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The Year 1998 in Review

Volume 1: Chapter One

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The year 1998 was one of immense change for adult learning and literacy, as significant new legislation was passed and the field headed more deeply into the mainstream. Along with these developments came greater demands for program accountability, expanded strategic alliances and partnerships, new instructional methodologies, changes in public policy, and advancements in technology that change the nature of the teaching-learning experience for both teachers and learners.

ADULT LEARNER DEMOGRAPHICS

The number of adult learners enrolled in programs funded by the Adult Education Act (AEA, as amended by the National Literacy Act of 1991) reached more than 4 million in 1997. (Comparable data for 1998 was not available when this chapter was prepared.) Since 1994 there has been a steady increase in the number of adults attending classes in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), signifying a significant demographic shift in service delivery: the number of ESOL students served (39 percent of the total) is now almost equal to that of adult basic education (ABE) students served (38 percent of total; the balance consists of enrollees in adult secondary education; see Exhibit 1.1). The "big five" ESOL states of California, Florida, Illinois, New York, and Texas enroll 82 percent of the ESOL population (Elliott, 1998). Although these five states account for most of the numerical increase in ESOL students, every state has made percentage gains in services to this population group, marking a migration in service toward the ESOL target population.

Of all students served, most were under the age of forty-five. More than one-third (37 percent) of all enrollees were between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four (see Exhibit 1.1). A majority of enrollees (54 percent) were female. As of 1997, about 11 percent of all adult education students lived at or below the poverty level, and 1 percent of enrollees were in

correctional facilities. Approximately 50 percent of all students were employed (Elliott, 1998).

The primary motivation for enrollment expressed by new students in adult education and literacy programs was to improve their basic skills. Adult learners sought basic skills to get a job, get a better job, prepare for college admission, get a high school diploma or the General Educational Development (GED) credential, or help their children achieve success in school. More than 300,000 (35 percent) did receive a high school diploma or GED, another 300,000 obtained a job or advanced in a job, and 175,000 (4 percent) entered other educational training programs (Elliott, 1998).

The annual expenditure for educating these adults is low in comparison with the costs of educating a child. In 1997, the average amount spent on an adult student was \$300, with half of the states spending between \$150 and \$299 per student (Elliott, 1998). The national average spent on a child was \$3,982, with a range from \$2,974 to \$10,053 (U.S. Department of Education, 1997).

While more than 4 million adults enrolled in classes in 1997, at least another 1 million were on waiting lists. And because every state does not maintain waiting lists, the number of individuals waiting for services was likely greater than the 1 million reported (Tracy-Mumford, 1998). The average wait for a seat to become available in a program ranged from four months to one year. Maintenance of waiting lists generally pays off. The lists tend to garner attention and mobilize support from state policymakers, who sometimes respond with state funds to decrease the number of adult learners waiting for services.

LANDMARK AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT LEGISLATION

After a lengthy four-year process, federal legislation for adult education and employment and training was signed into law, consolidating more than fifty employment, training, and literacy programs, including the Adult Education Act, the National Literacy Act, and the Job Training Partnership Act. Taking into account the relationship between literacy skills and success in the workplace, Congress placed the adult education and employment-training systems in one piece of legislation, although under separate title and governance by Congress (Brustein & Mahler, 1998). The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) is Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

This new legislation calls for the federal government, states, and local jurisdictions to join in a partnership to carry out its mandates. Title II

goals continue to address the broad purposes of adult education, which are to "(1) assist adults in becoming literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency; (2) assist parents in obtaining the educational skills necessary to become full partners in their children's education; and (3) assist adults in completing high school or the equivalent" (section 202). The AEFLA continues many of the provisions of the AEA and maintains adult education as a state grant-operated program, and it considers adult education, family literacy, and English literacy programs to share the same purpose. Most of the AEFLA investment continues to be placed in the state grant program, which now totals \$345 million (Murphy & Johnson, 1998).

Under the WIA, each state is to develop a five-year plan that lays out a leadership strategy to improve its adult education and literacy services. Federal funding will be tied to improvements in services state by state, and both federal and state governments will evaluate a state's progress by monitoring the degree to which it achieves the goals stated in its plan. During the plan development process, state agencies are to consult with adult literacy providers in their states.

States may submit their plans as a comprehensive education plan or as part of a unified workforce development plan. Regardless of the process chosen, Congress wants states to coordinate adult education and family literacy services with employment and training, and it wants the states to be able to track the progress of programs over time.

The WIA in its entirety gives adult education a voice and a vote on newly formed State Workforce Investment Boards. This is the first time that adult education and family literacy are guaranteed a seat at the table where decisions are made about policies and services that affect clients of adult education and job training employment. The WIA also mandates adult education representation on local boards (Murphy, 1998).

Under the AEFLA, the criteria for states to consider in awarding grants to local programs (section 231) place heavy emphasis on capacity to deliver services to adults. The twelve criteria that states must take into consideration in awarding grants or contracts to local providers (see Exhibit 1.2) define a new role for local providers, the state, and the clients served. First, the state and local providers share responsibility in setting and meeting state accountability measures. Second, the local provider establishes a partnership with the learner to achieve results related to skill gains that prepare adults for employment, family responsibilities, and citizenship. Because of these new roles, local program results must be linked directly to state goals and performance measures.

Highlights of the AEFLA

DIRECT AND EQUITABLE ACCESS. States must ensure that all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply for local grants (section 231[c][1]). Steps that states take to ensure that potential providers have the right to apply for federal funds and be treated fairly in consideration of their application for funding (Spiegths, 1998) are to be described in each state plan. Eligible to receive funding are "local education agencies, community-based organizations, volunteer literacy programs, institutions of higher education, public and private non-profits, libraries, public housing authorities, consortia of the organizations listed above, and other non-profits" (section 231). All applicants will be placed "on equal footing ... to compete for funds to provide services that the state has identified that it wants to support," wrote Bill Raleigh, director of government affairs at Laubach Literacy Action, on the National Literacy Advocacy (NLA) listserv.

SET-ASIDES. With the exception of support for corrections education and service to other institutionalized individuals, the AEFLA has no provisions for set-asides (section 225). States may not allocate more than 10 percent of state grant funds for programs in this category, and priority is given to serve individuals who are likely to leave the institution within five years of program participation. No other subpopulation is named to receive specific allocations, and the funding cap for adult secondary education participation was removed.

STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES. A new category of funding included in the AEFLA is state leadership. Although the category is new, the allowable activities are not. Not more than 12.5 percent of the state grant allocation may be used for any or all of the allowable activities, which include professional development, technical assistance, maintenance of literacy resource centers, activities of statewide significance, curriculum development, support services, promotion of linkages with workforce development, and/or development of linkages with postsecondary education institutions (section 223).

As states make the transition from the AEA to the AEFLA, they are confronted with the problem of maintaining current levels of service for professional development and state literacy resource centers with a smaller percentage of funds allowed in this category. Increased funding for federal program year 1999 does not offset the percentage loss of allowable funds that could be used for these services under the AEA. Previously states were required to spend a minimum of 15 percent of the state grant on special projects and training, and many states exceeded that percentage.

ACCOUNTABILITY. The AEFLA obligates states to establish a comprehensive accountability system that will assess continuous program improvement. Three specific indicators of performance are outlined in the law. Core indicators relate to:

1. Demonstrated improvements in literacy skills levels in reading, writing, and speaking the English language, in numeracy, in problem solving, in English language acquisition, and in other literacy skills
2. Placement, retention, or completion of postsecondary education, training, unsubsidized employment, or career advancement
3. Receipt of high-school diploma or equivalent (section 212)

Other indicators that a state adds must be negotiated with the secretary of the U.S. Department of Education (ED).

States are developing indicators and setting levels of performance for each indicator that will be used to measure state progress with guidance from the ED Division of Adult Education and Literacy. Performance indicators are written for three years only. Performance measures for years 4 and 5 will be written later and will be based on agreed-on levels of performance with the ED.

INCENTIVES. The WIA provides for incentive grants to states that exceed adjusted performance levels in Titles I and II and in Perkins Vocational Education. It also gives states the flexibility to expend incentive funds on innovative programs consistent with the requirements of any or all of these three programs. The process a state should use to prepare its application for proposed uses of incentive monies has not yet been determined (Murphy, 1998).

NATIONAL EMPHASIS. Two entities are charged with responsibilities at the national level: the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) and the ED. Allowable funding for each is 1.5 percent of the total appropriation, not to exceed \$8 million.

The NIFL (section 242) was created to provide national leadership regarding literacy, coordinate literacy services and policy, and serve as a national resource for adult education and literacy programs by providing current information to the field related to literacy and supporting the creation of new ways to offer services of proven effectiveness. To meet the purposes of the AEFLA, the NIFL is authorized to do the following:

- Establish a national electronic database
- Coordinate support for the programs and services across federal

agencies

- Collect and disseminate information on methods of advancing literacy that show great progress
- Advise Congress and federal departments and agencies regarding development of policy
- Provide policy and technical assistance to federal, state, and local entities for the improvement of policy and programs relating to literacy, including national organizations and associations
- Encourage federal agencies to support literacy efforts
- Help establish a reliable and replicable literacy research agenda

New legislation continues the NIFL's current work with a refinement of its responsibilities.

The greatest change at the national level is in the leadership provided by the Department of Education. National Leadership Activities replace National Programs. The department is charged with:

- Providing technical assistance to states in developing and using performance measures
- Providing technical assistance for professional development and with developing, improving, identifying, and disseminating the most successful methods and technology for providing adult education and literacy
- Carrying out research, such as establishing the number of adults functioning at the lowest levels
- Developing and replicating model programs, particularly those for the learning disabled, ESOL learners, and workplace populations

A stronger role for the ED is outlined through leadership activities to support states in achieving continuous program improvement. President Clinton's request to increase 1999 funding for National Leadership Activities to \$93 million puts teeth into this stronger supportive role.

Other Legislation Affecting Adult Education and Literacy

Several pieces of legislation directly or indirectly affect adult learners.

THE NATIONAL SCHOOL-TO-WORK ACT. All states receive school-to-work grants as of 1999. Each state grant must have an out-of-school or adult education component. School-to-work connections and alliances are to be made to connect learners with preparation for work. Activities within states include development of career portfolios, career planning, identification of programs of study leading to career paths, employability skills certifications, and work-based learning.

READING EXCELLENCE ACT OF 1998. The America Reads Initiative held a National Reading Summit to highlight the findings of the Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children chaired by Catherine Snow of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The committee, charged with translating research findings into practical application for parents, educators, and publishers of reading texts, found that for children to become effective readers, they need a solid literacy foundation provided in a language-rich home environment. Children in families with an "impoverished language and literacy environment have high incidence of reading difficulties" as they enter school. Access to an early childhood environment that promotes language growth is essential to reading success (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Family literacy was highlighted at the summit as an effective approach that has a positive influence on children and parents. (In Chapter Two Catherine Snow and John Strucker apply the findings of the committee's report to the experience of people who learn to read as adults.)

The Reading Excellence Act will provide grants to state education agencies. In these grants, states must describe how they will promote coordination between literacy programs, including the AEFLA, to increase the effectiveness of services designed to improve the reading skills of adults and children. The act also directs the NIFL, in coordination with the National Center for Family Literacy, to disseminate information on research related to family literacy (Peyton, 1998).

THE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND WORK OPPORTUNITIES RECONCILIATION ACT OF 1996. Since the passage of this act, the adult education and literacy community has been attempting to make sense of the work-first policy that has discouraged and in some cases abandoned adult education in an effort to reform the welfare system. Providers across the nation scrambled to find a way to provide service and put new programs in place. The work-first approach led to decreased participation in adult education classes, and when clients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) did attend, they attended for shorter periods of time and on a part-time basis.

Successful providers adapted to the work-first goal of the welfare reform law, focusing on employment-related goals, hands-on work experience, performance-based outcomes, involvement of private sector employers, early intervention in addressing potential problems in the workplace, job coaches and developers, and extensive support services (Murphy & Johnson, 1998).

AMENDMENTS TO THE HEAD START ACT. The Head Start Act amendments passed in 1998 introduced a formal role for family literacy,

including adult education. To comply with the amendments, local adult education programs must incorporate family literacy services as part of their design. The amendments encourage collaboration and partnership between providers of Head Start and providers of adult education services, and they allow for technical assistance to ensure that additional linkages are made for child development and parent education (Peyton, 1998).

BASIC SKILLS CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS

The mandate in the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act for performance measures has generated new interest in basic skills certification systems. Merrifield (1998) speaks to the importance of building capacity to perform and be accountable. Certification systems are emerging as a vehicle to certify skill gains at levels prior to graduation from high school or the attainment of the GED. In the development process, commonalities and differences have appeared from state to state. Commonalities are found in the purpose for creating certificates, responses from students, alignment with national reporting, and acceptance by the general public and business communities. System differences have emerged in skill areas identified for certification, measures used for skill verification, and methodology used in issuing certificates.

Seven states currently offer basic skills certificates at the state, regional, or local program level. Another thirty states and territories are at various stages of development in creating a basic skills certification system. At the implementation stage, basic skill certificates document the knowledge and skills of adults in any or all of the skill areas of reading, writing, mathematics, employability, and computer literacy (see Table 1.1 for the areas covered by the seven states offering certificates). States and programs using basic skills certification systems have found the system helpful in reporting individual learning gains to students, celebrating learner achievements, documenting program results in basic skills areas, and reporting aggregate program achievement of students to policy makers. Basic skills certificates reward students (and programs) in their quest for excellence and will be helpful to states in documenting attainment of state goals.

For fiscal year 2000, the ED will be recommending new national reporting levels that will articulate learner gains in smaller intervals. Basic skills certificates can be used to verify and document these gains. The two processes of reporting and certifying can work in tandem.

TEACHING AND LEARNING: STANDARDS AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

The production of content standards at the national and state levels is fueling program and curricular changes. While national development of standards for ABE continues, several states have aligned or adopted their state's K-12 standards for adult learners.

National Standards

To ensure a solid foundation for the improvement of adult learning and literacy nationwide, a set of national standards, Equipped for the Future (EFF), has been developed through the National Institute for Literacy. These standards establish the skills that learners must demonstrate across the three adult roles of family member, citizen, and worker and specify the knowledge and skills adults need to be competitive in the global economy. Practitioners from several states are working with the NIFL to gather data and establish specific levels of performance for each standard (Stein, 1997). Many states have embraced EFF as their state's content framework and have written EFF into their state plans for the AEFLA.

The call for ESOL standards is crisscrossing the nation. The group Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) has a standards task force that will roll out new adult ESOL standards at its 1999 national conference. States continue searching for curriculum and appropriate assessments for ESOL.

Literacy Volunteers of America added a new dimension to standards when its board approved program standards to certify volunteer literacy programs. Standards are based on effective program operation and designed to ensure more effective literacy instruction. By June 1999 local affiliates are to have signed an agreement committing themselves to certification. To become certified, programs must meet eighteen qualifying standards in the areas of development, organization, and finance and personnel and must also meet ten of fourteen additional standards in the same three topic areas.

The Correctional Education Association developed standards for quality correctional education programs that have been adopted by the National Corrections Association. Standards certify quality correctional education programs within institutions. Training of certified monitors is taking place to gear up for the anticipated demand for certification by adult and juvenile facilities.

State Standards

The alignment of content standards between adult education and K-12 continues at a state level in California, Delaware, Massachusetts, Texas, and Wisconsin. Alignment of literacy skills with occupational standards

has enormous instructional implications in the new legislation. States are placing a heavy emphasis on SCANS (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) workplace competencies and employability skills. Most southern states have promoted workplace and employment skills as a means of improving the foundation skills of workers as well as the economy itself. These programs have focused on identifying literacy standards that connect learners with the skills they need to become high-performing employees. North Carolina, California, and Massachusetts have begun development of standards or certifications for ESOL, or both.

Curriculum Changes

Under the AEFLA, an expanded list of basic skills has moved the field beyond the Three R's to include spoken English, problem solving, and other literacy skills, such as computer skills and employability skills. States are required to develop core indicators of performance around these skills. Several states are including computer literacy as a basic skill, and many are developing or linking curriculum to employability skills (for instance, reporting to work on time, solving problems, working effectively in groups, finding and keeping a job). Use of the Internet to obtain reliable and accurate information is another new skill to be taught in many adult education programs.

Developing curriculum to match content standards becomes a challenge at the state level. Networks or consortia such as the Adult Numeracy Network and Literacy South are helping to develop curriculum to support skill development.

Methodologies

Legislation speaks to providing classes of sufficient duration and intensity to obtain learning gains and performance outcomes with the expectation that service will vary by type of student served. Customizing instruction for intensity of service is one of the criteria that states must use in awarding local grants. More experiential, contextual, and student performance-based approaches are being introduced into adult education programs. Instructional programs are using a variety of technologies, such as video, the Internet, CD-ROMs, and e-mail, to augment in-class experiences.

Virginia, partnering with Great Britain, has taken off in a unique direction to promote an adult learner project model. This methodology enables the adult learner to identify and document short-term learning needs and gains as opposed to documentation of learning through standardized tests. In the project model, adults identify a specific short-term goal tied to personal need. Instruction is then targeted to the learner's goal and documented when achieved. This model is adaptable to workplace settings where learners have a very targeted, short-term

learning goal linked to success on the job. Extensive work has been devoted to this instructional practice, and exchange visits to and from England are moving the project forward. (For an overview of the adult basic education system in the United Kingdom, see Chapter Seven.)

Use of Technology in Instruction

New paradigms for when and where adults can learn have broadened perspectives on access to previously unserved populations and new instructional delivery models. For years postsecondary education has capitalized on distance delivery. No longer is a fixed time, place, or single location the norm for adult learning. The new reality is that learning takes place anytime, anyplace, anywhere. Several states, companies, and organizations have invested in distance-learning programming for adult literacy learners. KET, PBS, and Intelcom are offering or developing programs for distance delivery in GED (KET), ESOL (Intelcom), employability skills (KET/PBS), and family literacy (Intelcom). Cyber high schools for adults are operating in Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Minnesota, and Nebraska.

Providers of distance learning offer learners access both synchronously and asynchronously. Learning environments are customized to accommodate the diversity of learners, learning styles, and learning needs. Some models are self-contained, and others extend classroom learning time. Live programming for workplace skills and basic skills is used in New York, California, and Washington, which have special funding allocations for technology innovation. Star Schools projects funded by the ED have jump-started other distance delivery models, such as Project Class in Nebraska and the PBS LiteracyLink project. Project Class received funding to develop distance-learning high school courses on the World Wide Web, and PBS LiteracyLink has received funding to design an on-line instruction site for adult learners.

As distance learning and on-line learning methodologies capture the attention of more adult educators, it will be important to address critical questions about the infrastructure needed to sustain the system, the skills that instructors need, the instructor-learner interaction, and the matching of content with the most appropriate technology (software and other materials) (Neeley, Niemi, & Ehrhard, 1998). As one writer on distance learning said, "We must not forget that education is a social process, not purely a technological one, as we continue to utilize the increasing array of electronic devices for asynchronous and synchronous learning" (Charp, 1998). (For related information and resources, see Chapter Eight and the Resources section.)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

New legislation, content standards, technology, and contextual approaches to learning are driving instructional change, and instructional change is driving professional development. Knowledge of new approaches and flexibility in delivery is essential to implementing new methodologies. Changes in the delivery system point to a massive recommitment from adult educators to become and remain current.

The hallmark of adult education instructional staff is their dedication to and support of students, a vital quality that must not be lost as the delivery system evolves. Professional development on the scale outlined by the changes described for adult education will take time, effort, and financial commitment. Financial commitment and teacher certification may put more full-time instructors in adult education programs, one of the recommendations for 1999 made by the president and the National Coalition for Literacy to Congress.

Communication with the field through the NIFL's Literacy Information and Communications System (LINCS) project is bringing adult literacy-related resources, expertise, and knowledge on-line to the field. Regional hubs offer training in the planning and use of technology. PBS LiteracyLink also offers professional development resources and training for literacy educators through LitTeacher. On-line courses allow instructors to learn in a flexible manner and to communicate with experts in the field on a variety of topics.

Through efforts of the National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities (ALLD) Center, the learning disabilities resource guidebook, Bridges to Practice, was released at train-the-trainer sessions conducted across the nation. The Bridges tool kit is designed for instructors to take research to practice and align assessment with teaching and learning. ALLD's ultimate goal is to help providers better meet the needs of adults with learning disabilities.

The Practitioner Dissemination and Research Network (PDRN) of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) began operation as a strategic alliance between practitioners and researchers to disseminate research results to the field and provide feedback to researchers. Practitioner inquiry is included as part of the PDRN.

ADULT LEARNER MOVEMENT

Birth of a full-scale adult learner movement was launched as a result of several key events. The movement got its momentum from the national

adult learner congresses sponsored by Laubach Literacy Action and partners of the National Coalition for Literacy, a national adult learner forum sponsored by the Department of Education (and facilitated by the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium) and grassroots leadership conferences at the state level.

The National Adult Literacy Congresses forged a network of adult learners. From the congresses, a cadre of adult learners pressed for statewide efforts that evolved into student organizations (see Table 1.2). At least five states have a student organization, and seven hold annual student conferences.

In late 1997, the Department of Education held a national student leadership forum in Washington, D.C., where adult learners from each state gathered to discuss issues affecting them as learners. From there, several adult learners launched a national student leadership forum in 1998 at the Highlander Center in Tennessee, where forty-one adult learners attended.

At the Highlander meeting, student literacy leaders mapped out a national student organization, Voice for Adult Literacy United for Education (VALUE), and elected an eleven-member board. VALUE activities will include conferences, newsletters, and advocacy. VALUE wants to expand the role of adult learners as leaders in the effort to promote literacy throughout the nation. It promises to be a resource for adult learners, literacy practitioners, and policymakers.

Finally, the National Council of State Directors of Adult Education adopted a focus on student leadership as a goal. It will emphasize provision of technical assistance to states to help organize adult learners for leadership and advocacy.

NATIONAL INITIATIVES IN ADULT EDUCATION

A number of initiatives sponsored by national groups and organizations either got under way in 1998 or continued on their previous course to support or provide leadership for the field of adult education and literacy. These initiatives aim to support a wide variety of interests, from research to public awareness.

Awareness Campaigns

Significant national programs have funding levels of \$1 billion or more. The National Coalition for Literacy, piloted by its policy committee, is preparing a national effort to secure a state grant program allocation of \$1 billion over five years for adult education. This effort reflects the

belief of many who work in the field of adult education and literacy that there will be no real impact on literacy until programs of longer duration and greater intensity receive more funding support.

The public awareness campaign supported by the NIFL, Literacy: It's a Whole New World, made the business community the focus of its efforts in 1998. The NIFL released a new packet of information targeting the business community with the message that literacy amounts to more than reading and writing and that it is vital to personal success in the workplace. The material in the packet emphasizes the multiple purposes of literacy: educating children, getting people off welfare, and getting people into jobs. Media kits were developed and distributed nationally.

The third effort to boost public awareness of the value of adult literacy is the campaign by an adult education program to petition the U.S. Postal Service to create a commemorative stamp dedicated to adult literacy. Petitions for signature are being circulated across the country.

Health and Literacy

An increasing number of research studies are documenting the connection between literacy and health, especially low literacy and poor health (see Chapter Five). A major event of the year has been the mass media's increasing coverage of such studies (Hohn, 1998).

The GED

The GED Testing Service (GEDTS) has made progress on several fronts.

It has clarified its policy on providing accommodations for adults with learning disabilities. Policy is now aligned with that specified in the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. GEDTS changed its approval process to authorize accommodations for individuals with learning disabilities by shifting the approval of accommodations to the state level. GED administrator training and certification, which took place toward the end of the year, served to ensure a uniform implementation of national policy and procedures. This change will result in more efficient handling of applications and a reduction in the time it takes to obtain approvals for accommodations.

The GEDTS increased the minimum passing score required for each state to issue a GED credential. The minimum score is to be not less than 40, with an average of 45 for each of the five tests in the GED battery. This change affected states that had not previously adopted the minimum 40/average 45 criteria and resulted in a slight decrease in the number of examinees passing the GED where the new minimum pass score requirements were instituted.

The GEDTS continues preparation for GED2000, the new test intended to take learners into the twenty-first century. The questions asked on this new test will be more pertinent to real-life applications and will reflect the content standards now being implemented by all states. Five major changes are being made in the GED2000:

- There will be one English/language arts test.
- The test will offer multiple-choice responses as well as alternative formats, such as graphing responses on the math test or gridding answers without any choices.
- Students will be able to use a calculator for a major portion of the mathematics test.
- There will be an interdisciplinary test that will use authentic materials from real-life situations.
- Examinees will receive reports on their performance in terms of both content and skills instead of a single standard score on each test.

Examinees will be asked to use information processing skills, interpret a broad range of texts across core academic disciplines, and use and analyze information provided in authentic, or real-world, contexts. When the new test is introduced in 2001, any examinee who did not pass all sections of the test version being administered until then will have to take the entire new test; the old and the new tests will not equate.

National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

NCSALL completed its second year. Several studies have emerged and others are under way that will provide the field with information on teaching-learning models, learner persistence, best practices and effective models in professional development, assessment, health and literacy, and the impact of the GED on the lives of examinees. Working in conjunction with other groups, NCSALL has produced a research agenda for adult education and literacy and adult ESOL.

National Assessment of Adult Literacy

In preparation for the next generation of the national adult literacy assessment, the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) held focus groups to discuss data elements for the ensuing adult literacy assessment. The NAAL will assess adult literacy in the areas of prose, document, and quantitative skills. The next assessment is to be conducted in 2002. States will again have the option to draw larger samples to produce data on skill levels in their state. Background papers are being prepared to guide the direction of the next national assessment.

ERIC Clearinghouse

The U.S. Department of Education renewed its contract with the ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education to provide for research on topics of interest to adult education and family literacy. ERIC's mission was approved without change of provider or interruption of service.

New National Center for Community Literacy

A new national center for adult literacy, the Lindy Boggs National Center for Community Literacy, was established at Loyola University in New Orleans. The center's mission is to link the university to the community by focusing on the literacy needs of public housing residents. The center will develop a library collection specializing in the linkage of literacy and public housing, conduct research on the literacy needs of public housing neighborhoods, and develop demonstration projects designed in collaboration with public housing residents.

CONCLUSION

Following are a few final words on the gains made in 1998 and the needs that must be met in the years ahead.

Gains in 1998

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act offers the field of adult education and family literacy the promise of entering the mainstream of public policy and instructional delivery. New legislation nudged each state to reassess its current direction and identify state policy and program delivery changes that will promote more effective alliances with federal, state, and local entities. A new role for the ED is outlined in legislation for national leadership activities and promises a stronger connection with states. Instructional delivery is changing as new standards for program quality and instructional content are applied. Innovative instructional models are being developed by means of distance learning and the use of technology as both a tool for learning and a basic skill. A number of research studies are being implemented to inform practice, and adult learners created a vehicle through which they can voice their concerns about the policy and practice of adult education and literacy.

Future Needs

Now that legislation has been created outlining what the field must do, the field must determine how to change practice. Adequate tools will be needed to implement the necessary changes to the system. Programs are faced with preparing a new adult learner, who learns in different ways, is younger, and needs more assistance with English literacy. The field must bring every instructional program into the new century with the

technology needed for both instruction and management of data, and instruction must be provided by a highly proficient teaching staff. The current part-time delivery system must be transformed into a full-time delivery system, with educators who are prepared to teach the new adult learner. States must develop information management systems that collect information for informing the public and policymakers of the successes and weaknesses in the system.

Reporting performance on a local, state, national, and international basis will be critical in determining the impact the field is having on the target population as a whole. Unless the undereducated population raises its skills to a globally competitive level, the field will not have been successful. NAAL is gearing up to report national progress. The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) could be used to make international comparisons of success. IALS allows the United States to compare its progress with that of other countries on the basis of economic indicators such as productivity and earnings, effect of years of education on productivity and earnings, and the "wage premium" of high literacy skills and the "wage penalty" associated with low performance (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1997).

To fulfill the intentions of the AEFLA, Congress must provide serious funding for the state grant program for adult education and literacy systems, funding that will allow the field to retool for learner success. Achievement of a \$1 billion program funding level by the year 2004 is imperative.

The year 1998 was "unbelievable" (Darling, 1998). The long-overdue passage of adult education and literacy legislation has become a reality, presenting the field with opportunities for growth and redirection to lead adult learners into the new millennium. The events of the year confirm the slogan of the NIFL's public awareness campaign: literacy is "a whole new world" - for the nation, for the states, and for providers and learners.

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