



# National Coalition For Literacy

American Association for Adult and Continuing Education ◦ Adult Literacy Media Alliance ◦ American Institute for Research ◦ American Library Association ◦ Association of Adult Literacy Professional Developers ◦ Center for Literacy Studies, University of Tennessee ◦ Commission on Adult Basic Education ◦ Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy ◦ GED Testing Service ◦ Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy and the Goodling Institute for Research, Pennsylvania State University ◦ International Reading Association ◦ Literacy USA ◦ National Center for Family Literacy ◦ National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy ◦ National Center on Adult Literacy, University of Pennsylvania ◦ National Council of State Directors of Adult Education ◦ ProLiteracy Worldwide ◦ Student Coalition for Action in Literacy Education ◦ Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. ◦ Voices of Adult Literacy United for Education ◦ World Education

## Message Statement

December 14, 2005

As America speeds head long into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, more and more American adults are being left behind because of limited literacy skills.

The National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) is a stark snapshot of America's ability to prosper in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. If we are to tackle the serious literacy issues underscored by the NAAL study we must forge bipartisan solutions on the federal and local level.

Our nation is growing and changing at a rapid pace. Tens of millions of adults in this country lack the literacy skills to complete a job application, use the Internet, or read a bedtime story to a child. To compete in the global marketplace Americans must be literate, educated, and prepared to succeed in the workplace.

The National Coalition for Literacy believes that functional literacy is important for very fundamental reasons:

- **ECONOMY—A more literate America will be more competitive and more prosperous.** Improved literacy skills will create a stronger economy that helps all Americans.
- **FAMILY—A more literate America will mean stronger families.** Parents with strong literacy skills help their children succeed in school.
- **CITIZENSHIP— A more literate America will mean a stronger Democracy.** All adults will have an equal opportunity to contribute to their neighborhood, their community, and their country.

The NAAL study makes one thing very clear. Adults with limited literacy skills are being left behind. This jeopardizes the productivity and well being of all Americans.

How can America address the growing number of adults left behind because of limited literacy skills? What works best as we try to address these challenges?

1. We need more professionally-trained instructors. The same approach taken for K-12 education with meaningful standards and best practices must be applied to adult literacy education.
2. We support a research agenda for adult literacy comparable to the K-12 agenda. We must know more about best practices in order to deliver quality services.
3. We must draw on the best resources in the public and private sectors to meet the challenges. We must forge alliances on the federal, state and locals levels.
4. We must meet the demand. In every program in every state, there are long waiting lists for enrollment in adult literacy programs. They aren't looking for a hand out; they're looking for a hand up.

The National Coalition for Literacy is committed to engaging in solution-based dialogues working across party lines at every level of government. America needs to invest in adults who are sacrificing, studying and working to achieve a better life for themselves and their families. When America makes this investment our country will be stronger, more prosperous, and globally competitive.

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