

ProLiteracy Policy Update



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Dr. Sandra Baxter Appointed National Institute for Literacy Director

The Secretaries of the Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services have appointed Dr. Sandra L. Baxter as director of the National Institute for Literacy, a federal organization that addresses literacy across the lifespan and across federal agency programs.

The Secretaries made the appointment at the recommendation of the Institute's Advisory Board. The Board, chaired by M. Carmel Borders of Austin, Texas, consists of ten members appointed by the President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

"The Board is very pleased that Dr. Baxter is the Institute's director," said Mrs. Borders. "We are looking forward to a very productive period when the Institute will make critical contributions to literacy achievement."

Dr. Baxter has been serving as the Institute's interim director since October 2001. She was hired in January 1999 after the Institute received new responsibilities under the Reading Excellence Act to disseminate information on reading research. Working closely with Dr. G. Reid Lyon, formerly chief of the Child Development and Behavior Branch, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), she created The Partnership for Reading, an interagency collaboration directed by the Institute, to ensure that the federal government speaks with voice on reading research.

"It is a privilege to be entrusted with the Institute's leadership at this important time," said Dr. Baxter. "I am looking forward to building a body of work that expresses the breadth of the Institute's legislative mandate and still continues the important work in adult literacy education that the Institute has been known for."

Before working for the Institute, Dr. Baxter was a senior evaluator at the U.S. General Accountability Office where her work focused on federal education policy and programs. She began her career working in community-based programs for disadvantaged youth and adults where she advised students on college admissions and financial aid requirements.

Dr. Baxter earned a doctoral degree in education from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education and holds a master's degree from Loyola College. She completed her undergraduate education at Howard University.

"I'm inspired by the Institute's Advisory Board, members of the National Coalition for Literacy, and the many other dedicated members of the literacy community," said Dr. Baxter. "I know that by working together, we can help the Institute become a fully mature organization that addresses critical issues thoughtfully; promotes the use of evidence in improving literacy services; and strengthens results for children, youth, and adults."

The Institute was established in 1992 by the National Literacy Act and now is authorized by the Workforce Investment Act to "...provide(s) national leadership regarding literacy, coordinate(s) literacy services and policy, and serve(s) as a national resource for adult education and literacy programs..." The Institute also is authorized by the No Child Left Behind Act to disseminate information on the findings of scientifically based reading research and to identify and disseminate information on effective early literacy and K-3 reading programs.

Under Dr. Baxter's leadership, the Institute is planning new lines of work in adult English language acquisition, workforce literacy and basic skills, adult literacy, and youth literacy and employment. The Institute is managing an interagency effort to gather, summarize, and disseminate information on adolescent literacy as well as supporting the National Early Literacy Panel, which is synthesizing the literature on young children's acquisition of literacy skills.

"We've set an ambitious agenda and we're moving aggressively to increase staff capacity to handle these new responsibilities. The Institute is fortunate to have a core group of experienced staff that has been doing a commendable job. We're now looking for other talented and experienced individuals who will help the Institute fulfill its mission," said Dr. Baxter.

Dr. Baxter also appointed Lynn Reddy, who has been the Institute's communications director since 1999, as the Institute's deputy director. Ms. Reddy holds masters degrees in education and public administration from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education and the John F. Kennedy School of Government.