve problems along the way.*

<u>Implementation Challenges Vary.</u> Obviously, the problems faced will be different in different programs. For example, small programs in sparsely populated areas would find it extremely hard to aggregate enough students and teachers to provide high intensity-managed enrollment instruction at all proficiency levels on a regular basis. K-12 systems and community colleges face the same kind of problem. A number of respondents suggested that adult education should adopt the same solutions other educational systems have adopted: consolidation of programs and remote learning sites. For example, a dozen small programs in any given region might be combined into a single program and high intensity classes for different levels in that region might be held at different locations and/or online. Experience is too limited to know exactly how this

approach might be implemented or how effective it would be, and more work is needed on how to improve service in sparsely populated areas. One participant observed that travel costs could deter attendance. But it is worth noting that open-entry/open-exit programs experience the same barrier to success, so one approach is not necessarily more problematic than the other.

Transformation Needs to Start Now. In short, nearly all of CAAL *survey respondents recommended a paradigm shift in how adult education instruction is provided—away from open-entry/open-exit instruction, long the norm, toward more high intensity-managed enrollment*. Despite their different professional backgrounds, the respondents believe that it not only *should* take place but *must* if adult learners are to achieve the learning gains they need. This is a bold recommendation that would result in a major transformation of the field, although it is important to note that some programs are already beginning to make this change.

The group believes that this transformation can and must begin *in the near term*. They point out that the present shortage of resources creates an imperative to make fundamental changes to assure that adult education will create the greatest possible learning gains for the dollars available. This may mean serving fewer students, but most respondents feel that quality of service is more important than quantity *if* adult learners are to make the educational and workforce gains both they and the nation require. They urge that programs, states, and the federal government adopt the goal of gradually shifting to high intensity-managed enrollment and making the necessary changes in administrative systems, program structures, curriculum, teacher training, and supportive services.

It may seem paradoxical that the CAAL survey group would see opportunity for taking a major step forward in a time of such great adversity for adult education. But their views on this issue were clear.

2. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Another area of consensus was that expanding and improving staff development must be a high priority for adult education. Some respondents focused on the need to meet longstanding concerns about teacher quality—such as improving the proficiency of most math instructors, training teachers in the use of technology, developing contextualized instruction that meets students' needs, and/or strengthening the abilities of part-time adult education teachers. Others identified more and better staff development as a key requirement for the many *new* demands that teachers and programs are facing—e.g., preparing students for the workforce, job training, postsecondary education, or the new GED. Also, as noted above, staff development is key to changes in the instructional paradigm advocated by the respondents. No respondents set forth in detail the case for better staff development, but the case was implicit in nearly all of their recommendations.

The question CAAL asked was: <u>What 2-3 steps might be taken, if any, in the present economic climate to improve the skills of adult education teachers and administrators</u>? That is, CAAL asked what the *priorities* for staff development should be *in the near term*. The respondents

suggested a wide range of (mostly familiar) steps to take, most giving more than the 2-3 requested. They included greater availability of college course-work; more use of the large body of professional development materials available online; teacher certification supported by training curricula; and greater use of "master teaching" or "reflective teaching," staff development plans, and action research models. These might seem to be disparate recommendations, but in context they suggest that there are, in fact, many effective approaches to staff improvement. Many next steps could be taken in a time of limited resources, and most of them would be worthwhile and could be combined in many ways.

An Issue of Policy & Resource Allocation. Most respondents saw the near-term priority in staff development as a matter of policy and resource allocation, rather than the form professional development should take. Nearly all of them indicated that the major problem with staff development in adult education—both short- and long-term—is that there is far too little of it in any form. They agreed that the major reason for this shortage is financial. It takes a great deal of time for teachers to learn, just as it does for students. At present, the staff development available to most adult education teachers consists of a few short conferences or seminars per year. Sometimes teachers are paid to attend these sessions, but usually they are not. Either way, the resources states and programs devote to staff development are barely adequate to support even this low level of activity.

Need for More "Time-On-Task." The survey respondents, like many other adult education leaders, think that present levels of staff development provide teachers with far too little "time-on-task" to significantly upgrade their teaching skills. This is the case even when some of the least demanding methods are used (such as forming reflective teaching circles or making effective use of online resources), let alone more demanding approaches, such as university course work.

The Cost Implications. To provide more time-on-task would require a major increase in budgets. To some extent this is because most teachers are hired on a part-time hourly basis, and they are not paid much and get no financial incentive for improving their skills. As a result, leaders believe it is necessary to compensate most teachers for staff development time beyond de-minimus levels. Even if this were not so, all forms of staff development carry high provider costs—whether it is college tuition, fees of staff trainers, time of coordinators, or materials. A serious expansion of staff development would expand these costs considerably as well. Many survey respondents, and others consulted in other CAAL projects, believe that these difficulties could be overcome if teachers received financial rewards for meeting quality standards or if programs hired more full-time staff who are highly qualified at the outset and are prepared to meet the usual expectations of full-time professionals in any field to keep their skills current. But either of these measures would *also* increase costs, as we have long known.

However, most survey respondents felt that expanding staff professional development is such a high priority that it should not be deterred by cost considerations. Specifically, they recommended that the highest near-term staff development priority for the federal government, states, and programs is to make the policy decision to invest far more in this essential adult

education function, and to do so now. Some of them proposed that states and local programs should together earmark 15-20% of their funds for staff development activities—a resource allocation decision that could be made in the near term if states choose to make it. (CAAL has proposed to Congress that the present 12.5% set-aside of federal grant funds for program improvement should be increased to 15% for staff development plus 5% for administration to supplement this effort.) Alternatively, the federal government might allow waivers for states that wish to exceed the 12.5% level. Respondents did not indicate the exact portion of state and local budgets now devoted to staff development nationwide, but several said that in their states less than 10% of total adult education expenditures is used now for this purpose. Thus, an allocation of 15%- 20% would double or triple existing spending depending on the state.

At a time when total spending on adult education is stagnant, a greater investment in staff development would obviously require important trade-offs. Respondents acknowledged this. All of them urged that the most cost-effective means should be used, and many suggested a greater reliance on technology (section 3 below). Most respondents concluded that reducing the number of students served is certainly one major trade-off, but, as already discussed, they are comfortable with the idea that adult education should place more emphasis on quality than quantity. One respondent captured this point as follows:

> *"Serve fewer students with the present funding and use the money saved to provide professional development to teachers and administrators and move more of them to full-time funding with benefits so that they stay in the system."*

Massachusetts was cited as a successful model for generating a larger per-student investment in instruction, staff development, and other aspects of program development by reducing the number of students served. However, no respondent thought the Massachusetts model was appropriate for every state. Overall, they seem to think that the staff development challenge can and probably will be met by a variety of approaches, and they pointed to several that have been implemented at the state or local level to illustrate other directions that might be taken. Their essential conclusion was that *deliberate policy choices should be made to allocate more resources to meeting the staff development challenge through well-considered plans of action, even when this means serving fewer students*.

The Issue of Teacher Quality. A couple of issues *not* expressed by the survey participants are worth noting here. First, they did not express any doubt at all that teacher quality is essential to student retention and learning, and that it must be improved. This is important because of the present rigorous K-12 debates about the importance of teacher quality—in particular, about whether the No Child Left Behind Act is right to demand that schools employ more "highly qualified teachers."

It may be that the respondents are educators who believe teacher quality matters in all areas of education. And they may also believe the K-12 debate about teacher quality is irrelevant to adult education. University teacher training programs and state certification requirements are designed to assure that most K-12 teachers have at least the minimal knowledge and skills required for

teaching children, even if they are not "highly qualified." Adult education requires a very different set of knowledge and skills, and there are few training programs or very demanding certification systems in this field. As a result, the problem of teacher quality may be more severe in adult education than in K-12. Also, even if all adult education teachers are highly qualified to provide traditional basic skills instruction, the new demands being placed on those teachers— e.g., to prepare students for workforce readiness and workforce success, transition them to various forms of postsecondary education, and implement new instructional models and prepare students for the new GED—require virtually all of them to upgrade their knowledge and skills in many ways.

Second, the survey respondents devoted very little attention to certification and credentialing of adult education teachers. Some indicated that they believe developing standards of teacher quality and certifications systems based on those standards can provide a much-needed structure for staff development. But very few mentioned the topic. Their priority was increasing resources for this function rather than specifying the form it should take.

This is significant because certification and credentialing have been much discussed in the adult education field in recent years—although certification requirements in most states are minimal and there have been no substantial efforts to strengthen them. The nature of the survey responses may indicate why so little progress has been made in upgrading certification systems. If the respondents believe that teacher quality is a serious problem in adult education, for the reasons mentioned above, perhaps they think it is premature to implement more demanding certification systems until more funds are available to help teachers meet the standards those systems would establish. It may be that until there is a stronger commitment to staff development, certification and credentialing will remain a secondary concern. Of course, this would not mean that certification and credentialing are unimportant. On the contrary, as one respondent said: "In my opinion, adult education will survive only if our teachers are required to demonstrate competence and/or hold some form of certification."

In short, the respondents are most concerned about investing in staff development in the near term. If investment can be assured, CAAL suspects that it may be possible to strengthen both certification and staff development systems at the same time.

3. **TECHNOLOGY**

There was virtually complete agreement on the critical importance of expanding the use of technology, for both professional development and student instruction, and for purposes of data collection and sharing. Specific suggestions on next steps to achieve this tended to cluster in a few areas, with emphasis on teacher training, state and local planning, expanding student access through online learning and blended models of instruction, and tapping the popularity of the new social media. The respondents also expressed several caveats about the needs of different kinds of adult learners.

Training Personnel to Use Technology. Respondents believe that improving the knowledge and skills of teachers and administrators in the various uses of technology is one of the highest priorities. Teacher training and professional development in the application and use of technology is lacking, the same as it is in adult education generally, and teachers often seem uncomfortable with technology. One participant stressed that even basic computer adeptness cannot be taken for granted. Several thought that technology training should be a mandatory part of staff development. Fortunately, numerous training programs are available for various technology uses in adult education[2], many at no or very little cost. (California's OTAN[3] is one excellent source. The MERLOT Repository[4] is another.) State and local planners and programs should examine which of the available programs they consider suitable and effective for their purposes and either adopt or adapt them, before they develop their own programs from scratch. Moreover, it is too expensive for states to go it alone in this area, so partnerships and collaboration are needed.

While the discussion focused on using technology for instructional and professional development purposes, the respondents also recognized the important role of technology in better data gathering for reporting and program development purposes. As this function is improved, the technology skills of both teachers and administrators in analyzing and applying the data must be improved as well.

State and Local Planning. Several respondents suggested that technology goals need to be more clearly and explicitly stated, and understood by all parties to the adult education enterprise. They urged state planners and local adult education programs to create technology plans, and then to review and update those plans on an annual or multi-year basis. A few participants pointed favorably to the technology provisions of the Adult Education and Economic Growth Act, and observed that if the Act is passed (with major provisions incorporated in the Workforce Investment Act), a solid foundation would be in place for a major expansion of technology for instruction including funding for research and dissemination.[5] In short, providing teacher technology training is precisely the kind of thing the respondents had in mind when advocating more resources for professional development. There is presently no systematic effort to accomplish this, but the respondents think that planners and service providers should at least make a start in the near term. Respondents mentioned several state and national efforts that are

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[2] See The Power of Technology to Transform Adult Learning: Expanding Access to Adult Education and Workforce Skills Through Distance Learning, by Mary L. McCain, October 2009, Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, http://www.caalusa.org/POWER_OF_TECH.pdf.

[3] http://www.otan.us/

[4] http://taste.merlot.org/repository.html

[5] See HR2226 at www.thomas.gov.

guiding lights[6] and called for greater investments in such efforts and national dissemination of information on what they teach us.

Technology for Instruction: Several respondents spoke about the use of technology for instruction as *the most fundamental near-term priority*. There are many ways technology might be used to help students master basic skills, and to reach many more students. The survey participants and many other educators are confident about the importance of technology for instruction, based on their knowledge of the success of particular applications—developed by individual teachers, programs, researchers, education companies, and others. Some are online programs, some are computer-based (and available online), some are available in mobile learning labs, some are classroom-based. Others rely on video discs or other media, some are interactive. Some provide complete ABE, ASE, or ESL curricula and others focus on particular skills. Some are intended to help students practice specific skills they may have learned in the classroom and others provide students with the opportunity to use multiple skills in problem solving. Some offer self-paced, individualized instruction, and others allow students to work together in "learning communities." Simply stated, an enormous number of very different technology applications have already been developed by someone, somewhere.

A number of specific ideas and caveats were offered:

- **Online and Blended Models**. There was heavy interest in developing more fully the potential of online learning.   But some respondents cautioned that blended models of instruction are often more effective for students at certain levels than online instruction alone, and one urged advocacy for both public and private funding of blended models. Another observed that local programs that want to pursue online and blended learning approaches need state funding for licenses to purchase available programs.

- **Computers.** It was urged that greater use be made of computers and that steps be taken to ensure that all programs have adequate computer systems available to them, which is not the case now. Several respondents were hopeful that partnerships with libraries, colleges, and businesses could help fill that gap. (CAAL has observed from its other research that donating technology is one of the ways that local philanthropies, businesses, and service organizations are most likely to help adult education programs. They just need to be asked.) The ESL respondent noted that heavier use of computers for ESL language learners is a worthy goal, and noted that online Internet resources could be identified and incorporated into the ESL curricula. However, she cautioned that while online courses may work well for upper level learners, some evidence indicates that they often do not work well for low-level ESL adult students.

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[6] Among the models cited by the respondents as promising are The Learning Web (http://www.learnerweb.org/infosite/), the Khan Academy (http://www.khanacademy.org/), Second Life (http://secondlife.com/), PLATO (http://www.plato.com/), Centro Latino in Los Angeles (http://www.centrolatinoliteracy.org), and Project Ideal (http://www.projectideal.org/).

- **Social Media**. The respondents seemed to have special interest in experimenting with the new social media, which are ubiquitous and in a sense cost free. A few urged the development and dissemination of examples of how teachers are already using blogs, class wikis, and class web pages for instruction. The respondents commented that Facebook, twitter, and wikis, for example, have come into almost universal use among all but the lowest level learners. They indicated that students *want* to pursue the use of these media for learning. It was suggested that programs can integrate social media into instruction in many different ways. For example, students might be encouraged to form "learning communities" (such as Linked In, which is designed for that purpose) in which they critique each other in applying contextualized basic skills—such as writing a letter, answering an ad, or understanding a document. Furthermore, the social media might have potential for developing workforce skills by helping students practice problem-solving and teamwork, or for helping them to research occupational options. Increased use of handheld devices was urged for prison settings, where, according to the participating corrections expert, there is already considerable use.

What Technology for What Students and Purposes? Unfortunately, it was generally agreed that we know too little about how effective different types of technology applications are in improving retention and learning gains for different types of students with diverse learning needs in the various settings in which services are provided. That is, according to the respondents, many of the presumably large number of successful applications of technology for instruction in adult education are fairly unique, and there has been little research on their outcomes, what lessons to draw from them, or how replicable they are. As a result, it is hard to guide teachers, trainers, and administrators on exactly what to do to pursue technology for instruction, including which of the many approaches or particular applications to adopt. Many may well feel overwhelmed by the abundance of what *seem* to be equally good options but may not be. Nevertheless, in the view of many survey respondents, there is no reason that teachers and other program planners should not understand the basic dimensions of those options or be encouraged to experiment on their own. But if the benefits of technology for instruction are to be achieved, these professionals need much more reliable information on the experience and outcomes of all kinds of students with the different programs and applications available.

As mentioned a number of times, most respondents believe that expanding high intensity instruction is a top priority. They also think that technology can reduce the cost and increase learning effectiveness by allowing students to learn at times and places most convenient to them. Thus, it is important to have a firm grasp of the most effective and cost efficient technology systems or approaches for high intensity instruction. Likewise, it is important to know which students can benefit most from the various forms of instructional technology. Our ESL authority expressed doubts that technology (at least in some forms) is suitable for instruction of low-level ESL students, but two others expressed confidence that it is. Regrettably, their opinions are based largely on their personal professional experiences, rather than on any firm body of research. We need to find the right answers to this and related questions.

As a near-term priority, a number of the respondents called for more research on and evaluation of the best uses of technology for basic skills instruction. They called at the very least for some agency to better organize or consolidate what is known and then to make this information available in a user-friendly form to teachers and those responsible for staff development. They think that deploying technology will advance more quickly and its benefits will be greater if we develop greater knowledge about current uses and achieve better dissemination of that knowledge.

One respondent dubbed this "the Starbucks approach" to expanding technology for instruction: creating more informed consumers (teachers) and a fairly large number of appealing options, and allowing them to find the options that best suit their circumstances.

4. **CREATIVE FUNDING**

CAAL asked for ideas on how additional resources could be generated for adult education in the near term, and cited a few possibilities to stimulate their thinking. Specifically, we posed this question:

"What 2-3 suggestions do you have on what adult education can do to supplement the resources it receives from government on a large enough scale to bring about substantial increases in the number of adults served and/or the nature of service? For example, charging students for some services, increased contracting between Title I and II programs or with business, seeking business funding support for collaborative planning and assessment at the state and local levels. (Illustrative Example: If 3 million students were charged $20-$40 upon enrollment, this would yield a $60 million-$120 million fund for program improvement. These are not trivial amounts. Fees for contract students could generate even more.)"

Respondents agreed that all options suggested by the question should be pursued, although they did not propose any particularly novel ways to pursue them. Many respondents felt that student enrollment fees should be charged in some form. Some suggested that funding gains would come from closer ties between Title I and Title II programs, as advocated by the National Commission on Adult Literacy in Reach Higher, America. Many stressed the importance of public and private funding partnerships of one kind or another, along with better marketing of basic skills service to companies and major national foundations. CAAL strongly encourages these solutions to improving program financing and effectiveness, with research as needed in some areas, but we had hoped to tease out new ideas about how to do it more effectively. For the most part, such ideas were not forthcoming.

Student Service Fees. We were surprised that so many respondents—over half of them—support the idea of charging fees to students for adult education services. Even more might support that practice under certain circumstances and for certain categories of learners. Traditionally adult education has been free, for the same reasons that K-12 education is—that is, adult education is a public good that improves communities and the economy, and free adult education compensates adults for the failure of public schools to provide an adequate education when low-skilled adults were children. Similarly, with regard to ESL populations, free

instruction has been justified on the grounds that is in the interest of both immigrants and the general public to help language minorities function effectively in a country where English is the dominant language.

The respondents did not reject traditional arguments for *not* charging fees. They recognized, for example, that recruiting students to programs can be hard as it is because we often do not motivate them to admit that they have basic skills problems and to *want* to make the commitment to do something about it. Moreover, it is widely known that many people with low basic skills usually have low incomes and, in those cases, even nominal fees might deter them from enrolling.

However, there is evidence that use of fee-for-service instruction works or can be made to work with careful planning. For example, although information is not readily available on how many students they enroll, it appears that as many as half of those now preparing for the GED pay some kind of service fee. A number of respondents pointed to the fact that individuals and companies make extensive use of private language academies for both life skills ESL instruction and, more importantly, for English language instruction to meet the needs of postsecondary education and the workforce. In fact, a few argued that one goal in marketing public adult education should be to increase awareness of GED and higher level ESL students and of the companies that support them, noting that public programs can do the same thing at a more reasonable cost. Several respondents pointed out that two states—Washington and Florida—already charge nominal fees for adult education (Washington charges $25 per semester and Florida $40 per quarter). It is not clear that this affects enrollment—the percentage of Washington's population enrolled in adult education is about the same as in other states, and although Florida experienced a fall in enrollment after it introduced a fee, state officials there believe this was primarily due to other changes at the time. In both states, the fee is waived if students claim financial hardship, but, according to the participants, remarkably few students do that. In corrections education, families have long paid for certain adult education services, despite the fact that so many inmates are indigent or poor.

One respondent summarized her rather extensive experience with ESL programs this way: *"Programs that have charged nominal fees for enrollment in adult education classes have found that not only will people pay those fees, but they are more likely to attend regularly."* This may be because people value what they pay for, and/or it may be that even nominal fees screen out the substantial number of people who might enroll but are not yet ready to make a commitment to basic skills instruction, just as high intensity instruction does.

At present the federal government places no restriction on charging for services supported by Title II of the Workforce Investment Act, although at the local level, administrative cost is often given as a reason for not doing so. One respondent observed that *"if the 'Red Box' can make money from $1 movie rentals via credit card, adult education programs should be able to do the same."*

Some respondents suggested that charges should apply only to students above the intermediate level of proficiency. Others suggested that student enrollment fees should be based on ability to pay, such as a sliding scale based on income (and proof of income). One, a former state ABE

director, thought that there should be no charge to people who test below 6th grade level on an appropriate test, and a charge of $20-$40 to people above this level (describing the activity as preparation for postsecondary education). Another suggested that a "materials fee" might be more appropriate for some students. Although the level of basic skills proficiency correlates highly with income, respondents saw no reason to adopt a single cut-off point rather than a hardship exemption—especially in ESL programs, where immigrants are often affluent professionals in the same entry-level classes as field hands. And one respondent noted that states with waiting lists should experience no unintended consequences from charging fees.

Most respondents appeared to believe that if fees are collected, it should be by local programs with the approval of states. They were not clear who should determine the use of these resources. As the illustrative example given by CAAL's question suggests, the amounts on a national basis could be substantial, and even if they provide only a small percentage increase in new resources to local programs, *any* increase would be significant.

But new resources are likely to have a greater impact if states require that they be used to meet one or more near-term priorities—such as implementing high-intensity instruction, staff development, or increased use of technology. By devoting fees to one or a few purposes, states might concentrate enough new funding for those priority purposes to actually improve the odds of achieving the intended goals. And because they would know exactly how the fees are used, they could more easily determine the effectiveness and role of fees in increasing program outcomes. Importantly, if states devoted fees to a few priorities, they could usefully build this funding stream into their statewide plans for other forms of upgrading service.

Even though some respondents urged that research be done to better determine the impact of fees on student enrollment and outcomes, they believe that the states should begin charging some fees for adult education service in the near term. Most areas of postsecondary education are increasing tuition and fees due to public funding losses; implementing fees in adult education would be an equivalent response by our field. Whether this should be done on a permanent or temporary basis, at least in some form, is hard to know. It is a subject worth exploring.

The mission of adult education has expanded greatly over the last decade—from combating "illiteracy" and helping immigrants obtain "survival English" to incorporating many components traditionally associated with workforce development and postsecondary education. Moreover, it has become increasingly apparent that it is in the national interest for many more adults to obtain the benefits of workforce readiness and postsecondary education. With our near-term financial problems, it may be an ideal time to consider whether public funding should, or realistically can, pay the full cost of all of these components at the level and quality of service the nation needs, or whether part of the cost should be borne by at least some categories of students.

Other Funding Ideas. Most respondents commented on how important developing partnerships and collaborations is to current and future funding of programs. Specific suggestions on how to achieve this varied widely, ranging from liaisons with business (which can contribute funds and other supports to programs whose services guarantee student work readiness), to more partnerships with schools for family literacy services, to contracts for specific kinds of services,

to more collaborations with colleges. Some urged support for Title V of the Adult Education and Economic Growth Act, which calls for tax credits to employers that provide job-related skills training. Another called for developing stronger partnerships among an array of federal agencies that have a stake in adult readiness for college and work. One urged creation of a private sector council of a small number of national employers and workforce investment boards that understand the adult education challenge and want to work with adult educators in doing something about it. One participant, speaking of the employability of the American workforce, advocated a "job exportation" penalty. He wrote that: *"In a better economy, the perfect adult education systems would be self-supporting—through employer payroll taxes, employee income taxes, and savings....[Moreover] a good system of concessions and incentives, duties and taxes, could encourage corporations to bring back overseas operations, in the industries' and country's best interest."*

It was also urged that we advocate state laws that enable charter-school funding for adults, by easing age requirements. Several of the participants stressed the importance of developing *information* in a way that will attract more philanthropic funding.

<u>A National Training Trust Fund</u>. Finally, CAAL posed this question about the appropriateness of a national Trust as a new dedicated source of funding:

"*The National Commission on Adult Literacy recommended creation of an independent National Training Trust Fund, to be financed through a partnership of public, private philanthropic, and business interests. The Fund might serve as an entity to finance adult education and workforce skills activities that are job or occupation directed. Do you think this is a good idea? If so, can you give us some specific suggestions on next steps to more fully develop the idea?*"

There was near-consensus support among the survey respondents on the desirability of creating an independent national training trust fund, but with some cautions and conditions. It was clear that for most respondents the workforce upgrading needs of low-skilled students in *adult education* would have to be the priority focus, and that national and state adult educators would have to be part of the governance structure and planning processes. CAAL believes that the field of adult education should not and could not be expected to support such a Fund otherwise.

Certain other matters were also of priority importance to the respondents regarding a Trust. Prime among them were: Dedicated funding would have to be available for multiple years, and ideally the collective effort should develop national dissemination projects that can be widely replicated. The features of "independent" and "national" would be vital. A job- and sector-specific orientation would be important, even with adult education students as the priority clientele. Those who commented on likely funding sources to get a Trust started thought that it would have to come from a prominent wealthy individual, one or more savvy large corporations, and/or a committed philanthropy or two. One respondent said that any Trust that might be established should be *required* to allocate a specific percentage or amount for skills development of lower-skilled adults.

A handful of next-step ideas were offered for moving ahead with a Trust, ranging from development of a white paper on the concept, to identifying state and regional models that might

provide insights, to discussing the idea with some major corporations and national unions that understand the importance of basic skills upgrading to their futures, to forming a transitional start-up staff that could put together a governing board, oversee an initial plan, and develop the funding. All of these suggestions are sensible, but in CAAL's judgment the logical *next* step would be a discussion paper (and funding for it) that summarizes past experience with such initiatives and presents elements of a possible program, including a statement of clear purposes, options for a structure, make-up for governance, and other such elements.

C. OTHER IDEAS TO CONSIDER

Some CAAL survey questions did not elicit strong or convergent responses, and the respondents did not have clear directional preferences. In a sense, what matters most about them is the degree of uncertainty they reflect. But they do constitute a menu of often good ideas and possibilities that may be worth further consideration. We summarize them below to encourage that. Most of the ideas offered were in a few broad areas: research and data collection, the suitability of adopting core curriculum standards keyed to the GED, developing the role of business in adult education program planning and evaluation, and improving service to unemployed persons and incumbent workers.

1. <u>RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION</u>

Obviously, research and data collection systems are important because they provide at least some of the intellectual capital required for evaluating and improving service. Regrettably, adequate resources have never been available for these functions in adult education—certainly nothing on the order of the resources devoted to K-12 or postsecondary education. Moreover, focus and sustainability has often been lacking in the research that has been supported. Limited resources have been distributed among many researchers on topics of interest to particular funders and the researchers over the years, but rarely has there been a sufficient investment in any of the major issues in this field or for long enough to form a critical mass of understanding. As a result, adult educators often feel that they do not have the research base and support they need for effective oversight and program improvement.

Despite recent funding reductions for many aspects of adult education, public and private funding continues to be available for research and data collection. So, *even without an increase* in that funding, it should be possible to strengthen the results of research and data collection by improving the focus of the work. Thus, the survey asked respondents to identify "the 2-3 highest priority, near-term research investments" that should be made in adult education (as well as the form that research should take and who should conduct it). They were also asked to identify "2-3 short term steps at *minimal cost* to improve data collection at the state and national levels" for reporting and program development purposes. CAAL sees these as related questions, because data collection systems in adult education (such as the federal National Reporting System) are specialized programs to provide policymakers and practitioners with information to evaluate and improve service on an ongoing basis. The design of these systems and the interpretation of the data they generate are based on in-depth research of various aspects of adult education and related fields.

We were surprised that there was little convergence in the answers to these questions (apart from the important research suggestions embedded in section B above). Almost all respondents indicated their research priorities, but only one priority was mentioned more than once and these suggestions were at a high level of generality. Collectively, the responses reflected issues commonly discussed in adult education. Due to their nature, it is hard to infer a small number of research priorities from them. Among the specific ideas offered for research attention were:

- How students learn, how to determine/define teacher effectiveness, and the validity of tests that measure learning gains

- Characteristics of promising career pathways programs and practices

- Forms of professional development to ensure that teachers can integrate basic skills and workplace training

- Best practices for serving particular types of students, such as low level learners and adults who make transitions to postsecondary education

- Models for accelerated learning, and non-formal learning environments

- The most effective uses of technology in "blended" programs of instruction and professional development

- Better ways to identify the educational needs of various occupations

- Deeper understanding of the commonality and differences among existing assessment systems, what it would take to improve the systems, and improved use of assessments to link different programs and guide instruction

- Models of partnering between adult education and business to identify instructional goals and outcomes

- How applicable the Common Core Standards being adopted in the K-12 field are to adult education

- How to build better on-ramps to employability for low-skilled students as well as better bridge and pre-bridge programs for occupational and postsecondary education

- Program sustainability and capacity building

- The impact of recent funding reductions on planning and service provision

Longitudinal Research and Data Collection. The one topic mentioned by several respondents was that there should be more longitudinal research on virtually all aspects of adult education. It is increasingly understood that individual learning gains should be tracked for multiple years as well as transitions to and success in further education and employment. Likewise, the effectiveness of different methods of instruction, curricula, program structures, professional development systems, and other "inputs" should be followed by longitudinal research. *The common theme here is that the effectiveness of adult education can only be assessed and improved if its outcomes are known, and some of the most important outcomes take many years to achieve.* Of course, some questions—such as the impact of changes in funding levels—can be answered without long-term data, but projects in which research investments are made should have longitudinal components appropriate to their ultimate goals.

The NRS. There was wide agreement that the National Reporting System (NRS) must be improved in major ways. Respondents suggested that the system would be far more valuable if it gathered multi-year data on student performance and if it expanded the range of data gathered beyond adult education to include longitudinal data on workforce training, transitions to postsecondary education, employment, and other aspects of career pathways. New ways are also needed, they said, to analyze NRS data so as to better help practitioners and policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels solve their immediate problems. Clearly, however, building such a system would be an expensive, long-term undertaking.

A number of respondents suggested that in the near term the value of the NRS would be greater if it were linked more to other existing and emerging data systems. They had in mind the workforce credentialing systems being created by a number of states, the various national and state data bases on skills needed for specific occupations, and the longitudinal systems being created to connect K-12 with postsecondary education. One respondent pointed out that these are "islands of valuable data" and that it would be cost-effective to build bridges between them by developing common terminology, cross-walking assessment measures, implementing unit record systems, and increasing their interactions. Almost any steps along these lines might be beneficial, in fact, if they gained the support of adult educators and those in the employment and training field.

Who Should Take the Leadership Role? A number of respondents expressed uncertainty about who should assume the leadership in building and managing an improved system. Several had doubts that federal agencies are best able to perform the role—apparently because they believe it is too difficult to break down silos between the data systems of different agencies. It was suggested that, in the near term, it might be more realistic for the federal government to invest in improved data collection in a few exemplary states, i.e., undertake a pilot project for a larger national effort.

Some respondents stressed that any new or revised system should be more responsive to the needs of policymakers and practitioners at all levels. To this end, they suggested that thought be given to placing the system under the responsibility of an independent user consortium of public and private agencies. The consortium might include representatives of state agencies in various aspects of Employment and Training, professional organizations (such as COABE and TESOL in adult education), and research centers. It is unlikely that such a consortium could become fully operational in the short run, but it might be an effective vehicle for future planning.

In fact, *the CAAL survey results suggest that strategic planning is the greatest near-term priority for research and data collection in the adult education field*. The lack of convergent thinking about priorities, and about how to proceed, may well reflect the inadequate funding that has been devoted to these functions in the past. Until now, there has been no reason for adult educators to consider research or data collection priorities on a nationwide basis. They have understandably followed the likely interests of public and private funding sources, where in most cases adult education issues are generally incidental to their larger established programmatic concerns.

However, a number of respondents cited a few notable exceptions— the more successful years of the National Institute for Literacy and the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning

(NCSALL). In both cases, substantial funds were made available for research and data collection, and the organizations attempted to prioritize their use. In addition, a few states (e.g., Massachusetts, California, and Kentucky) have developed prioritized research agendas to support their own planning. Many adult educators believe that the results of these efforts are outstanding, in terms of quality and relevance of work. But the two national organizations have closed their doors due to federal budget cuts, and there are limits on how extensive or replicable the work of any one state can be. It could be that if and when reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act takes place (incorporating the Adult Education and Economic Growth Act), WIA will help solve this problem—whether by reviving the National Institute for Literacy or other means.

Finally, because the survey elicited no common agreement on what the focus of research and data collection should be, CAAL believes that a mechanism should be set up in the near term to establish that focus. Major stakeholders in adult education and related fields should collaborate to define the research and data gathering agenda and advocate for funding support of it. The work could be done by a privately funded taskforce, a public commission, a collaboration led by state directors, or others. What matters is to begin the process.

2. CORE CURRICULUM AND THE GED

Because this bears significantly on the future directions of adult education, CAAL asked if adult education should adopt core curriculum standards (similar to the K-12 Common Core Standards being adopted by most states) that are keyed to the new GED assessment, which is itself based on Common Core Standards and scheduled to be in use by 2014. We also asked what other curricular changes should be made. The near-term urgency of the GED question is obvious.

There was no consensus in the survey responses. Each person raised different issues, expressed different concerns, and drew different conclusions. *About a fifth of the respondents spoke for developing core curriculum standards in general, but they saw the GED as just one element of adult education that should be articulated to them.* A few believed that the K-12 Common Core Standards should or might be used to enrich and develop state curricular guidelines in adult education, but it was pointed out that many states have developed guidelines of this sort for ABE and/or ASE already, and a few have developed them for ESL. One respondent pointed to the Common Core State Standards for College and Career Readiness (CCSS)[7] as the new benchmark to which both K-12 and adult education should be aligned.

Some respondees thought that somewhat less diversity might be desirable in adult education and that K-12 standards can provide some guidance. However, none appeared to consider development of common core standards an urgent *near term issue.* Put another way, the issues of uniformity and diversity in adult education curriculum were not seen as a short-term priority. However, some felt that adult educators should participate in working groups that implement the K-12 core as a way to determine if and how that experience can benefit adult education.

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[7] See http://www.act.org/commoncore/pdf/FirstLook.pdf.

There are worries in the field generally that adult education students will have less access to the new GED than to the current one because it will be more expensive and will be primarily administered via computer. But a different kind of concern emerged from the survey: because it has been developed and will be administered by a for-profit partnership (between ACE and Pearson PLC), its proprietary nature could create problems. This might occur, for example, if data about the test and preparation material for it is withheld from adult educators and other education service companies that might want to evaluate it and/or develop other possibly more useful alternatives.

More importantly, there was a feeling among most of the respondents that the GED has always played a more limited role in adult education than might appear to be the case. Several expressed doubts about the value of the *new* GED, and a few about the current GED. Some suggested that the GED may be a tool of diminishing value.

Skepticism about the salience of the GED appear to be due in part to the fact that the present test is not strongly articulated with ABE instruction. Moreover, two subjects that link ABE and ASE—Language Arts and Math—are taught and tested in somewhat different ways. For example, there is more emphasis on reading as a life skill and less emphasis on writing altogether in ABE than in ASE instruction. Several survey respondents emphasized that it would be wrong to see ABE as an instructional system that prepares students for ASE. It may be best to see preparation for the GED as a separate but related component of adult education, just as ESL and ABE are separate. Some respondents seemed to believe that the value of ASE is limited because it is the smallest component of adult education—enrolling only about 16 percent of adult education students, according to NRS data. They also stressed that the GED is not required for entry to most colleges and that it is a poor predictor of postsecondary success. Furthermore, they noted that surveys of many occupations that pay a living wage show that many of the important skills workers must have are either not measured by the GED or are not necessarily required at the level of proficiency the test measures.

A number of respondents noted that the GED has little relevance to about 50 percent of adult education students enrolled in ESL classes. The primary purpose of ESL is teaching English rather than academic skills. Because many adult ESL students have very low basic skills, ESL instruction should and often does include these aspects of their educational need. But none of the respondents suggested that greater articulation between the GED and ESL instruction should have a high priority.

Despite many concerns about its limitations, respondents did *not* conclude that the GED is of marginal value, any more than high school diplomas are. Any system of common schooling needs a capstone level to meet the economic and social needs of most citizens, although that capstone can take various forms. Since World War II, the GED has been the most commonly used capstone measure for adults who do not graduate from high school through sequential attendance. But the impending introduction of the *new* GED has led many adult educators—including some of the survey respondents—to begin considering alternatives. As the respondents pointed out, there have always been alternatives, such as the National External Diploma Program

and the International Baccalaureate[8]. Moreover, a number of states have programs that allow high school dropouts to obtain their diplomas by taking missed courses at an adult school and passing an exit exam.

At present, most adult educators have limited knowledge about the new GED.[9] But it may well require extensive investments in staff development, infrastructure, and articulation with other programs, such as postsecondary or occupational training. A number of respondents believed adult educators should consider whether that investment would be better made in implementing alternative capstone programs.

A great deal of time is devoted to the issue of core curriculum standards at federal, state, and local levels, and in professional conclaves and research projects. The respondents' most important point on this topic is that K-12 standards and the new GED are only two among many elements to consider in improving the content and pedagogy of adult education service. Adult education is not K-12 instruction for dropouts and immigrants—adult educators define their mission as providing knowledge and basic skills to meet the needs of the adult populations they serve, in whatever ways are most appropriate. But innovations in K-12 can certainly shed some light on how to accomplish this mission.

CAAL believes that the GED has such a dominant position in the high school equivalency market that it will continue to be an important component of adult education for the foreseeable future.[10] As long as this is the case, adult educators should be prepared to make at least some adjustments

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[8] For detailed information on these two programs, go to http://nedpc.net/, http://www2.casas.org/home/index.cfm?fuseaction=nedp.welcome, and http://www.ibo.org/diploma/

[9] As this paper was going to press, CAAL learned that Newsome Associates in Massachusetts has been carrying out workshops for groups of GED Preparation programs in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, including development of a GED 2014 plan template. For information on available resources, contact djrosen@newsomeassociates.com.

[10] Note that the continuing role of the GED is assumed in the Democratic and Republican versions of the reauthorized (but not yet enacted) Workforce Investment Act. In those bills (except for ESL), enrollment is limited to adults without a diploma, and Congress would expect to see State plans in which a sizeable number of participants seek to earn a GED. However, the GED would count as a positive outcome only if it leads to a job or enrollment and/or completion of a training program or postsecondary course. This means that instruction for the GED must prepare many participants to pass an "ability to benefit" exam to be admitted into a desired program. Setting State plan GED goals are thus likely to be more difficult with a new, more expensive, criterion-referenced GED.

in the ABE and ASE curricula to increase articulation with the GED.[11] Among other things, this should provide greater opportunities for students with low basic skills. In a sense, greater articulation with the GED should advance other curricular goals often articulated in adult education because the new test will require more contextualized learning and depth of understanding in math and language arts.[12]

3. **GETTING BUSINESS & OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO THE TABLE**

Perhaps the greatest change in adult education over the last decade has been the far stronger emphasis on adult education for work and, hence, the need for adult educators to determine from employers the types of basic skills that will best meet their workplace needs. Thus, one CAAL survey question asked the participants what states and local programs could or should do to strengthen the role of business in planning the form, content, and needed outcomes of basic skills programs, and to draw other stakeholder groups into the partnership.

Responses to this question offered little that has not already been suggested by CAAL[13] and others in the past few years. The respondents take it as a given that building partnerships involving businesses, One-Stops, and WIBs, along with other stakeholder groups, is essential. Most responded in terms of what adult education should itself do to increase meaningful business partnering. "We must go to their table, not expect them to come to ours," one participant said.

Among the ideas offered were for adult educators (especially state ABE directors) to take a more aggressive role in reaching out to businesses and getting involved in their group meetings and conferences; to initiate joint activities with Workforce Investment Boards especially; to seek formal representation on state and local WIBs; and to call more on businesses at both state and local levels (just as community colleges do and as committed adult education and workforce

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[11] In August 2011, the U.S. Department of Education launched a three-year project to "promote college and career-ready standards in adult basic education." One purpose is to validate a set of college- and career-readiness standards in English Language and Math, so as to help states and adult education programs as they update their own state standards. Another purpose is to align selected Common Core Standards with NRS levels and assess how the standards interact with NRS accountability standards. Various workshops and review activities are being undertaken through 2014 and two reports and a guide are the expected outcomes. For more information, see http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/factsh/promoting-college-career.pdf .

[12] Note that the GED Testing Service recently announced the launching of its "2014 GED Test Item Samplers," to show adult educators some content and test items that will appear on the new test. For information go to www.GEDtestingservice.com/educators/itemsampler.

[13] In Doing Business Together: Adult Education and Business Partnering to Build a Qualified Workforce, by James Parker, February 2011, Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (at http://www.caalusa.org/Doing.pdf).

development initiatives in some states do[14]) to explain the benefits of collaboration and seek their participation in planning and curriculum development for both potential and incumbent workers. It was also urged that business leaders be invited to visit local adult education classes to observe and talk about what is needed for particular jobs.

A wide range of very specific *communication activities* was suggested for adult educators—for example, preparation of brochures for business and economic development groups that cite the benefits of collaboration; development of materials that clearly articulate return-on-investment in terms that mean something to business and economic groups; formation of speakers' bureaus; reaching out to recently-retired CEOs and top executives to serve on adult education boards and committees; participation in job and career fairs; development of business internships in selected career pathways; job/shadowing opportunities for adult education students at the workplace; and development of business "open houses" where students can come to worksites for a firsthand look at what goes on there.

A few respondents called for national and state media campaigns that make the need for adult education and business partnerships more widely known, and that feature promising business/ education partnerships already in existence, especially at the state level. One person suggested that the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education, perhaps together with the Chamber of Commerce, should sponsor the national campaign, with states tapping in as appropriate to their local circumstances. Another advocated that Congress establish a Business Education Partnership Week (or Month).

Numerous respondents suggested, although in somewhat different forms, that adult educators should take the lead in forming councils and agencies at the state level to achieve the desired partnerships and involvements. Models cited as guiding lights were Pennsylvania's Interagency Coordinating Council, California's Employer Advisory Board, Massachusetts' Workforce Alliance, and the Capital Workforce Partners of Connecticut, all of which link business and other groups to adult education.[15] A few respondents also pointed to the possible merit of regional consortia, which are being widely recommended by government and other planning groups for advancing adult education and workforce skills development generally. One respondent said that the U.S. Department of Labor should use its bully pulpit to show greater support for strong business involvement in adult education, including stronger emphasis on low-skilled adults and the usefulness of One-Stops. And the corrections representative urged that state departments of labor and education both take the lead in developing links to adult basic skills programs for correctional populations.

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[14] For example, see IndianaReady and the Arkansas' WAGE program (Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy) at http://www.readyindiana.org/, http://www.work-basedlearning.org/tips-viewstory.cfm?id=25.

[15] For details, see http://paadultedresources.org/icc.html, http://ceac.org/about, http://massworkforcealliance.org/, and http://www.capitalworkforce.org/.

The bottom line is that adult education must not only develop better working connections to the business community but it must also be able to articulate more clearly to business and other partners why it is to their advantage to join planning alliances.

4. <u>SERVING THE UNEMPLOYED & INCUMBENT WORKERS</u>

CAAL also asked for ideas about how to better serve incumbent workers and unemployed persons specifically, especially young adults.

Only four ideas were offered on how to better serve the needs of unemployed persons. One respondent called for a survey of currently enrolled unemployed young adults to determine appropriate job-related adult education strategies for them. Another commented that the "career pathway framework is a good way to develop strategies to serve unemployed youth because it is based on the assumption that multiple pathways lead to employment with good wages." A third respondent pressed for better guidance and job placement services, and for "heavy doses" of technology-based learning, especially the social media, to reach young unemployed adults. And, one respondent commented that high intensity-managed enrollment approaches are more easily adopted in programs that serve unemployed or nonworking adults who want to lift their basic skills to a level that will meet "ability to benefit" criteria. CAAL thinks that we should be reaching out more to state and local unemployment offices, other public welfare agencies, and perhaps One-Stops to better identify individuals and their learning needs.

Not so long ago, incumbent workers were seldom considered in conversations about how to make adult education better serve national needs, but that is no longer the case. Like others who understand the interconnections between adult education and employability, the survey respondents agreed on the importance of including incumbent workers as a target group for services.

A few emphasized the importance of partnerships between and among employers, workforce organizations, industry/labor associations, community-based organizations, community colleges, and other adult education groups. Several had suggestions about the importance of developing career pathways and providing orientation services to concepts of career pathways. One respondent said that "*career pathways need to be delineated as a series of well-defined and achievable outcomes* that allow learners to progress in ways that align to the reality of their lives."

Other suggestions ranged from career coaching, to contextualized workshops for different business sectors where specific authentic materials are used, to career counseling services geared to incumbent workers, to development of an array of special materials for both learners and the business community, to new forms of professional development geared to understanding labor market realities, to creation of learning communities based on innovation rather than traditional education pedagogies.

A number of suggestions were for more defined activities, with a heavy focus on what state and federal entities might do:

- Adult education groups and education and business alliances should market classes at One-Stops, and develop cross referral services with One-Stop partners.

- Adult education entities should form business workforce development consulting services that focus on developing access to incumbent workers.

- Adult education programs should train adults to a level where they can volunteer in a workplace with the aim of permanent employment.

- A government or philanthropic entity should fund a project to identify programs that reach and serve the unemployed effectively—some programs do, according to one respondent.

- Although the economy and current political environment make it impossible in the near term, federal government should create a public works program—in which vocational experience and basic skills can be gained at the same time, perhaps even with the "educated unemployed" functioning as teachers, as they were in the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Core (CCC) of the 30s and 40s.[16]

- For incumbent workers who are union members, New York City's Consortium for Worker Education is an excellent model. "The program's familiarity with promotional opportunities allows it to fashion basic education curricula that rings true with members."

- Federal and state sources should adjust their guidelines so that incumbent workers and the unemployed qualify for their workforce training financial aid programs.

- More individuals should be co-enrolled in WIA Title I and II programs.

- A handful of states are good at reaching and serving incumbent workers and the unemployed. They should get together with states that need models and other guidance.

- The U.S. Department of Education (OVAE) should reinstate its Workplace Literacy program strand.

There were significant observations about corrections education. Because of the high importance of upgrading the skills and employability of correctional populations, one respondent suggested that One-Stops should be surveyed to determine how extensively they have liaisons with prisons and jails. A few One-Stops do have such programs now, but no one knows much about the extent of it or what it adds up to. Another respondent noted that *"the least discussed and most auspicious settings for corrections education are the city and county jails and penitentiaries, because sentences are shorter and there are many first-time offenders."* In addition, a number of

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[16] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Works_Progress_Administration and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civilian_Conservation_Corps.

programs of the National Institute of Corrections train job specialists to work with inmates to help them find and keep jobs. A good deal more should be known about how these programs work and with what outcomes.

And finally, there was some discussion of NRS barriers to serving incumbent workers. One participant said that "some NRS reporting limitations are 'deadly' for incumbent workers, and there is no greater goal than to help undereducated adults in jobs remain employed."   It was suggested that the NRS should add a performance measure under "retained employment" that rewards incumbent workers. Another respondent urged that OVAE should develop/validate work-based outcome measures for inclusion in the NRS.

D. CONCLUSION

This report summarizes and discusses the thinking of a well-informed and deeply experienced group of adult education professionals who bring very different perspectives to the table. In taking on this project, it was CAAL's intent to seek informed judgments from responsible, caring, and authoritative leaders who know the field well and are savvy about the current political and economic contexts in which the field must operate.

As noted at the outset, CAAL believes the key to progress in adult education at this time of scarce resources is to establish clear priorities for change. If adult educators and those with whom they work can focus the resources they have on a discrete number of specific measures, we think it is entirely feasible to "move the needle" toward meaningful change.

In that spirit, CAAL hopes this paper will motivate serious discussion at all levels about next step priorities and how best to make the trade-offs that will be needed to provide effective programs to the greatest number of students. We encourage close attention to the various ideas and suggestions offered, especially those of high convergence in Part B of the paper.

State and local circumstances will necessarily influence whether, when, and to what extent adult educators can adopt the specific suggestions made. But if everyone is traveling in the same direction on the major elements of action—despite the inhospitable economic and political climate of our times—it should be possible to achieve a good deal in the near term and to keep things moving along the track to more comprehensive change in the future.

Finally, we should note that some of the discussion that should take place on the issues presented in *Scarce Resources* is not likely to occur unless it is sponsored by activities and funding designed to encourage and support those discussions.   We hope that national adult education entities, government agencies, the business community, and philanthropic leaders will look for opportunities to do just that, and that they will do this with a strong sense of urgency and national purpose.

APPENDIX I: SURVEY QUESTIONS

In carrying out this assignment for CAAL, please keep the context stated above in mind and review the following CAAL assumptions about the near future. Then, please respond to as many of the questions posed below (e-mail will be fine) that you feel you can answer with authority and insight. Please focus on what you realistically think we can achieve in the near term, and on only a few priorities, guided by the certainty that to make progress across the field hard choices will have to be made.

Assumptions For the Next 2-3 Years:

1. There will probably be little net increase in Title II funding for adult education, and there are likely to be funding reductions for Title II and for adult education in the states.

2. Title I job training programs will hopefully be at least level funded, although this is presently uncertain, perhaps permitting more contracting opportunities with Title II agencies.

3. When WIA is reauthorized, there will continue to be a separate title of grants for states for adult education with likely adjustments in design to reflect the need for such things as alignment in programs and planning, additional outcome goals of readiness for admission to college and to jobs, and collaborative planning that takes account of local and regional labor market needs.

4. A new version of the GED will be introduced in 2014 based on the Common Core Standards for math and English, as presently adopted by the K-12 system and linked to readiness standards for postsecondary education and for careers.

5. The nation will be in the grip of high unemployment, which means that there will be a substantial number of unemployed people in need of services as they look for jobs. In the current economic climate, service programs that provide opportunities for reaching unemployed persons may find their access to public funds improved.

6. Family-sustaining jobs will require both high basic skills and highly specialized/certified or credentialed occupational and possibly job-specific skills.

7. The number of adults with limited English proficiency, especially those with low skills levels as well, will continue to be about the same in the foreseeable future.

8. Adult education teachers and program managers, though called upon to provide new skills services to more adults and new population groups, will have pretty much the same skills and credentials/certifications that they have now – unless significant professional development options can be provided.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Strengthening and Targeting Program Services

Question 1a: Do you think adult education programs should change their dominant service model from open entry/open exit and tutoring to a greater emphasis on high intensity instruction and support services/counseling that serves fewer or different types of students? Would such a change be justified? If not, why not?

Question 1b: What 2-3 near-term changes in policy and practice should be made to enable programs to help more students with very low basic skills (below the Intermediate level) pursue career pathways to occupational training and other forms of postsecondary education, and why?

Question 1c: What 2-3 steps can programs take in the very near term to adapt some services to the needs of unemployed persons, especially unemployed young adults, and of low-skilled incumbent workers.

Question 1d: What 2-3 steps might be taken, if any, in the present economic climate to improve the skills of adult education teachers and administrators.

Question 1e: As a short-term priority, should adult education develop a "core curriculum" in English and math keyed to the new GED? If so, who should develop that curriculum? If not, why not? What other near-term priority changes should/might be made in curriculum development, e.g., in ESL or numeracy?

2. <u>Strengthening Planning and Collaboration</u>

Question 2: What 2-3 near-term and relatively cost-free steps can states and local programs take to strengthen the role of business in planning and assessing instructional programs, and in bringing other stakeholders to the table? Who needs to do what at the state level, and at the national level, to make this happen on a more widespread basis?

3. <u>Research and Data Collection</u>

Question 3a: What do you think the 2-3 highest priority, near-term research investments should be, and why? What form should that research take, and what type of group (or who specifically) should conduct it?

Question 3b: Every study indicates the need for stronger data collection, and on a longitudinal basis, for both reporting and program development purposes. Can you suggest 2-3 short-term steps at minimal cost to improve data collection at the state and national levels?

4. **Tapping the Potential of Technology**

Question 4: What 2-3 priority steps can be taken in the near term, if any, to capture more of the potential benefits of technology for instruction? Please be specific regarding the form of technology you have in mind and the purpose to which it would be put.

5. **Creative Funding**

Question 5a: What 2-3 suggestions do you have on what adult education can do to supplement the resources it receives from government on a large enough scale to bring about substantial increases in the number of adults served and/or the quality and nature of service? For example, charging students for some services, increased contracting between Title I and II programs or with business, seeking business funding support for collaborative planning and assessment activities at the local and state levels. (*Illustrative Example: If 3 million students were charged $20-$40 upon enrollment, this would yield a $60-$120 million fund for program improvement. These are not trivial amounts. Fees for contract students could generate even more.*)

Question 5b: The National Commission on Adult Literacy recommended creation of an *independent* National Training Trust Fund, to be financed through a partnership of public, private philanthropic, and business interests. The Fund might serve as an entity to finance adult education and workforce skills development activities that are job or occupation directed. Do you think this is a good idea? If so, can you give us some specific suggestions on next steps to more fully develop the idea?

6. **Other**

If there are 2-3 high priority suggestions you want to make in some area not covered above, feel free to make them briefly below, being as specific as possible and indicating why you think it is important.

APPENDIX II: SURVEY RESPONDENTS

John Comings
Policy Advisor on Reading, Research, and Evaluation
USAID (Agency for International Development)
(Former Director, National Center on the Study
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Washington, D.C.

Mary Ann Corley
Principal Research Analyst
American Institutes for Research
Washington, D.C.

JoAnn Crandall
Professor of ESOL/Bilingual Education
Director, Ph.D. Program in Language, Literacy & Culture
University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC)
Baltimore, MD

Sharon Darling
President & Founder
National Center for Family Literacy
(Member, National Commission on Adult Literacy)
Louisville, KY

Amy Ellen Duke-Benfield
Senior Policy Analyst
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Brooklyn, NY

Cheryl Feldman
Director
District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund
Philadelphia, PA

Marshall Goldberg
Sr. Consultant, Labor Management Workplace Education
University of Massachusetts—Amherst
(Past President & Executive Director,
Association of Joint Labor/Management Educational Programs)
High Bridge, NJ

Debra Jones
Dean, Career Education Practices Unit
California Community College Chancellor's Office
(former State ABE Director)
Sacramento, CA

Cheryl King
Retired President, Kentucky Wesleyan College
Former Commissioner and Deputy Secretary,
Kentucky Cabinet for Workforce Development
(Study Director, National Commission on Adult Literacy)
Louisville, KY

Robert Hughes
Associate Professor of Adult Education
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Seattle, WA

Kris Deckard
Executive Director
Ready Indiana
Indianapolis, IN

Karen Liersch
State Director, Adult Education Services
Arizona Department of Education
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Lennox McLendon
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National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium (NAEPDC)
National Council of State Directors of Adult Education (NCSDAE)
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Garrett Murphy
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David Rosen
President
Newsome Associates
Jamaica Plain, MA

Barry Schaffer
Supervisor, Adult Basic Education
Minnesota Department of Education
Roseville, MN

Kevin Smith
Deputy Commissioner,
Adult Education & Workforce Development
New York State Education Department;
(Former Director, NYS Literacy Volunteers)
Albany, NY

Stephen Steurer
Executive Director
Correctional Education Association
Elkridge, MD

Andy Tyskiewicz
Director of Community Education
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Peter Waite
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Randy Whitfield
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APPENDIX III: ABOUT THE AUTHORS

GAIL SPANGENBERG, President and Founder, Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy. From 1993-2001, Ms. Spangenberg was President of Spangenberg Learning Resources, which conducted policy analysis, project and program planning and evaluation, research, and other activities for education, philanthropy, arts, and government groups. Independent studies completed include a study and report under Library of Congress auspices (*Even Anchors Need Lifelines: The Role of Public Libraries in Adult Literacy* (1976), and a one-year assessment of needs in adult literacy and the feasibility of creating a blue-ribbon commission on adult literacy (funded by the Carnegie Corporation and the Ford Foundation, 2000-01). From 1983 to 1993 she served as Operating Head of the Business Council for Effective Literacy, the national operating foundation established by McGraw-Hill Chairman Emeritus, the late Harold W. McGraw, Jr. BCEL played a central leadership role in creation of the National Institute for Literacy and the National Literacy Act of 1991 and received the White House Literacy Honors Award for its achievements. She is a former board member of the National Coalition for Literacy and was a member of the National Committee of NALS (the National Adult Literacy Survey). In 1983, Ms. Spangenberg was Director of an Independent Task Force Study (with Frank Keppel) for the New York State Regents External Degree and College Proficiency Examination Programs. From 1965 to 1981, she was a Program Consultant, Program Officer, and Assistant Program Officer at the Ford Foundation where she directed U.S. and European grant programs in educational technology, open learning and nontraditional education, adult literacy, and urban higher education. She also initiated Ford's attention to the role of women within the Foundation and in its external grant programs. Between 1976 and 1981 she was Senior Consultant, Carnegie Corporation (adult literacy); Consultant, Educational Facilities Laboratory (CUNY governance, funding, facilities—with Harold Howe II for Mayor Ed Koch); and Senior Advisor to President Jay Iselin, Educational Broadcasting System (a study of converting municipal broadcast facilities into a citywide open learning system—for Mayor Abe Beame).

FORREST P. CHISMAN, Vice President, Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy. He has consulted in the fields of human resource development, community colleges, health care, and philanthropy. From 1988-1997, he was President of the Southport Institute for Policy Analysis. Earlier he was Director of the Project on the Federal Social Role (a bipartisan group of 150 prominent scholars, public officials, and other leaders investigating future directions for federal social policy). From 1977-1981, he was Deputy Administrator for Policy of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. Previously he was Deputy Director of the Aspen Institute's Program on Communications and Society, and Senior Program Officer of the John and Mary Markle Foundation. He received his BA from Harvard and his doctorate from Oxford. He has written numerous books, articles, and reports on a wide range of public policy issues. Among them is the award-winning Jump-Start: The Federal Role in Adult Literacy (1989), which proposed extensive changes in federal adult education policy, including specific recommendations for ESL. From 1992-1993 he directed a comprehensive Southport Institute study of adult ESL in the U.S. The results were published as ESL and The American Dream (co-authored with Heide Spruck Wrigley) in 1997. He also authored Leadership for Literacy (Jossey-Bass, 1990), with chapters on ESL and related matters. He has directed CAAL's work in ESL and transitions for many years.