

Adult Education and Family Literacy Act

Section 243--National Activities

Section 243 of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), which provides for national leadership activities, authorizes the Secretary to establish and carry out a “program of national leadership activities to enhance the quality of adult education and literacy programs nationwide.” Congress annually appropriates funds for national programs to implement section 243. Appropriations for section 243 over the past several years amount to approximate \$9 million annually. Activities funded through section 243 generally are targeted to improving instruction and teacher quality, developing new models of service delivery to learners, improving accountability, and furthering research.

These major activities were funded during FY 2006 and FY 2007:

Improving Instruction

- *ESL Center:* National programs funds support the Center for English Language Acquisition (CAELA), which has worked with States to improve their teacher training efforts for several years. A new center, also supported by national programs funds, now provides more intensive assistance to States in improving their teacher training systems and maintains a repository of research-based information on English language learning. The CAELA Network recently created a framework for quality professional development for teachers of adult limited English speakers and will use it to help twelve States strengthen their professional development systems for English literacy instructors. The CAELA Network focuses not only on adult educators teaching ESL learners, but also adult educators working with ABE learners who are non-native English speakers.
- *Standards-Based Education:* National programs funds have supported State-level institutionalization of standards-based education reform since 2003. Past efforts produced the Adult Education Content Standards Warehouse, A Process Guide for Establishing State Adult Education Content Standards, and State collaborative working groups. Up to twelve States will collaborate under the current contract to develop and pilot test training and technical assistance materials that build teachers’ understanding of their State standards, translate standards into curriculum and instruction, and assess implementation of content standards in adult education classrooms.
- *STAR:* National programs funds supported the creation of a state-of-the-art tool kit that translates research into usable classroom strategies to teach reading to adults. The training package consists of two three-day institutes for teachers and program directors, on-site technical assistance for participants on implementing evidence-based reading instruction, and access to a state-of-the-art tool kit. States may have State trainers certified to further expand training throughout their provider networks. Ten States have partnered with OVAE to deliver STAR training and technical assistance to ABE practitioners in their States. Nine others are currently planning to begin STAR training and technical assistance within the next six months. OVAE anticipates that

20 States will be partners in the STAR Network by September 2009 and hopes to have at least 26 States STAR Network by June 2011.

- *Using Technology:* National programs funds have supported the creation of two online self-assessment tools for teachers. The first tool gives teachers an opportunity to assess their distance learning capabilities and develop a professional development plan. The second allows programs to improve the quality of instruction by determining how effectively technology is being used in the classroom.
- *GED Math:* National programs funds supported development of training materials to improve math instruction in GED programs. The funds supported a national train-the-trainer conference during which two staff from each State learned how to use the materials to launch statewide training to enhance secondary mathematics instruction in adult education programs.
- *Professional Development in Numeracy:* National programs funds will be used to make new teacher training materials available to States to enhance adult numeracy instruction. Teachers Investigating Adult Numeracy (TIAN), a National Science Foundation project, will be used as a foundation to develop national training materials for adult educators.

Creating New Models of Service Delivery

- *College Readiness:* National programs funds in this grant assist States in successfully transitioning adult secondary education (ASE) students into postsecondary educational opportunities. The effort provides support to four States working with twenty-five local adult education programs. Local programs are enhancing and expanding as well as gathering data on instructional and programmatic strategies that help out-of-school youth achieve high school equivalency, demonstrate college readiness and transition to postsecondary education. States' results are expected to include curricular, counseling, scheduling, and professional development innovations that will be packaged for dissemination nationally.
- *Career Pathways: Adult Basic Education (ABE) Career Connections:* National programs funds are supporting the involvement of five local adult education programs in postsecondary career pathways initiatives. The project will produce a manual that demonstrates how ABE programs can operate within career pathways to prepare students for postsecondary courses leading to a degree or occupational certificate targeted toward an industry important to a regional economy.
- *Online Learning:* This project builds national capacity to meet the needs of low-skilled adults and English language learners by determining the feasibility of a Web-based learning portal. As a part of the feasibility study, a prototype is being developed for low-level English language learners. The prototype will be field-tested beginning in April 2008 with a nationwide launch planned for early fall 2008.
- *Distance Education:* National programs funds over the past five years have supported States working toward making distance-learning options available through funded adult education programs. Funds underwrote development of national policies on reporting distance students and providing training to teachers instructing at a distance.

- *Interagency Models:* National programs funds supported demonstrations in six States that exemplified interagency partnerships. The demonstrations included partnerships aimed at improving the provision of services between adult education and workforce development partners. The demonstrations will result in a manual available to all States and regional meetings on interagency partnerships
- *Guide for Businesses:* This project is designed to promote more business involvement in adult education and develop adult education programs that prepare students for work.

Improving Accountability

- *Report Cards:* National programs funds supported States developing public performance report cards to improve accountability of local adult education programs. Materials related to these efforts are posted on the NRS Web site and include electronic templates and training materials.
- *Desktop Monitoring:* National programs funds supported regional meetings that assisted States in improving their desk monitoring procedures. Models of State data systems and other electronic tools are available for States on the NRS Web site.
- *Performance-Based Funding:* National programs funds were invested in case studies of performance-based funding in three States. The case studies provided information to States at conferences and other forums. The project produced a technical assistance manual for States based on the case study findings. A new activity in 2008 will provide technical assistance and training to States on developing performance-based funding systems.
- *Leadership Academy:* This new project will enable State directors to attend a week-long intensive leadership seminar. The leadership academy will include a review of pertinent leadership research and lessons and activities to strengthen State directors' leadership skills. Training will explore a variety of decision-making models and research on the roles and responsibilities associated with instructional leadership.

Supporting Research

- *Numeracy:* This project will build on the findings of the National Math Panel Report and create publications and activities to improve adult numeracy instruction, promote teacher quality, identify evidence-based practices and products, and assist States in improving math outcomes for low-skilled adults.
- *Reading (National Institute for Child Health and Development):* Each of these six studies represents some of the most comprehensive results to date on teaching adults to read. These studies promise to identify new knowledge about: factors that influence instruction (in reading and writing); effective program structures and models of service delivery; and how adults learn.
- *STAR Evaluation:* This study will focus on learner outcomes that result from using the STAR materials.

- *NAAL*: This project provides a comprehensive report on the state of adult literacy in the United States. The report contains data useful to addressing literacy needs of America's adult population. Information from the Adult Education Program Study (AEPS) may also prove useful to States in addressing need. State directors should watch for upcoming work based on secondary analysis from these, and other, reports.