



National Coalition For Literacy

National Coalition for Literacy Recommendations for the Senate Draft of WIA Reauthorization

The National Coalition for Literacy applauds the Senate staff for their work in revising the Workforce Investment Act. The Coalition recommends the following recommendations to support your work:

1. Include Performance Measures on Educational Gains

Recommendation:

Sec. 312(a) add “primary” after “the”

“Programs and activities authorized in this title are subject to the primary performance accountability provisions described in section 131.”

Add paragraph 312(b): “Programs and activities authorized in this title are subject to additional performance accountability measures. These additional indicators of performance shall include measurable improvements in literacy skills in reading, writing, and speaking the English language, numeracy, English language acquisition, and other literacy skills.”

Justification:

Basic literacy skills are vital in order for many program participants to access the career pathway or integrated education and training programs that will lead them to postsecondary education or increased employment opportunities. However, unless there are performance measures related to educational gains for Title III programs, an adult education program's performance in helping their students acquire greater literacy skills will no longer be a required performance measure for those programs.

We strongly recommend, therefore, that the final bill include educational gains as a primary performance measure so that the performance of Title III programs can be accurately evaluated. Otherwise, we believe there will be a substantial disincentive for programs funded through WIA to serve adults with low literacy skills, thwarting the intent of Title III.

2. Revise Intensity and Quality, page 31 (4)(a)

Recommendation:

Title III, p. 30, Section (e) Considerations -- In awarding grants or contracts under his section, the eligible agency shall consider - p. 31 Subsection(4)"whether the eligible provider's program -

(A) is of sufficient intensity and quality, and based on the most rigorous research available so that participants achieve substantial learning gains;"

To:

Title III, p. 30, Section (e) Considerations -- "In awarding grants or contracts under this section, the eligible agency shall consider - ... p. 31 Subsection(4)whether the eligible provider's program -- ...(A) is of sufficient intensity and quality utilizing appropriate delivery approaches (including group and individual instruction, technology-supported instruction, self-study, or a combination) so that participants achieve substantial learning gains."

Justification:

The draft Senate bill language leaves it up to the state to define both "sufficient quality" and "the most rigorous research available". The individual states are not in the best position to determine this and may interpret the language very differently state to state. We recognize and appreciate the change from "duration" to "quality" in this section. We have added some clarifying language consistent with the 2011 NCL WIA Priorities.

3. Change State Leadership to a Minimum of 15%

Recommendation:

Add new language under Title III, Section 322 (a)(2) "shall use not ~~more~~ less than 15 percent of the grant funds to carry out State leadership activities under section 323.

Justification:

It has been NCL's position to increase the amount of state leadership funds from 12.5% to a **minimum** of 15% to improve teacher quality by providing more professional development, improving working conditions, professionalizing the workforce, and researching the intersection of these factors to determine what practitioners need to be effective.

We find the cap of 15% to fund Section 323, State Leadership Activities, inadequate to meet the needs of the field. There are a host of eligible activities listed as required and permissible activities in the draft of Title III, yet this funding amount is insufficient to meet even the most

cursory coverage of any of them. In addition, student outcomes – the goal of the Title – hinge upon the quality of instruction students receive. Improving the professionalization and knowledge of the teaching workforce should be a national priority.

Facts:

- ***Professional development, which is provided for under state leadership, is the primary mechanism for preparing adult educators with the knowledge and skills about instructional practices that spur student achievement.*** Research shows that most adult educators have limited formal education specifically related to teaching adults. Few states require an adult education teaching certification. Thus, practitioners rely on professional development to help them use data to improve student outcomes and pursue training specific to their instructional needs.
- ***Adult educators are being asked to do more and meet higher student outcomes.*** With the increased focus on teacher quality, career and college pathway services, the need to prepare adults to transition to postsecondary education and training, and integrating technology into teaching and learning, funding for high quality professional development should increase to meet the new demands on teachers.
- ***Participation by states in national activities require a substantial investment of professional development that state leadership dollars are stretched thin to provide.*** High-quality, national professional development activities are costly. States and programs must fund the training of the trainers, convene the practitioners and provide the materials, pay travel and release time to attend, including paying for substitutes and paid planning time to implement what participants have learned. Research shows that professional development leading to teacher change takes significant investment in time and long-term, job-embedded support to translate into improvement in practices.

4. Improve the Professional Quality of the Adult Education Workforce

Recommendation:

Amend Section 323(a)(1) to include a new required activity establishing a **Career Advancement System for Adult Education Practitioners**, providing guidance to states for improving the professional quality of the adult education workforce.

“The establishment or operation of a Career Advancement System for Adult Education Practitioners to provide guidance for states to improve the professional quality of the adult education workforce, including one or more of the following activities:

- i. Ensuring participation in professional development that is responsive to practitioner and learner needs for adult basic education, adult ESOL, and adult secondary education practitioners that will help them be effective teachers, program administrators, tutors, learner leaders, counselors, and paraprofessionals.
- ii. Establishing pathways to careers for adult educators that are linked to compensation commensurate with experience and qualifications.
- iii. Providing paid professional development release time for practitioners and allowances for hiring substitute teachers, where applicable, to provide release time for practitioners to attend professional development.
- iv. Offering tuition stipends to attract college graduates who then get degrees in adult education and stay in the field for a period of 5 years.
- v. Offering grants to eligible providers with an ability to deliver new practitioner induction, mentoring, and coaching experiences.
- vi. Establishing career ladders for teachers who then become mentors of other teachers and who take leadership roles within the program to become master teachers.
- vii. Providing incentives for hiring full time instructors.

Recommendation:

Add new language to section 343(b)(3)(F) carrying out rigorous research on the relationship between instructional quality, including education levels, certification status, and experience of instructors, teacher working conditions, and the performance outcomes of eligible providers consistent with section 131.

Justification:

Closing the Achievement and Life Outcomes Gaps Through Teacher Quality

The 21st century adult educator needs to:

- Prepare adults to be digital age learners using existing and new technologies in creative ways.
- Prepare adults with the basic adult literacy and critical thinking skills they need to be competitive in the 21st century workforce.
- Teach adults with learning and other disabilities to close the life outcomes gap.
- Prepare adults to transition into postsecondary and vocational credit-bearing classes.

- Instruct a linguistically diverse classroom made up of learners at all different levels of language proficiency to improve their language proficiency.
- Increase political literacy and civic participation among our nation's adults.
- Strengthen programs to be scalable and flexible to meet new demands in communities.

A new type of high quality adult educator is in demand.

However, very few 21st century educators can make a commitment for any length of time in adult education. They lack opportunities for stable, full-time employment. Only one in five adult education teachers is full time; 82% of teachers are part-time; thousands are volunteers; most are funded on year-to-year grant programs. Stable job status that facilitates a dedicated, professional workforce is critical to raising student achievement outcomes. Research in higher education found that adjunct faculty produced lower student achievement outcomes than full time faculty¹. Career ladders are virtually non-existent in adult education. Many practitioners are not paid to attend professional development or provided the opportunity to grow professionally in order to meet these demands upon them.

Developing a qualified teaching workforce is vital. Higher quality teachers make for a higher quality programs with better results for students. If our nation wants this teaching workforce to produce high student outcomes for adult learners, then first we must have the professional working conditions that enable it.

Conditions Enable Quality

We need to grow the next generation of adult educators. Smith & Hofer (2003)² found that most adult basic education teachers do not have formal training in teaching adults (even if they have been K-12 teachers). Therefore, all new adult education teachers, whether they have previously taught in K-12 before, need training in the basics of teaching adults and an orientation to the field of adult education. They need pre-service training and credentialing, new teacher orientation, mentoring, and coaching in tandem with pay commensurate and scalable to their qualifications and experience.

Provide Equity

The Higher Education Opportunity Act (P.L. 110 – 315) Reauthorization of 2008 sets new precedent in teacher quality by:

- Providing pay commensurate to qualifications and experience;
- Creating a trained and highly qualified K-12 teacher workforce; and
- Requiring quality and accountability assurances for teacher preparation programs.

¹ <http://gseacademic.harvard.edu/~longbr/Bettinger%20Long%20-%20Impact%20of%20Adjunct%20Instructors%2009-08.pdf>
http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/cheri/conferences/upload/2005/Bettinger_Long_adjunct_cheri.pdf

² Smith, C. & Hofer, J. (2003). *The Characteristics and Concerns of Adult Basic Education Teachers*. Report #26. Boston, MA: National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. Brief:
<http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/research/brief26.pdf>

Additionally, the HEA provides grants to institutions of higher education partnerships to improve the quality of preservice and new teachers in K-12 system. This is one of many examples this title offers to improve the quality of the K-12 teaching workforce. What is considered best practice for K-12 educators is worth applying to the field of adult educators. Provide equity for adult educators. Create conditions that enable quality.

5. Include Digital Literacy in the Definition of Adult Education

Recommendation:

Title I, Section 101 Definitions, insert a new definition of digital literacy, adding new paragraph:

Digital Literacy Skills.- The term “digital literacy skills” has the meaning given the term in section 202 of the Museum and Library Act (20 U.S.C. 9101).

We note: Under 20 U.S.C. 9101, the term “digital literacy skills” means the skills associated with using technology to enable users to find, evaluate, organize, create, and communicate information.

Title III:

Section 303(1) add new subparagraph (B) and re-designate accordingly

(B) attain digital literacy skills

Section 303(2) insert digital literacy skills after “literacy”

Section 331(e)(15) add digital literacy skills after “technology”

Section 342(c)(1)(A)(i) insert digital literacy skills after “integrated education and training”

Justification:

Successful attainment of digital literacy skills is necessary for individuals to succeed in today’s educational settings and the workplace. Digital literacy skills include skills associated with using technology and they enable users to find, evaluate, organize, create, and communicate information. Unfortunately, librarians and adult educators across the country have learned that many individuals who are underemployed, or unemployed, lack these essential 21st Century skills.

We strongly support the position taken by the American Library Association (ALA) to infuse digital literacy into the goals of Title III. NCL has been very vocal on the issue of digital literacy

as key to a 21st century adult education and workforce system, voting on a response to the National Education Technology Plan in 2010 (see http://www.national-coalition-literacy.org/AdultEdResponsetoNETP_FINAL.pdf) and recently co-hosting a Hill Briefing on 21st century adult literacy solutions, powered by technology (see <http://blog.ncladvocacy.org/2011/05/caucus-briefing/>).

Accordingly, the National Coalition for Literacy believes that provisions to help individuals gain these critical skills must be included under Title III of the new Workforce Investment Act. Specifically, the Coalition asks that provisions related to digital literacy skills be included under the definition of “adult education” and that such activities be authorized throughout Title III.

6. Review the Performance Accountability System

Recommendation:

Title III, Section 343(a) Insert:

Required activity:

The National Academy of Sciences shall convene an independent panel of researchers, policymakers, and practitioners with relevant experience from among adult education, postsecondary education, and workforce development fields to review the effectiveness of the performance accountability system in incentivizing programs to document adult learning and continuous program improvement, especially toward more effective practices for helping students a) most in need of literacy services (including those with minimal literacy skills) and b) achieve their college and career readiness goals quickly.

Justification:

For the past several years, NCL has requested an objective review of the National Reporting System and the assessments that are approved for its data collection. Our WIA Priorities document states: **Fund a review of, and update, the National Reporting System, to ensure that required outcomes measures are appropriate for all levels of adult education students.** This recommendation underscores our concern that current assessments and programming are not sensitive to the gains, goals and outcomes of adults at the lowest levels, with disabilities, or language differences.

7. Emphasize All Literacy Levels in Title Purpose

Recommendation:

Amend Title III, Section 302(1) by adding “at all literacy levels” after “adults”: “(1) assist adults at all literacy levels to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency;”

Justification: NCL has maintained a concern that current performance systems and programming are not sensitive to the gains, goals and outcomes of adults at the lowest levels. An additional element in the Purpose that embraces lowest level learners will counteract a programming pressure to teach only those who will show performance measure gains on the primary performance indicator measures listed in Title I(131)(b).

8. Add Definition of “Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program”

Recommendation:

Add the following as Title III, Section 303(17):

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program – The term “integrated English literacy and civics education program” means programs of instruction designed to help an English language learner achieve competence in English literacy through contextualized instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civic participation, and United State history and Government to help such an individual acquire the skills and knowledge to become an active and informed parent, work, community member, and citizen.

Justification:

The draft Senate WIA bill simply incorporates the language from appropriations bills to authorize the EL/civics grant program without providing a definition for the kind of programs the grant is meant to support. Since EL/civics programs provide very specific content and instruction, and are meant to serve ELLs with their high school diploma or equivalent – as well as those without – a specific definition is needed to provide a clear purpose for the grant program.

9. Include Libraries on Center Advisory Board and Ensure Coordination of Eligible Providers with Libraries

Recommendation:

Add public libraries to the National Institute for Adult Education and Literacy Advisory Board

Title III, Section 342(e)(1) add new clause (ix)

(ix) public libraries

Ensure that an eligible provider's activities are coordinated with appropriate activities carried out by public libraries:

Title III, Section 331(e)(9) add public libraries after "institutions of higher education"

Justification:

Just as representatives of institutions of higher education are specifically included as members of the advisory board because of their involvement in adult education and literacy, we believe that public libraries, the people's university, should also be included because of their leading role in advancing literacy in communities across the nation. Public libraries provide free access to reading materials, workshops, classes and other activities which promote a more literate society. Accordingly, it only makes sense to ensure that public libraries are included on the literacy board to ensure their important perspective on adult literacy is reflected at the national level.

10. Add "career advancement" to the Definition of English Language Acquisition

Recommendation:

Add "or career advancement" to Title III, Section 303(6)(B)(iii).

Justification:

While limited English proficiency does serve as a barrier to employment for many English language learners, it also serves as a significant barrier to career advancement for college-educated and highly skilled immigrants. According to an October 2008 report from the Migration Policy Institute, more than 1.3 million college-educated immigrants living in the United States are unemployed or underemployed in unskilled jobs because they are unable to make full use of their academic and professional credentials. Many of these college-educated immigrants lack the English language skills critical to obtaining jobs commensurate with their education and training. According to a June 2011 policy brief by the Brookings Institution, the share of working-age immigrants in the United States who have a bachelor's degree has risen considerably since 1980, and now exceeds the share without a high school diploma. College-educated immigrants outnumber immigrants without high-school diplomas (or equivalent) by at least 25 percent in 44

of the 100 largest metropolitan areas in the United States. Therefore, it is worth emphasizing the value of English for career advancement in this population of educated immigrants.