

***Reach Higher, America***  
***Overcoming Crisis in the U.S Workforce***

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# Bloomberg

More Than Half of U.S. Workers Lack Basic Education, Study Says  
2008-06-26 16:29 (New York)

By John Taddei

June 26 (Bloomberg) -- More than half the U.S. workforce lacks the education and skills needed for jobs that can support a family, a commission found, urging that Congress and states set aside more money for adult education and training.

Those workers, about 90 million, didn't graduate from high school or attend college, couldn't speak English adequately, or had no access to training in special skills, the National Commission on Adult Literacy, an independent panel, said in a report released today. The share of 25- to 34-year-olds without a high school diploma exceeded the share of those 45 to 54.

The U.S. lost more than 4 million manufacturing jobs in the past decade according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and baby boomers, the generation born from 1946 to 1964, are starting to retire. The New York-based commission, a panel of labor and business leaders formed two years ago, said Congress should increase annual spending to \$20 billion by the end of the next decade for adult education and skills training, about five times the level under existing programs.

"Americans are particularly struggling in those growing areas of our economy that now require more than a high school diploma," said Cheryl D. King, a former state official in Kentucky and incoming president of Kentucky Wesleyan College, in an interview yesterday. "What we've been overlooking in this country for years is the significant adult populations of our workforce that simply lack the basic skills to succeed in a 21st-Century economy."

## Education Levels Declining

The U.S. is the only nation among 30 free-market democracies where a lower percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds have received high school diplomas than 45- to 54-year-olds, the commission said. More than 1.2 million young adults -- one in three -- drop out of high school each year, the commission said.

"Young Americans now are the first generation in American history to be less educated than the previous generation," said

King, the director of the study.

About 155 million people belonged to the U.S. workforce in May, the Labor Department reported earlier this month. The unemployment rate increased to 5.5 percent from 5 percent, the biggest jump in more than two decades, as more teen-agers applied for jobs. Factories, builders and retailers axed workers.

Spending \$20 billion a year on training would serve 20 million people a year, up from about 3 million now. Current spending is under Titles I and II of the current Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

Representative Patrick Kennedy, a Democrat of Rhode Island, will sponsor legislation to increase the number of adults enrolled annually in education and job training programs such as GED, English language proficiency and workplace certification classes.

David A. Perdue, former chairman and chief executive officer of Dollar General Corp., based in Goodlettsville, Tennessee, chaired the commission. Dollar General, a chain of discount general stores mostly in the U.S. Midwest and Southeast, provided most of the financing for the report, giving \$1 million, according to a commission statement.

## **Adult Education Overhaul Urged to Serve More in Need**

WASHINGTON, June 26 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- A study from a blue ribbon panel calling for sweeping changes in adult literacy and basic education programs "deserves urgent attention from Congress and the new administration," said David C. Harvey, president and CEO of ProLiteracy, the nation's largest adult literacy organization.

"We applaud this critically important study at a time when the U.S. economy is hurting, a debate is raging about the role of immigrants in the U.S. workforce, and unemployment is on the rise," Harvey said. "With 30 million adults in immediate need of literacy and adult basic education, the U.S. is at risk of becoming a second-rate economy."

The report, *Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce*, is the result of two years of study by the National Commission on Adult Literacy, an independent panel of leaders from labor, business, government, education, literacy, and philanthropy. The report recommends new legislation to provide reading, writing, math, and English language instruction to people who are unemployed, low-skilled workers, immigrants, and high school dropouts. It recommends that Congress commit \$20 billion by the year 2020.

"ProLiteracy urges that any such legislative reform address the needs of adults across the continuum of adult literacy and basic education -- from the very newest readers to those who are struggling to earn a GED or ready to transition to a community college or vocational program," Harvey said.

The most recent survey of adult literacy skills in the United States indicated that 30 million people over age 16 have difficulty with daily tasks such as reading directions on a medicine bottle or understanding the main facts in a short newspaper article. The effects of low literacy ripple throughout the U.S. economy and impact health care costs, children's literacy, and crime.

"Many adults who are most in need of literacy and basic education services are outside the workforce, but they need to read to make good health and financial decisions, too," Harvey said. "ProLiteracy will work to make sure there is support for adult literacy and basic education programs that serve every adult who needs them."

Reaction from David C. Harvey, President/CEO, ProLiteracy Worldwide to *Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce*, the report of the National Commission on Adult Literacy:

"It's about time the issue of adult low literacy and its crippling affect on all aspects of life in the U.S. is getting the attention it deserves. Recommending change is one thing, however, and

implementing change is another. The real test of this country's commitment to a crisis not just in our workforce, but in our communities, and in families as well will be what happens in the follow-up -- drafting legislation and then stewarding that proposed bill through Congress and the appropriations process. ProLiteracy will do everything it can to support implementing change."

"There's a great deal in this report for ProLiteracy to support -- more money for programs, more adult learners getting instruction, Pell grants so adult learners can move on to college, incentives to businesses that help incumbent workers get basic instruction. ProLiteracy is ready and willing to do what it can to help make these things happen; however, there are some recommendations that need some additional thought and more discussion so that we don't lose the good work and lessons learned by the existing network of people and programs who have been working with adult learners for years. For example:

-- The Commission calls for a "redefining" of the fundamentals of adult education and setting standards for teachers -- who will be involved in creating the language and standards for these? ProLiteracy supports representation from all types and sizes of adult education and literacy service providers, not just those programs receiving state and federal funds.

-- Will focusing on the needs of the unemployed and measurements based on numbers of GEDs earned, adult learners admitted to college, or jobs obtained make it more difficult for those outside the workforce to get instruction; the grandfather who wants to learn to read a bedtime story to his grandchild, for example, or the elderly woman who wants to make an informed decision in the voting booth? ProLiteracy considers reading, writing, and math skills to be basic human rights and necessities for success in today's world.

"ProLiteracy offers to assist those continuing the Commission's work to ensure that a new adult education system meets the needs of adult learners at all levels -- from those not yet ready to prepare for a GED to those transitioning into college -- and that there be fair and equitable access to resources for the many different programs that serve them."

"ProLiteracy certainly supports the Commission's recommendations that call for expanding services so more students can be served -- as long as programs can be supported with the financial resources and qualified instructors they'll need to meet new demand.""

"We support the use of Pell Grants to support adult learners' efforts to further their education and earn the postsecondary degrees that are critical to getting jobs in today's environment that pay a living wage."

"ProLiteracy supports the Commission's recommendations that incentives be given employers who provide basics skills training for incumbent workers. Our network of local literacy providers are ready, willing, and able to work with employers in their communities to help workers gain the skills they need to do the jobs they have today and to prepare for the jobs that will need to be filled tomorrow, but we often find that we can't engage the employers in such programs. It is our hope that tax credits, using unemployment insurance tax money to fund employer-based programs, and matching grants to groups of employers with similar needs will encourage business and industry to partner with adult literacy programs for everyone's benefit."

## About ProLiteracy:

ProLiteracy promotes literacy in the context of people's daily lives -- at home, at work, and in the community -- through education, training and technical assistance, publications, research, policy development, and advocacy. ProLiteracy works with adult new readers and learners, and in partnership with local, national and international organizations, including volunteer-based literacy programs and the traditional adult basic education system, and agencies specializing in workforce readiness, health literacy, and English as a second language. ProLiteracy has member programs in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Internationally, ProLiteracy works with 125 nongovernmental agencies in 65 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East.

ProLiteracy supports adults and young people in the U.S. and internationally who are learning to read, write, and do basic math by training instructors, publishing instructional materials, and advocating for resources and public policies that support them. ProLiteracy represents more than 3,000 organizational and individual members in the U.S. and works with 125 nongovernmental agencies in 65 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. The sale of materials produced by ProLiteracy's publishing division, New Readers Press, support its programs and services. For more information, please go to [www.proliteracy.org](http://www.proliteracy.org) and [www.newreaderspress.com](http://www.newreaderspress.com).

For more information, please go to [www.proliteracy.org](http://www.proliteracy.org).

## July 3, 2008 - Letter to the Editor

Let's hope the sidebar accompanying your Cover Story ("Job One for McCain or Obama: Jobs") is correct in stating that whoever wins in November, "Washington will likely try to do something to get factory jobs growing." But the proposals mentioned in the article for strengthening the competitiveness of American manufacturing require us to pay greater attention to upgrading the skills of our workforce. This is an area in which the U.S. has a growing competitive disadvantage.

The need for greater skills was recently highlighted by a report from the National Commission on Adult Literacy, an independent panel of labor and business leaders. It revealed that 85 million to 90 million American adults (about half of our workforce) do not have the skills to function well in the global economy or to earn family-sustaining wages. Such a trend may be explained by the fact that, alone among advanced industrial countries, American 25-to-35-year-olds are not as well educated as their parents.

The commission (on which I serve) recommends enacting a new Adult Education & Economic Growth Act that would increase the number of adults served by federal and state literacy programs from today's 3 million to 20 million by 2020. Congressmen Patrick J. Kennedy (D-R.I.) and Rubén Hinojosa (D-Tex.) have announced that they will introduce this legislation.

China and India are trying to improve their workers' skills and knowledge (and thus, their incomes). Their objective is to accelerate the transition from low-wage competition to winning a larger share of the market for high-value-added products. They seem to understand, better than we do, that this is not possible without a well-trained and educated workforce.

Ray Marshall  
U.S. Labor Secretary, 1977-81  
Professor Emeritus,  
Economics & Public Affairs  
University of Texas Austin



## **Our View: U.S. needs to focus on education**

1 July 2008

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Education has received plenty of attention in the Twin Counties for much of the past decade. Business leaders, legislators, churches, parents and more have generated good ideas and emphasized again and again how important it is to our economy and to our future.

It's a discussion that must continue if we're to improve the quality of worker and life in our community. That goes for the rest of the country, too, as a new study points out in alarming detail.

A report from the National Commission on Adult Literacy shows the education level of adults in the United States is actually worsening. The U.S. is the only country among 30 free-market democracies where a lower percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds have graduated from high school than 45- to 54-year-olds.

That doesn't bode well for our economy or our future. As huge economies such as India and China continue to strengthen, the competition for smart, resourceful workers is only going to intensify.

The best, highest-paying jobs will go to the areas with the smartest workers. Unless the United States figures out a way to reverse the course we're sailing, we will devolve even further into a service-oriented economy.

There aren't any easy answers. Politicians will no doubt look for ways to hold teachers and administrators more accountable. Education leaders will no doubt ask for more money. Everyone will remind us that education starts at home.

It's a shame to see a country as rich as ours struggle to graduate students at the most basic level. We have to do better than this.

# The Dallas Morning News

ROBERT MILLER

BUSINESS

LIFT turning page on illiteracy

ROBERT MILLER

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1,039 words

6 July 2008

The Dallas Morning News

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The issue of illiteracy is of dire consequence on both the local and national scene.

Just last month, a report from the **National Commission on Adult Literacy** stated:

"Education drives the economy. Almost a decade into the 21st century, America faces a choice: We can invest in the basic education and skills of our workforce and remain competitive in today's global economy, or we can continue to overlook glaring evidence of a national crisis and move further down the path to decline."

Call it clairvoyance or the desire to create a more perfect community: As far back as 1960, the National Council of Jewish Women's Greater Dallas Section began a project that it labeled Operation LIFT, or Literacy Instruction for Texas.

The president at the time was Pat Peiser, who serves on the LIFT board today.

The concept percolated for a year as the program became reality.

Sonyia Hartwell, current executive director, reports that "for six months, three times each week, The Dallas Morning News ran half- and quarter-page ads with coupons for teachers' and students' registration. WFAA-TV and KERA-TV agreed to run a TV literacy teaching series at 6 a.m. and 4 p.m. five days each week.

"The project became a citywide effort. Classes began on June 5, 1961, with 250 volunteers, 150 from NCJW, and served 600 students during the first year.

"NCJW won the very first Dallas Times Herald Club of the Year Award for Operation LIFT in 1961."

The next year, NCJW turned the program over to become a community- sponsored organization.

LIFT relies on a dedicated force of more than 500 volunteers to teach the 150 adult literacy

and English as a second language classes offered at 39 sites in Dallas, Tarrant and Collin counties, said Leslie Clay, director of community development.

"Volunteers commit to teaching at least two hours a week for 12 weeks," Ms. Clay said.

And more than 80 percent of them come back each year.

"Many volunteers have been giving their time to LIFT for 10 years or more," she said.

Ms. Clay said the women of the Junior League of Dallas are longtime supporters of LIFT, supplying more than 10 volunteers each year.

Maureen Milligan is one of those volunteers, she said.

She's been teaching adult literacy classes for a year - continuing the teaching experience she began as an educator in inner-city Washington, D.C., with Teach for America.

"For Maureen, the most rewarding part of her volunteer experience is knowing that she is changing lives," Ms. Clay said.

High demand, rewards

Each of the five adult learners in Ms. Milligan's class, which she teaches as a team with Valerie Ness, keeps a journal, Ms. Clay said.

"One of the adult learners, who works in the juniors department of a local department store, wrote in her journal that she wanted to be able to read her Bible and read to her grandchildren," she said.

"Just a few weeks ago, this adult learner shared with the class the joy she felt when she was able to read along in her Bible with her pastor and understood the passage. She now aspires to be a writer herself. Maureen's students are committed to completing the course they have begun."

In 1993, LIFT moved to the Wilson Historic District; 10 years later, it moved to its current space at 2121 Main St.

Growth in the number of participants has been phenomenal.

Between 2004 and the end of 2007, the number of adult learners participating in LIFT programs increased by 292 percent, from 2,103 to 6,141, and it continues to increase.

For the 12-month period ending this past April, LIFT has served 6,317 students. Of those, 1,418 were in adult literacy, 4,018 were in English as a second language classes, and 881 were enrolled in family literacy programs.

In 2003, LIFT received a grant from the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy for its family literacy programs.

An exemplary record

Ms. Hartwell, the executive director, explained the criteria LIFT has put in place:

Classes are free and meet for two hours twice a week.

Adult learners commit to attending every class, being on time, and calling when they must be absent. Poor attendance may cause participants to be dropped from class.

Potential participants must make an appointment with LIFT for a screening interview.

During that interview, staff members determine the reading level of the participant and gather pertinent contact and background information for the file.

All information is confidential.

LIFT asks that students donate the cost of books they want to keep, take home and write in.

Students may pay weekly or monthly, as they are able. The average book cost for 2008 is \$20.

Ms. Hartwell noted that LIFT's exemplary record has spread far beyond its core area of operation.

LIFT staff members were featured speakers in 2005 at the ProLiteracy Worldwide Conference in Tucson, Ariz., where they presented the innovative and successful Community Partnership Program model.

"This model evolved from LIFT's strategic initiative to work with community partners to establish its classes at partner sites in areas of the community that are currently underserved," Ms. Hartwell added.

For more information about LIFT, its programs, its need for volunteers and applying for participation in its programs, call Leslie Clay at 214-824-2000, ext. 230.

LIFTing literacy

- **\$1,010,034** - budget for 2009
- **106,269** class hours taught
- **6,317** students served in 12 months ending in April
- **1,418** in adult literacy
- **4,018** in English as a second language classes
- **881** in family literacy programs
- **13** full-time and part-time employees

- **37** - average age of students
- **61** percent female
- **39** percent male
- **74** percent Hispanic
- **19** percent African American
- **3.5** percent Caucasian
- **1.5** percent Asian

SOURCE: Operation LIFT

PHOTO(S): (REX C. CURRY/Special Contributor) Katy Abdul-Aziz (center), LIFT learning development coordinator, trains volunteers Sandra McFeeley (right) and Sara Ahr (background) on the New Reader Bookstore software. LIFT's 500-plus volunteers teach 150 classes at 39 sites. CHART(S): LIFTing literacy

# THE HUFFINGTON POST

**David Perdue**

Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce

Posted July 9, 2008 | 11:10 AM (EST)

The National Commission on Adult Literacy recently released its final report, Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce, revealing that between 88 and 90 million adults aren't prepared to meet the demands of today's global economy or secure a family-sustaining wage job. Of the 88 to 90 million adults who have at least one educational barrier to economic success, 18 million Americans don't have a high school diploma, 51 million haven't gone to college, and 18 million aren't proficient in their English language and literacy skills.

Already beyond the reach of schools and lacking the adequate education and skills to obtain a good paying job, our nation's 25 to 34 year-olds are the first generation in U.S. history to be less educated than their parents and unless we do something about it, they face the prospect of a lower standard of living.

To help address these challenges, the Commission recommends enacting a comprehensive new Adult Education and Economic Growth Act, a new domestic "Marshall Plan" that would overhaul and expand adult education and workforce skills training.

As a first step, Congressman Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) announced his intention to introduce legislation to bring about the called-for change, "The National Commission on Adult Literacy's report should serve as a wake-up call for those who do not see a lack of basic skills, education, and job readiness as a major problem and a barrier to our national economic success," said Congressman Kennedy. "I intend to introduce legislation that responds to the specific concerns raised by the Commission and look forward to working with other leaders on this issue to bring appropriate attention to this large and growing problem."

As reported in Reach Higher, America, 24 of the 30 fastest-growing occupations will require workers who possess postsecondary education or training. About 40% of job openings over the next decade will be "middle skill" jobs - or jobs that require more than a high school diploma, but less than a four-year degree.

During a briefing, the Commission, comprised of leaders in business, education, government, and labor- including Bob Bickerton, Senior Associate Commissioner of Education for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; Morton Bahr, President Emeritus, Communications Workers of America; The Honorable Gerald Baliles, Former Governor of Virginia; Sharon Darling, President and Founder, National Center for Family Literacy; Thomas Donohue, President and CEO, U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Honorary Commissioner; Samuel Halperin, Founder and Senior Fellow, American Youth Policy Forum; The Honorable Ray Marshall, Former U.S.

Secretary of Labor; and David Perdue, Former Chairman and CEO, Dollar General Corporation, recommended:

Transforming current programs for adults into a comprehensive, integrated♣ Adult Education and Workforce Skills System that can effectively serve 20 million American adults annually by the year 2020.

Resetting the mission of this new System to attaining readiness for♣ postsecondary and workforce training.

Increasing public investments in the new System reaching \$20 billion by♣ 2020 plus additional support and involvement from philanthropy and business.

Calling for strong bold leadership from state government, especially♣ governors, and business.

Current adult education services reach only 3 million adults annually and were designed for a different time and different challenges. Existing programs cannot meet the urgent national need with our nation's changing demographics. According to Reach Higher, America, 1.2 million young people drop out of high school each year; one in five children live in poverty; one in every 100 adults 16 years and older is in prison or jail; and 50% of entering immigrants haven't completed high school and don't have adequate English language skills.

"If we can make it possible for even 4 million dropouts to earn a high school diploma by 2020, the net fiscal benefit to federal, state and local governments would exceed \$25 billion annually," says Cheryl King, Commission Study Director. "The potential is there to put less stress on our healthcare system with increased health literacy, improve our children's learning through better educated parents, reduce crime and incarceration, increase voter participation, and help all adults in America reach higher."

For a complete list of Commissioners, more information on the details of the Commission's findings, recommendations, and projections, and to get the full report in PDF or hard copy, please reference [www.nationalcommissiononadultliteracy.org](http://www.nationalcommissiononadultliteracy.org).

The National Commission on Adult Literacy is an independent panel of leaders from labor, business, government, education, literacy, and philanthropy. The Commission is managed by the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL), which works to increase business and philanthropic engagement in adult education and literacy, improve federal and state policy, and raise public awareness of the critical importance of the adult learning system to America's future. The Commission's work has been funded by Dollar General Corporation (lead funder at \$1 million), the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the McGraw-Hill Companies, Harold W. McGraw, Jr., the Ford Foundation, and The Joyce Foundation.

# THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR

EDITORIAL

## **We've got to get smart about educating workers**

June 30, 2008

One of the more overused nouns in the English language is the word "crisis." It's slapped - by politicians, policy advocates and the news media - on almost every problem that comes along, seemingly no matter how small-bore or distant. But the National Commission on Adult Literacy wasn't overreaching last week when it released a report with the title "Reach Higher, America: Overcoming crisis in the U.S. work force."

Don't believe us? Consider these facts:

The U.S. is the only nation, among 30 free-market countries that are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in which current young adults are less educated than their parents' generation.

More than 1.2 million teenagers drop out of high school each year. In Indiana, nearly three out of 10 high school students fail to graduate on time.

More than half of the adult work force faces at least one educational hurdle, from lack of a high school diploma to little or no college to poor literacy skills, that blocks moving into the best-paying jobs. Existing adult education programs reach only a fraction of workers who need training to compete in the modern marketplace.

In Indiana, about one in three workers lacks the literacy skills needed to land good jobs.

It's not that the United States isn't producing millions of well-educated workers each year. The nation's university system remains the best in the world. But there is a growing gap between the highly educated and those who lack basic skills. The gap is developing at a time when, more than ever, education is vital to economic and social well-being. In short, we are a nation headed in two directions when it comes to education. Failure to help those on the bottom climb to higher levels will carry a painful price for everyone.

The Commission on Adult Literacy argues that "our failure to address America's adult education and work force skills is putting our country in great jeopardy and threatening our nation's standard of living and economic viability." Again, that's no exaggeration.

To begin confronting these issues in Central Indiana, Indy Reads and The Star's Editorial Board brought together leaders of about 50 community organizations for a Literacy Summit this month. That effort will continue, through a variety of means, in the months ahead.

On the political front, the education level of the work force needs to become a central issue of this year's state and federal races. The nation won't meet the economic challenges ahead unless it enlists and trains a growing army of well-educated workers.

Adult education programs are failing to reach millions of Americans who lack basic literacy or other skills needed to get decent jobs, says a report released Thursday by a national commission charged with studying the issue. “Reach Higher, America: Overcoming the Crisis in the U.S. Workforce” notes that 18 million adult Americans lack high school diplomas, 51 million haven’t gone to college and 18 million aren’t proficient in English. The report, from the [National Commission on Adult Literacy](#), calls for an overhaul of federal programs for adult literacy so that efforts have the explicit goals of either job training or preparation for postsecondary education.

## Incoming President Cheryl King Featured in Bloomberg Article

### More Than Half of U.S. Workers Lack Basic Education, Study Says

2008-06-26 16:29 (New York)

By John Taddei

June 26 (Bloomberg) -- More than half the U.S. workforce lacks the education and skills needed for jobs that can support a family, a commission found, urging that Congress and states set aside more money for adult education and training.

Those workers, about 90 million, didn't graduate from high school or attend college, couldn't speak English adequately, or had no access to training in special skills, the National Commission on Adult Literacy, an independent panel, said in a report released today. The share of 25- to 34-year-olds without a high school diploma exceeded the share of those 45 to 54.

The U.S. lost more than 4 million manufacturing jobs in the past decade according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and baby boomers, the generation born from 1946 to 1964, are starting to retire. The New York-based commission, a panel of labor and business leaders formed two years ago, said Congress should increase annual spending to \$20 billion by the end of the next decade for adult education and skills training, about five times the level under existing programs.

"Americans are particularly struggling in those growing areas of our economy that now require more than a high school diploma," said Cheryl D. King, a former state official in Kentucky and incoming president of Kentucky Wesleyan College, in an interview yesterday. "What we've been overlooking in this country for years is the significant adult populations of our workforce that simply lack the basic skills to succeed in a 21st-Century economy."

### Education Levels Declining

The U.S. is the only nation among 30 free-market democracies where a lower percentage of 25- to 34-year-olds have received high school diplomas than 45- to 54-year-olds, the commission said. More than 1.2 million young adults -- one in three -- drop out of high school each year, the commission said.

"Young Americans now are the first generation in American history to be less educated than the previous generation," said King, the director of the study.

About 155 million people belonged to the U.S. workforce in May, the Labor Department reported earlier this month. The unemployment rate increased to 5.5 percent from 5 percent, the biggest jump in more than two decades, as more teen-agers applied for jobs. Factories, builders and retailers axed workers.

Spending \$20 billion a year on training would serve 20 million people a year, up from about 3 million now. Current spending is under Titles I and II of the current Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

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**Panel: Overhaul adult education: Owensboro's Cheryl King part of national group**

By Joy Campbell  
27 June 2008

Jun. 27--Cheryl King of Owensboro was among a group of national leaders calling for a complete makeover of the country's adult education and work force skills training systems at a news briefing Thursday in Washington, D.C.

Fortunately, many of the recommendations already are in place in Owensboro and Daviess County, King said in a phone interview.

The National Commission on Adult Literacy released its final report, which includes a call for the federal government to pass a comprehensive Adult Education and Economic Growth Act.

King, who starts her new duties as president of Kentucky Wesleyan College in July, directed the commission's two-year study. She led Kentucky's adult education department for nine years, from 1996 to 2005.

"I think Owensboro has been a leader in this area for years, and today we're even stronger with so many groups focused on education," King said. "What we've done with the commission is look at it on a national level. It will take planning at the local level that will ultimately make a difference."

King said the Citizens Committee on Education and the Regional Alliance for Education (P-16 Council) have brought together representatives from education, government, the private sector and foundations.

Those kinds of partnerships also are recommended in the study.

"It's going to take a monumental effort nationally and support from all of us in understanding that education is something we do throughout our lives -- it doesn't end with a high school diploma," she said. "The world requires us to be learners throughout our lifetimes."

Nearly 90 million American adults are unprepared to get a "family-sustaining wage job," and all of those individuals have at least one educational barrier, the report says.

The report, "Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce," states that 24 of the 30 fastest-growing jobs will require workers who have some postsecondary training.

About 40 percent of the job openings over the next decade will require more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree. About 18 million Americans without high school diplomas will be left out of those "middle skill" jobs if something isn't done, the report finds.

Another 51 million Americans haven't gone to college, and 18 million need more work on their English language and literacy skills.

Owensboro is much better positioned to address the adult education and work force issues than many communities, said Nick Brake, president of the Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corp.

The region has a big advantage in Owensboro Community & Technical College's position as the adult education provider, he said.

"They're reaching out, not just to get students to earn GEDs, but also to provide work force preparation and connect adult learners with opportunities for jobs," Brake said.

The community's economic development alignment with education and The Learning Community initiative also are pluses, he said.

"We do have a lot more to do, though," Brake said.

He points to an aging work force as a regional concern. As workers retire, it becomes more critical for those remaining and entering to have the education and training for the emerging jobs.

"Another issue worth paying attention to is the number of high school dropouts," Brake said. "We're doing better in this area than some, but we still have students who are disengaged."

Local plant managers also have literacy issues with their work force, Brake said.

The commission recommended overhauling current adult ed programs to reach 20 million adults by 2020. The goals will require public investment of \$20 billion by 2020 on top of philanthropic and business support.

"We need to set state goals that are consistent with federal goals and measure them over time," King said. "If we do this, our return on the investment will be much greater than the cost."

Owensboro benefits from having education on city and county governments' agendas and from OCTC's leadership in adult education, King said.

Kentucky, as a state, also has begun to align its priorities, said Cindy Fiorella, OCTC's vice president of work force and economic development, and the co-chairwoman of the P-16 Council.

"We've identified strategically through linkages that we need public and private partnerships to reach our work force development goals," she said. "Owensboro, specifically, has been moving in that direction for a while, and to see our random acts of progress move into systemic progress is pretty exciting."

Fiorella said she also was excited to read the study recommendations, especially the call for alignment of federal and state education programs.

The participation of national corporations and CEOs on the commission "will lend even greater strength to the study," she said.

Congressman Patrick Kennedy, a Democrat from Rhode Island, attended the commission's briefing and announced that he will introduce legislation to respond to the recommendations.

Colleges and universities have a role to play in the recommended changes for adult education, King said.

"(KWC) will be at the table helping Owensboro and Daviess County, the region and state meet the goals of adult education," she said.

Get the report "Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce" at [www.nationalcommissiononadultliteracy.org](http://www.nationalcommissiononadultliteracy.org).



**EDITORIAL: More progress needed in adult ed: Editorial**

McClatchy-Tribune Regional News

3 July 2008

Jul. 3--It feels good to be out in front of a national issue.

Last week at a Washington D.C., news briefing, leaders of a national panel called for a complete makeover of this country's adult education and work force skills training programs.

Owensboro's own Cheryl King, the new president of Kentucky Wesleyan College and a career educator with tremendous expertise and experience in adult education, was among those leaders. King actually directed the two-year study undertaken by the National Commission on Adult Literacy.

On the national level, much needs to be done to improve the earning ability of Americans by eliminating education barriers. The commission's report states that nearly 90 million adults in the United States can't land a "family-sustaining wage job" because they all have at least one educational barrier. For them, the future is bleak because, according to the report, 24 of the 30 fastest-growing jobs will require training beyond a high school degree.

About 18 million U.S. adults do not have a high school diploma at a time when about 40 percent of future job openings will require more than a high school diploma. Another 51 million adults stopped their education upon graduating from high school. With no post-secondary education, their earning ability will also be seriously limited.

This community has been hammering away at improving the educational level of its residents for years. The local Citizens Committee on Education has for nearly three decades set a course for strengthening higher education and was among those leading the charge for the establishment of what is now Owensboro Community & Technical College.

More recently, the Regional Alliance for Education (P-16 Council) has brought together representatives from education, government, the private sector and foundations to place even more emphasis on the need for adults to continue learning throughout their lives. The Learning Community initiative is another indicator of the community's determination to make education a top priority.

In fact, if the nation undergoes an overhaul of adult education programs as the commission recommends, programs in place in Owensboro-Daviess County may actually serve as a model.

Before we get too self-congratulatory, however, this community still has way too many residents

without a high school diploma, far too many students who drop out of high school every year and not enough people with either a two-year or four-year college or university degree. Owensboro is Kentucky's third- largest city, but it doesn't compare well with counties with public four-year universities when it comes to the higher education attainment level of its residents.

Those failings are hurting the community. While there are good things going on in education locally, with more improvements on the way with a new campus for Western Kentucky University on the horizon, Owensboro-Daviess County can't afford to let up in the quest to have a better educated work force.

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## **“Reach Higher, America” report released today**

Posted Thursday, June 26th, 2008 at 11:40 am and is filed under Features.

This morning, [The National Commission on Adult Literacy](#) released the [Reach Higher, America](#) report on the crisis and solutions for adult education and workforce preparation. I serve as one of the commissioners and was honored to present at the event held today in Washington, D.C.

*Reach Higher, America* confirmed what we in the family literacy movement have long understood...*low literacy is a primary factor that leads to an unskilled workforce that isn't prepared for 21st century jobs.*

The report

- documents the adult education and skills crisis facing American workers;
- proposes a fundamentally new approach to adult basic education and workforce skills in America;
- and lays out the fiscal and social benefits that will result from substantially increased public expenditures for programs and services.

This is a kind of “domestic Marshall plan” for meeting workforce education needs, including recommendations for state government, business and labor, philanthropy, and the general public.

Unless the nation gives a much higher priority to the basic educational needs of the workforce, America’s standard of living, its status as a leading world power, and its very social fabric will be further eroded.

If you would like to read *Reach Higher, America* report, click [here](#). In case you don’t have time to read the whole report today, there is an executive summary in the front (pgs. v-viii).

After looking over the findings, please post a comment sharing your thoughts about the report and any further suggestions you have on improving adult literacy.

New national adult literacy report supports state recommendations of Written by Press Release  
Thursday, 26 June 2008

June 26, 2008 (INDIANAPOLIS) — Statement from Indiana Chamber Senior Vice President Mark Lawrance on today's release of Reaching Higher, America, a report by the National Commission on Adult Literacy:

“The comprehensive Reaching Higher, America report is a significant research project with bold recommendations to better prepare our country's workforce for the 21st century. It urges overhauling and expanding adult education and workforce skills training. That is what the Indiana Chamber has been advocating for in Indiana, as highlighted in our two recent reports on this area (including this year's Indiana's Adult Education and Workforce Skills Performance Report).

“It recommends that states should legislate authority for coordination and alignment of systems consistent with their postsecondary education, workforce and economic development goals. In some cases, a cross-agency planning body already exists, and in others it may need to be created. While there is presently no cross-agency authority in Indiana, this is worthy of doing, as it will allow for better coordination of efforts and allow for more effective use of funds with a better coordinated system.

“The report also strongly encourages states to invest in the skills of their workers so that increased productivity helps offset the effect of low-cost labor furnished by developing countries. Businesses must be an active partner in this effort. (The work of the Indiana Chamber and the business community in creating the Ready Indiana online resource portal was highlighted on page 27 of the Reaching Higher, America report.)

“With much of the funding for state workforce programs originating with federal programs, we hope that the recommendations from the report will be implemented by Congress. To better prepare our current workforce to compete globally, it's imperative that this happens.”

The Reaching Higher, America report is available at [www.nationalcommissiononadulthoodliteracy.org](http://www.nationalcommissiononadulthoodliteracy.org). The Indiana Chamber's 2008 Indiana's Adult Education and Workforce Skills Performance Report) is online at [www.indianachamber.com/adulthoodeducation](http://www.indianachamber.com/adulthoodeducation).

# Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Report calls for \$20 billion for adult literacy  
Friday, June 27, 2008  
By Anya Sostek,

The United States needs a major overhaul in adult education and work force training if it hopes to reverse a decline in adult literacy, said a report released yesterday by the National Commission on Adult Literacy.

The report -- the product of two years of research and hearings -- calls for new federal legislation and funding to serve 20 million people by 2020.

"This is of monumental importance to our country and it's urgent," said Cheryl King, study director and former commissioner of adult education and work force development in Kentucky. "This is not an issue that can wait another 10 years for resolution."

The United States is unique among the world's most developed nations in actually losing educational momentum, said the report. Among the 30 countries that are members of the Organization for Cooperation and Development, the United States is the only country where the younger generation (adults 25 to 34) has a lower percentage of high school diplomas than the older generation (ages 45 to 54).

"Countries other than the U.S. do a lot better job with adult literacy than we do," said Don Block, executive director of the Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council. "They don't seem to draw this line at age 18 or high school completion."

Out of an adult population of about 222 million, the 2005 National Assessment of Adult Literacy found that 30 million Americans scored "below basic" on a literacy test, and another 63 million did not have adequate literacy to enroll in postsecondary education.

"This is a staggering problem, and it is growing," Ms. King said.

The federal government currently spends about \$4 billion to serve 3 million people, she said.

The report calls for a "Marshall Plan" in the form of an Adult Education and Economic Growth Act that would ramp up spending to \$20 billion by the year 2020 to serve 20 million adults.

The new system would coordinate and renovate the array of disparate federal literacy programs under the Department of Education and Department of Labor that currently have different standards for eligibility and reporting systems.

The report divided those in need of adult education into several different categories: the unemployed; low-skilled incumbent workers; immigrants with no or limited English; parents or

caregivers; incarcerated adults; high school dropouts; and high school graduates unprepared for college.

Each group should have specific recommendations written into the new law, advised the report, so that each gets the necessary attention.

Mr. Block, who attended the presentation of the report yesterday in Washington, D.C., cautioned that literacy should not just be seen as a means to workforce development.

Between 3,000 and 4,000 people use the Literacy Council's services every year, he said, many seeking further education in order to help their children with their schoolwork.

"The reasons are quite broad," he said. "They have to do with family, parenting, citizenship, and also employment, but it's broader than just jobs."

EDITORIAL

## SCARY READ AMERICA NEEDS A MARSHALL PLAN FOR LITERACY

June 30, 2008

Once again, America is an educational trailblazer. Unfortunately, it isn't blazing trails in a direction we would prefer.

According to a recent study by the National Commission on Adult Literacy, the United States has produced 30 million citizens who have scored "below basic" on literacy tests, with another 63 million unprepared for the rigors of postsecondary education.

The report, released Thursday, said the United States is the only country among 30 of the world's most developed in which the younger generation (adults age 25 to 34) has a lower percentage of high school diplomas than the older generation (ages 45 to 54).

To arrest the erosion of adult literacy, the commission called for a "Marshall Plan" that would ramp up spending for literacy programs to \$20 billion by 2020. Twenty million adults would be served by this new effort. It includes overhauling, updating and bringing into agreement the disparate standards of federal literacy programs now administered by the Departments of Education and Labor.

The reforms must go beyond the narrow (though important) needs of work-force development because the decline of adult literacy has profound implications for the nation, its politics and our standard of living. It is as much a disaster and drain on society's resources as a botched war.

At one time, the United States had one of the most literate populations in the world. Now we're in the unenviable position of being a country where adult illiteracy is growing despite broad access to education by even the poorest of our citizens.

The National Commission on Adult Literacy didn't mince words in its gloomy assessment. To ensure an adult literacy rate that is consistent with American aspirations and values, the nation will have to spend billions more than it does now.

Some will argue that \$20 billion is excessive. Whatever the final price of education reform, it will be worth it if it means Americans can once again reclaim a spot among the world's most literate.

# The Republican.

NEIGHBORHOODS PLUS  
**MARIE P. GRADY**

MARIE GRADY

1,003 words

9 July 2008

The Republican

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In a career spanning two decades in the Massachusetts House, Tom Petrolati has probably chewed on hundreds of political courses at dozens of legislative breakfasts.

Sometimes as many as four can be scheduled in one day by various interest groups vying for the ear of the Ludlow Democrat, who is speaker pro tempore of the House. So, when Petrolati was invited to attend an event at the Ludlow Area Adult Learning Center last Feb. 1, it was anyone's guess whether his schedule would allow it.

But there he was, arriving in the winter chill to celebrate a donation by Citizens Bank to the community education program offered by Holyoke Community College. A month later he was in downtown Springfield at another legislative breakfast that promoted the importance of literacy in building a better workforce.

Why? Because, as Petrolati related in Ludlow on that cold February day, he was more moved by a 2007 legislative breakfast featuring adult learners than almost any of the breakfasts he has attended in his political career.

Petrolati was among champions of literacy personally thanked by students at that 2007 legislative breakfast. So was state Sen. Michael R. Knapik, a Westfield Republican who has long supported literacy programs as a member of the powerful Ways and Means Committee. Both used their leadership positions to help stave off massive cuts to adult education in 2007 and both are among the reasons state funding for adult education this year stands to grow by about \$1 million to \$31 million.

In the world of politics, adult education has not exactly been a hot button constituent issue, especially at a time when citizens are struggling with astronomical gas prices and a recession that looms like a storm cloud. But years of inadequate funding for literacy services have now paid off in a workforce that lacks the education and skills to help businesses grow. Lawmakers know that when the economy doesn't grow, we all suffer.

As chairwoman of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons With Disabilities, state Rep. Cheryl A. Coakley-Rivera gets it, too. The Springfield Democrat was among co-sponsors of an amendment filed by state Rep. Daniel T. Bosley, D-North Adams, to increase funding for adult education to \$35 million. Other Western Massachusetts representatives who signed on in

support were longtime literacy supporter John W. Scibak, D-South Hadley; Christopher J. Donelan, D-Orange; Peter V. Kocot, D-Northampton; Stephen Kulik, D-Worthington; Angelo J. Puppolo, D-Springfield; Ellen Story, D-Amherst; Joseph F. Wagner, D-Chicopee, chairman of the Joint Committee on Transportation; and James T. Welch, D-West Springfield.

Coakley-Rivera also attended the March 7 legislative breakfast on literacy sponsored by the "Building a Better Workforce Coalition," a coalition of partners brought together by the Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation. Others there included state Sen. Stephen J. Buoniconti, D-West Springfield, and state Reps. Puppolo; Donald F. Humason Jr., R-Westfield; and Rosemary Sandlin, D-Agawam.

A visit to one of the many open houses held in adult education centers this time of year offers a glimpse of what's at stake. At the Valley Opportunity Council's open house in Chicopee last month, students from ages 18 to over 60 sampled foods from Polish pierogis to Spanish rice while displaying their newfound skills. Some, like Vladimir Tartakovsky, took lessons at the center to improve his English. Once a dermatologist in Russia, he is now a medical interpreter who volunteers his time to teach others.

Janet Gottsman has struggled over the years to get her GED but now is looking forward to starting a college level course at Holyoke's Care Center in September. Jane Baatz, executive director of the Chicopee program, said waiting lists have swelled for GED classes and federal funding does not cover advanced English classes needed for many to move into open jobs or college classes. Among those concerned enough about the situation to visit with students that night was Thomas Moriarty, Hampden County Register of Probate and a member of the Hampden County Literacy Cabinet.

While adult education dollars still serve only a fraction of the need statewide, a new report by the **National Commission on Adult Literacy** calculates their public payoff. The net fiscal impact for federal, state, and local governments if 400,000 adults earn a high school diploma is estimated to be \$2.5 billion per year. By 2020, if 4 million dropouts earn a high school diploma, that figure exceeds \$25 billion annually.

The U.S. is now the only nation among 30 free-market countries where young adults are less educated than the previous generation, according to the June report. One out of three of our children don't graduate from high school and 88 million adults - more than half the current work force - face educational or language barriers.

While Congressmen John W. Olver and Richard E. Neal are asked to turn the tide in Washington, lawmakers like Petrolati and Knapik are lending their powerful voices to this urgent need at home. Other literacy supporters have included state Reps. Stephen M. Brewer, D-Barre; Michael F. Kane, D-Holyoke; Todd M. Smola, R-Palmer; Benjamin Swan, D-Springfield; Mary S. Rogeness, R-Longmeadow; and state Sens. Gale D. Candaras, D-Wilbraham, and Stanley C. Rosenberg, D-Amherst.

In a previous career as managing editor of The Republican, I sometimes had to explain to angry lawmakers that public figures don't always get to escape criticism or hard-hitting reporting. That

comes with the territory. But what should also come with the territory is an appreciation when they take a stand that builds a better future for all of us.

So, to all the lawmakers who have supported literacy, thank you.

Marie P. Grady is director of the Literacy Works Project of the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County, Inc. She can be reached at [mgrady@rebhc.org](mailto:mgrady@rebhc.org) or at (413) 755-1367.



## **National Literacy Report: Over Half of Current Workforce Needs More Skills for U.S. to Compete**

Last month, the National Commission on Adult Literacy released its landmark report, *Reach Higher, America*, which finds that 90 million American adults are not equipped to meet workforce needs. Noting that two-thirds of future workers are out of the reach of the K-12 system and that the largest portion of the nation's jobs are middle-skill, the report calls on the U.S. to "bring adults back into the education system and put them on track to earning certificates and degrees, and to qualifying for jobs at family-sustaining wages."

In a press release about the report, Andy Van Kleunen, Executive Director for The Workforce Alliance, commented on why the Commission's vision falls squarely within the Skills2Compete vision which calls for a 21st-century skill guarantee that includes basic skills education. Read what Van Kleunen and others had to say about the report.

### **How's this for depressing news**

The [National Commission on Adult Literacy](#) brings you this nugget of gloomy news to start your day: Nearly 90 million adults in the United States aren't prepared for jobs in the global economy or for jobs that pay well enough to support their families, according to a [report](#) the group is releasing today.

More specifically, 18 million don't have high school diplomas, 18 million aren't proficient in English and 51 million haven't gone to college. Meanwhile, 40 percent of the new jobs in the next decade will require "middle skills" – meaning more than a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree.

Among other changes, the group says part of the solution is a total revamp and massive expansion of adult education. The report "should serve as a wake-up call for those who do not see a lack of basic skills, education and job readiness as a major problem and a barrier to our economic success," U.S. Rep. Patrick Kennedy, D-Rhode Island, said in a press release.

- Ron Matus, state education reporter

## Readings on education

09 Jul 2008 06:41 am

My column on America's educational assets—diminishing relative to those of other countries, and maybe in absolute terms as well—yielded some suggestions for further reading. Of the ones I've had a chance to look at so far, I recommend the following.

Roger Pielke Jr (author of "Honest Broker: Making Sense of Science in Policy and Politics") directs me to his observations on a new Rand report on competitiveness, which suggests that the situation is far from desperate. I agree, of course: I wasn't describing an imminent crisis, but a slowly developing threat to future American growth. Roger also notes that intelligent discussion of this issue is more difficult than it need be because of lack of reliable data (a point I touch on, in referring to the debate over high-school graduation rates). This is true, he says, of many issues at the intersection of technology and policy.

Gail Mellow, president of LaGuardia Community College, also sent me a couple of very interesting documents: "Each and All: Creating a Sustainable American Higher Education System" (a lecture to the American Council on Education; look at the charts on page 7), and "Reach Higher, America" (a report from the National Commission of Adult Literacy).

My friend Frank Vogl, publisher of EthicsWorld and a trustee of the Committee for Economic Development, pointed me to this CED paper from 2005, "Cracks in the Education Pipeline".

Incidentally, Ben Wildavsky at the Kauffman Foundation also drew my attention to this education blog (which I hadn't seen before: Ben says it's good, and I shall read it from now on). It links to my column and asks, before going on to make a couple of fair points, whether I'm anti-American.

Please! I'm an ardent Americanophile and indeed a would-be American--all the zeal of a convert, as my (American) wife will confirm.

## **Report: U.S. falling behind in education**

Published: June 27, 2008 at 12:46 AM

WASHINGTON, June 27 (UPI) -- The United States is falling behind other developed countries in the education of its workforce, with a growing literacy gap, a report released Thursday said.

The National Committee on Adult Literacy said the United States is the only country among the 30 in the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development in which the most recent generation of adults is less well educated than its predecessor. The United States is also falling behind in the numbers of high school diplomas and college degrees awarded.

The United States scores near the top among OECD countries in numbers of well-educated people and in numbers of uneducated ones. Blacks, Hispanics and American Indians are disproportionately concentrated at the low end.

The country also has a "staggering" high school drop out rate, with one-third of young adults leaving school without graduating.

The committee called on Congress to adopt a new adult literacy program with adequate funding.

NEWS

If you can read this . . .

454 words

9 July 2008

USA Today

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At a time when only a quarter of college graduates rate "proficient" in literacy skills on federal reading surveys, it's no surprise that employers are struggling to find workers with the reading and writing skills they need.

About half of current workers test at literacy levels low enough to impede their progress on the job, according to a report released last month by the **National Commission on Adult Literacy**.

More troubling, the problem could be getting worse. A recent study found the United States to be the only country among 30 studied where young adults are less well-educated than the previous generation was.

So it came as a surprise last week when House and Senate committees axed a \$1 billion-a-year program that has produced measureable success in attacking the problem at its roots. Called Reading First, it funnels money to schools that use early-grade reading programs demonstrated to work.

Literacy problems often start in homes lacking an emphasis on reading and writing, but over the past decade, much has been learned about how to compensate.

The results were summed up in 2000 by the congressionally sponsored National Reading Panel. It called for teaching an approach rooted in something familiar to many older people today -- phonics - - but taught in a new way developed in large-scale medical style experiments. It gives students precise skills in a specific, structured way.

So why is the program in jeopardy? The chairmen of the committees that did the cutting, Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, and Rep. David Obey, D-Wis., declined to write opposing views for this page to defend their actions. Their press statements cite mismanagement and ineffectiveness.

To be sure, the program has had management problems. Some managers have bullied state education officials and others. But that's all correctable.

Ineffectiveness, however, has not been proven. At the schoolhouse level, many educators praise the program. State reading directors usually report success. In a 2006 study by the Center on Education Policy, an independent advocacy group for improving public education, 19 of the 35 states reported strong backing for Reading First.

To the extent that criticism is justified, it's that the program focuses too much on the mechanics of decoding words and too little on comprehension. But users of the Core Knowledge curriculum pioneered by E.D. Hirsch, a former University of Virginia English professor, have already conquered that problem. These Core Knowledge students use phonics to learn to read, then marry the phonics with real-world knowledge to understand the meanings of the text.

Reading First needs adjustment, not elimination. The USA has too many literacy problems to pull the plug on a valuable program.

## ED REVIEW, JULY 2

2 July 2008

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WASHINGTON, July 2 -- The U.S. Department of Education issued the following newsletter:

### NCLB Update

Yesterday (July 1), at the Education Commission of the States' National Forum on Education Policy, Secretary Spellings announced that Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, and Ohio have been approved to participate in the Department's differentiated accountability pilot program. No Child Left Behind currently treats all schools in improvement alike. The pilot allows states to vary the intensity and type of interventions to match the academic reasons that lead to a school's identification for improvement. And, in states with a large percentage of schools identified, it allows officials to target interventions and resources to schools most in need of reform. The Department received 17 state proposals. A peer review panel evaluated the proposals against core principles and priorities (set out in agency guidance). After considering the peers' comments, the Secretary approved these six proposals. "The plans these states submitted speak to the fact that many were among the first to embrace data-based decision-making and accountability," she explained. "I'm hopeful that they will build on this progress, by creating effective new strategies that we can share and take to scale. However, I'm also discouraged that more states didn't take this as an opportunity to take more dramatic action to improve schools that have not met reasonable goals for multiple years running. We need more states to be pioneers in advancing positive change." The Department intends to invite additional state proposals in the fall. For more information, please go to <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2008/07/07012008.html>.

Expanding on a similar study from last year, the Center on Education Policy (CEP) found that reading and math achievement has increased since 2002 (when the No Child Left Behind Act went into effect) and achievement gaps between subgroups of students have narrowed. Indeed, in reading, 17 of 28 states made moderate-to-large gains in the percentage of students scoring proficient at the elementary level, while 14 states recorded such gains in middle school and eight states recorded such gains in high school. Likewise, in math, 21 of 27 states made moderate-to-large gains in the percentage of students scoring proficient at the elementary level, 22 states recorded such gains in middle school, and 12 states recorded such gains in high school. (The number of states included varies depending on the trend being referenced. CEP excluded state data from years that should not be compared because a state introduced a new test, changed the passing score on its test, or made other major test changes.) In general, although proficiency gains on the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tended to be smaller, the overall trends on state tests and NAEP moved in the same direction. For example, in fourth-grade math, of 33 states with sufficient data, 31 recorded gains on both assessments.

Moreover, achievement gaps between white and minority students have narrowed more often than widened. For example, in elementary reading, the proficiency gap between white and black students narrowed in 13 states on state tests, while it widened in only one. The study's authors were careful not to credit any particular initiative for these positive trends, praising local, state, and federal reforms. For more information, please go to [http://www.cep-dc.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=document\\_ext.showDocumentByID&nodeID=1&DocumentID=241](http://www.cep-dc.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=document_ext.showDocumentByID&nodeID=1&DocumentID=241).

In a recent letter to Congressional appropriators, Secretary Spellings argued against the "zeroing out" of the Reading First program. As evidence, she presented state-reported performance data indicating impressive gains in reading comprehension-with improvements in nearly every grade and subgroup of students. For more information, please go to <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2008/06/06232008.html>.

#### Military Children Pact

On June 25, at the Pentagon, Deputy Secretary of Education Ray Simon and Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between their agencies that addresses the quality of education and the unique challenges faced by children of military families. Hundreds of thousands of students in military families will be affected by moves precipitated by recent Base Realignment and Closure Act decisions and the relocations of military units from overseas bases to stateside installations as part of global defense posture realignment moves. The MOU generally defines how the entities will work together with school districts to strengthen and expand school-based efforts to ease student transitions and help students develop academic skills and coping strategies during parental deployments. Of the nation's 1.2 million school-age military students, only 8% attend Defense-run schools; the overwhelming majority attend America's public and private schools. For more information, please go to <http://www.defenselink.mil/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=12014>.

#### Evaluating Online Learning

This week, the Department's Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII) released the latest guide in its "Innovations in Education" series: "Evaluating Online Learning: Challenges and Strategies for Success." The guide highlights seven evaluations that address a broad spectrum of online learning options, from programs that provide online courses to web sites that feature education resources. These evaluations help to hold programs accountable for results and can assist schools in identifying whether online programs and resources are performing as promised (identifying critical areas for improvement). For more information, please go to <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/academic/evalonline/>. (For an archived webcast discussing the guide, see <http://evalonline.ed.gov/>.)

Other new, insightful publications:

\* "Trends Among High School Seniors, 1972-2004" (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2008320>)

\* "National Indian Education Study-Part II" (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/nies/>)

\* "Technology-Based Distance Education Courses for Public Elementary and Secondary Students: 2002-03 and 2004-05" (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2008008>)

\* "Biennial Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Title III State Formula Grant Program: School Years 2004-06" (<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/title3biennial0406.pdf>)

\* The final report of the National Commission on Adult Literacy, "**Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce**" (<http://www.nationalcommissiononadultliteracy.org/report.html>)

### Student Loan Access

The Department's Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) has developed a new web site to publish and disseminate information about the agency's authority to purchase federal student loans under the Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act. The latest post-a Federal Register notice-outlines the final terms and conditions under which the agency will buy loans made by lenders who are unable to sell them to other investors. The terms are consistent with those the Department unveiled in May, as part of a broader, four-part plan (<http://www.ed.gov/students/college/aid/loans.html>) to ensure students will be able to access federal student loans in the 2008-09 academic year. Want more details? FSA is facilitating a series of live, Internet-based briefings (or webinars) on the Department's purchasing authority and, specifically, the plan to implement that authority. For more information, please go to <http://federalstudentaid.ed.gov/ffelp/>.

### Administrative Items

President Bush has announced his intention to nominate Holly Kuzmich to be Assistant Secretary for Legislation and Congressional Affairs and Christopher Marston to be Assistant Secretary for Management. Kuzmich currently serves as Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and Programs at the Department. Previously, she served as Associate Director of the Domestic Policy Council at the White House. Earlier, she served as a professional staff member on the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP). Marston currently serves as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Process Improvement of the Office of Management at the Department. Previously, he served as White House Liaison at the Department of the Interior. Earlier, he served as Washington Office Director for the State of Ohio. For more information, please go to <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2008/06/06252008.html> and <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2008/06/06252008a.html>.

Meanwhile, over the last two weeks, the Department made a number of substantial grant awards, including the Partnerships in Character Education Program

(<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2008/06/06202008a.html>), the Arts in Education-Model Development and Dissemination Grant Program (<http://www.ed.gov/programs/artsedmodel/awards.html>), the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program (<http://www.ed.gov/programs/elseccounseling/awards.html>), the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) (<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2008/07/07012008a.html>), and the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative (<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2008/07/07022008.html>). Also, the Department's Office of Special Education Programs' National Technical Assistance Center selected six states with which it will work to expand promising, evidence-based practices (<http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2008/06/06202008b.html>).

BuildingChoice.org is a web-based toolkit for district administrators and others seeking to improve or expand public school choice options for students, parents, and teachers. Providing access to information about the initiatives profiled in OII's "Innovations in Education" guides and/or funded by the agency's Voluntary Public School Choice Program, the web site features descriptions of key practices, examples of district materials, and downloadable tools in five essential areas: Building a Vision; District Operations; Communication with Parents; Supporting Schools; and Evaluation and Improvement. The site is regularly updated with additional choice sites, more resources, and details on other public school choice options (charter schools, supplemental educational services, virtual schools, etc.). For more information, please go to <http://www.buildingchoice.org/>.

#### Quote to Note

"With No Child Left Behind, we know what's working in schools and what's not and where students are falling behind. We've reached an important crossroads. Will we leverage the information we have to challenge the fundamental structures, customize instruction, and use time and people more effectively? Or will we go back to the ostrich approach-sticking our heads in the sand while problems multiply? Instead of turning our backs on students and teachers, we must defend the core principles of accountability. And we must use data and research to create innovative solutions to our most pressing problems."

- Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings (7/1/08), at the Education Commission of the States' National Forum on Education Policy.

## **New National Study Highlights Crisis in American Workforce Readiness**

**WASHINGTON, June 26 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ --** A study from a blue ribbon panel calling for sweeping changes in adult literacy and basic education programs "deserves urgent attention from Congress and the new administration," said David C. Harvey, president and CEO of ProLiteracy, the nation's largest adult literacy organization.

"We applaud this critically important study at a time when the U.S. economy is hurting, a debate is raging about the role of immigrants in the U.S. workforce, and unemployment is on the rise," Harvey said. "With 30 million adults in immediate need of literacy and adult basic education, the U.S. is at risk of becoming a second-rate economy."

The report, *Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce*, is the result of two years of study by the National Commission on Adult Literacy, an independent panel of leaders from labor, business, government, education, literacy, and philanthropy. The report recommends new legislation to provide reading, writing, math, and English language instruction to people who are unemployed, low-skilled workers, immigrants, and high school dropouts. It recommends that Congress commit \$20 billion by the year 2020.

"ProLiteracy urges that any such legislative reform address the needs of adults across the continuum of adult literacy and basic education -- from the very newest readers to those who are struggling to earn a GED or ready to transition to a community college or vocational program," Harvey said.

The most recent survey of adult literacy skills in the United States indicated that 30 million people over age 16 have difficulty with daily tasks such as reading directions on a medicine bottle or understanding the main facts in a short newspaper article. The effects of low literacy ripple throughout the U.S. economy and impact health care costs, children's literacy, and crime.

"Many adults who are most in need of literacy and basic education services are outside the workforce, but they need to read to make good health and financial decisions, too," Harvey said. "ProLiteracy will work to make sure there is support for adult literacy and basic education programs that serve every adult who needs them."

Reaction from David C. Harvey, President/CEO, ProLiteracy Worldwide to *Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce*, the report of the National Commission on Adult Literacy:

"It's about time the issue of adult low literacy and its crippling affect on all aspects of life in the U.S. is getting the attention it deserves. Recommending change is one thing, however, and implementing change is another. The real test of this country's commitment to a crisis not just in our workforce, but in our communities, and in families as well will be what happens in the follow-up -- drafting legislation and then stewarding that proposed bill through Congress and the appropriations process. ProLiteracy will do everything it can to support implementing change."

"There's a great deal in this report for ProLiteracy to support -- more money for programs, more adult learners getting instruction, Pell grants so adult learners can move on to college, incentives to businesses that help incumbent workers get basic instruction. ProLiteracy is ready and willing to do what it can to help make these things happen; however, there are some recommendations that need some additional thought and more discussion so that we don't lose the good work and lessons learned by the existing network of people and programs who have been working with adult learners for years. For example:

-- The Commission calls for a "redefining" of the fundamentals of adult education and setting standards for teachers -- who will be involved in creating the language and standards for these? ProLiteracy supports representation from all types and sizes of adult education and literacy service providers, not just those programs receiving state and federal funds.

-- Will focusing on the needs of the unemployed and measurements based on numbers of GEDs earned, adult learners admitted to college, or jobs obtained make it more difficult for those outside the workforce to get instruction; the grandfather who wants to learn to read a bedtime story to his grandchild, for example, or the elderly woman who wants to make an informed decision in the voting booth? ProLiteracy considers reading, writing, and math skills to be basic human rights and necessities for success in today's world.

"ProLiteracy offers to assist those continuing the Commission's work to ensure that a new adult education system meets the needs of adult learners at all levels -- from those not yet ready to prepare for a GED to those transitioning into college -- and that there be fair and equitable access to resources for the many different programs that serve them."

"ProLiteracy certainly supports the Commission's recommendations that call for expanding services so more students can be served -- as long as programs can be supported with the financial resources and qualified instructors they'll need to meet new demand.""

"We support the use of Pell Grants to support adult learners' efforts to further their education and earn the postsecondary degrees that are critical to getting jobs in today's environment that pay a living wage."

"ProLiteracy supports the Commission's recommendations that incentives be given employers who provide basics skills training for incumbent workers. Our network of local literacy providers are ready, willing, and able to work with employers in their communities to help workers gain the skills they need to do the jobs they have today and to prepare for the jobs that will need to be filled tomorrow, but we often find that we can't engage the employers in such programs. It is our hope that tax credits, using unemployment insurance tax money to fund employer-based

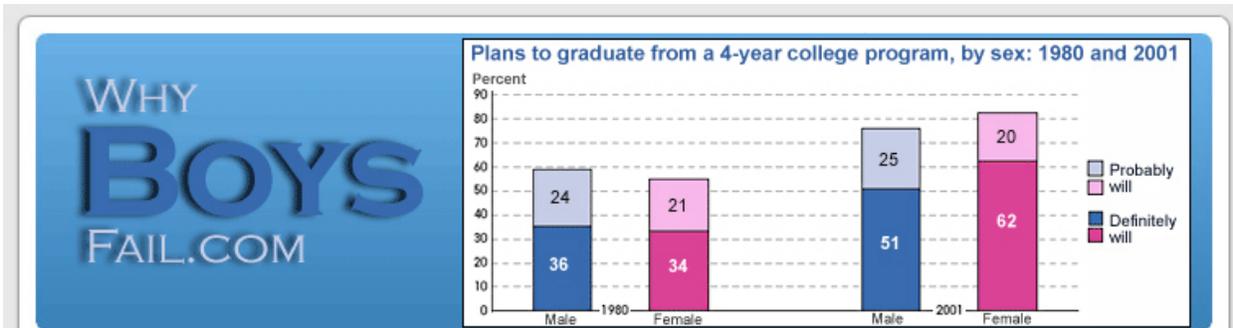
programs, and matching grants to groups of employers with similar needs will encourage business and industry to partner with adult literacy programs for everyone's benefit."

#### About ProLiteracy:

ProLiteracy promotes literacy in the context of people's daily lives -- at home, at work, and in the community -- through education, training and technical assistance, publications, research, policy development, and advocacy. ProLiteracy works with adult new readers and learners, and in partnership with local, national and international organizations, including volunteer-based literacy programs and the traditional adult basic education system, and agencies specializing in workforce readiness, health literacy, and English as a second language. ProLiteracy has member programs in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Internationally, ProLiteracy works with 125 nongovernmental agencies in 65 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East.

ProLiteracy supports adults and young people in the U.S. and internationally who are learning to read, write, and do basic math by training instructors, publishing instructional materials, and advocating for resources and public policies that support them. ProLiteracy represents more than 3,000 organizational and individual members in the U.S. and works with 125 nongovernmental agencies in 65 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. The sale of materials produced by ProLiteracy's publishing division, New Readers Press, support its programs and services. For more information, please go to [www.proliteracy.org](http://www.proliteracy.org) and [www.newreaderspress.com](http://www.newreaderspress.com).

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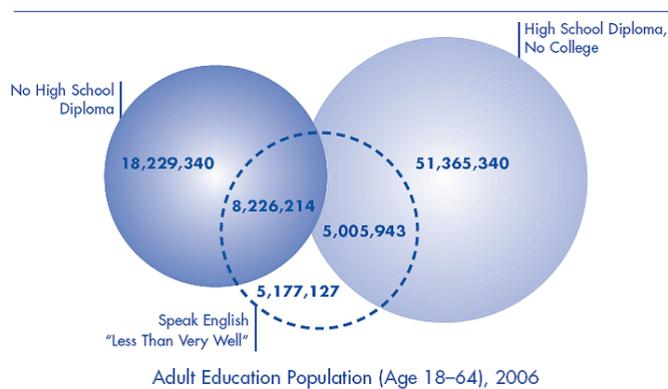
**Nation! (think Colbert here....) – Richard Whitmire blog**

We has a literacy problem! So says a new [report](#) on adult literacy released Thursday:

*America is losing its place as a world leader in education, and in fact is becoming less educated. Among the 30 OECD free-market countries, the U.S. is the only nation where young adults are less educated than the previous generation. And we are losing ground to other countries in educational attainment. More and more, the American economy requires that most workers have at least some postsecondary education or occupational training to be ready for current and future jobs in the global marketplace, yet we are moving further from that goal. By one set of measures, more than 88 million adults have at least one major educational barrier-no high school diploma, no college, or ESL language needs. With a current U.S. labor force of about 150 million(16 and older), a troubling number of prime working age adults likely will fall behind in their struggle to get higher wage jobs, or to qualify for the college courses or job training that will help them join or advance in jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage.*

Here’s the cool graphic that goes with that:

**Figure 1**  
88 Million Adults Have At Least One Education Barrier



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey (Public Use Microdata Samples); prepared by National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). Unduplicated population = 88,005,964.

If that's true, and I think it is, then surely Congress is moving with dispatch to ensure school districts use reading programs based on actual research, as opposed to programs teachers like because, well, they've been comfortable with them for years. Not so. Instead, Congress is poised to [wipe out](#) the \$1 billion-a-year Reading First program, not because it was ineffective but because it was run by sometimes-bullying true believers.

Well, I never much cared for Larry, my neighborhood bully, either, but is it really right to respond by pulling the reading rug out from under thousands of poor children who appear to need the kind of highly structured reading programs the bullies were pushing? Oh wait, the House and Senate have reasons for their actions; they have *research* showing the program was not effective.

Remember former WPostie Karin Chenoweth, whose book about schools serving poor and minority children that are succeeding I recommended a couple of days ago? Well, my timing is great ... she just did an [analysis](#) of that research. Chenoweth is a shoe-leather reporter; she both gets out of the office *and* crunches numbers. I trust her assessment of the research:

*If this were a medical trial, this would be like comparing two groups of people, both of which had asked for a particular treatment. One group gets the treatment and results are compared to the second, control, group, and the treatment is declared to have no effect. But - and this is the important part - members of the second group are never asked whether they went to the drug store and bought the generic version of the treatment. They could all have been using substantially the same medicine.*

Translation: The comparison group used to conclude Reading First was ineffective was, well, ineffective. I vote for Karin and against both chambers of Congress.

I know what you're wondering: **What the hell has this got to do with boys?**

Ok, I hear you. First, check the graphic atop my blog. Then read About the Blog. Literacy issues, I believe, are at the root of what's limiting those higher education ambitions we're seeing among boys. We don't know how to teach reading, and it's affecting boys more than girls. They can't compete, so they withdraw into video games and other distractions.

If Reading First is truly ineffective, and I don't believe that's the case, then let's re-do the [National Reading Panel](#) that settled on the phonics-heavy Reading First strategies while keeping current reading programs at full strength. If the review calls for changes, then make them. But don't kill the program based on this research. This is too important an issue to get wrong.



WGCL-AM, 1370 AM broadcasting to the Indianapolis, IN area

**The Afternoon Edition with Darryl Neher, Weekdays 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM**

Bloomington, IN's daily call-in show. Darryl Neher deals with local issues and local guests.

July 8, 2008, 4:00 PM

Live Interview with Cheryl King



WJLA-TV, ABC News broadcasting to the Washington D.C. area



Leon Harris, news anchor for WJLA-TV, moderated the Commission's June 26<sup>th</sup> Final Report release event. WJLA-TV covered the event and Mr. Harris's participation.