

ProLiteracy Worldwide Public Policy Council

M. Shân Atkins

Sara Davis

Anne DuPrey

Andy Hartman

Alice Johnson Cain

Garrett Murphy

Lynn Reed

Thomas C. Sawyer, FMC, Chair

Marsha L. Tait

Peter Waite

Robert Wedgeworth

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1320 Jamesville Ave.
Syracuse, NY 13210

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Ten Point U.S. Advocacy Plan



ProLiteracy Worldwide

Ten Point U.S. Advocacy Plan

Call To Action

Adequate literacy skills are a prerequisite for success in the fast-paced, global economy in which we live. They are the foundation for economic self-sufficiency, good health, effective parenting, and civic participation in a democratic society.

The U.S. Department of Education is expected to release the results of the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) in the fall of 2005. The Department last issued an estimate of adult literacy skills in the U.S. in 1993 (the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey, or NALS). The NALS estimated that approximately 40-44 million adults in the U.S. performed at the lowest level of literacy skill, including those who were non-native speakers of English.

We anticipate that the number of native English-speaking adults estimated to have minimal literacy skills in the upcoming NAAL report will be significant. The report should also give us fresh information about the literacy skills of immigrants in the U.S.

ProLiteracy Worldwide has developed the following advocacy plan in anticipation of the release of the NAAL and with intent to increase the quantity and quality of literacy instruction available to adults in the U.S.

The goals of the ProLiteracy Worldwide U.S. Advocacy Plan are:

- To create a comprehensive and fully coordinated adult literacy and basic education system
- To ensure that all adults with limited literacy skills have the opportunity to pursue appropriate educational or job credentialing opportunities
- To assist adults to fulfill their human potential and to participate fully in society

To implement these goals ProLiteracy will advocate for:

1. A foundation-funded, independent, and scholarly study of the issue of adult literacy and its implications in the U.S. The projected outcomes of the study will include:
 - A uniform definition of adult literacy
 - A better understanding of how adult literacy intersects with other significant health, education, economic, and social issues
 - A blueprint for improvement of the adult basic education and literacy system
 - Public policy initiatives including strategies to increase available resources
 - Identification of further areas for research and study
2. Immediate planning for regularly recurring and timely surveys and analyses of the state of adult literacy in the U.S. upon release of the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy
3. Greater focus on state legislative initiatives to increase attention to, and funding for, adult literacy programs
4. Increased focus by the National Institute for Literacy on lifelong learning resulting in coordinated research about adult literacy and a central national repository of adult literacy data and information
5. Meeting the educational needs of out of school youth by allowing the per-capita public expenditure for high school students to transfer with them if they enroll in an adult literacy program before they reach the age of 21
6. Ensuring that community colleges are funded adequately to facilitate the transition of adult basic education and literacy students to enrollment in post secondary academic or vocational programs
7. Increasing the flexibility of existing legislation such as the reauthorized Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Act (welfare), Title I (employment and training) and II (adult and family literacy) of the reauthorized Workforce Investment Act, and community development legislation so that more funds can be invested in adult basic education and literacy
8. Providing foundational, "real life," English speaking instruction for all immigrants seeking citizenship and ensuring that a continuum of literacy instruction opportunities are available and funded for non-English-proficient adults
9. Increasing financial investment in adult literacy by potential corporate partners by creating tax incentives for employers who make basic literacy instruction available to their employees and their employees' families, and by creating a personal tax incentive for individuals who volunteer in adult literacy programs
10. Funding diagnostic testing and accommodations for learning disabilities for all native English-speaking adults entering federally funded adult basic education and literacy programs

The goals and implementation actions above are based on the belief that the most important investment this country can make is in its people. They are based on the promise of the "American dream" that we make to each immigrant. They are based on the understanding that education is not just for children, but that learning is lifelong and necessary for both economic productivity and personal fulfillment.

Awareness

Public
Policy

Resources