

## Issue #12 December 20, 2010

Each issue of the E-News reports on CAAL's programs and publications, including follow-up activities related to the National Commission on Adult Literacy. Occasional feature articles are offered, along with news about complementary work by other groups.

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- Year-End Roundup of New Reports

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## CAAL NEWS IN BRIEF

▶ [Importance of Reforming and Reauthorizing WIA](#) -- On November 29, 2010, 18 national and state organizations and members of the National Commission on Adult Literacy joined in a CAAL-coordinated letter to Congressional Leaders urging the reform and reauthorization of WIA early in 2011, with the Adult Education and Economic Growth Act incorporated. (Note: The AEEG Act will be reintroduced in January or February in both the Senate and House.)

▶ CAAL will join a team of six panel presenters at the April 2010 conference of the [Commission on Adult Basic Education](#) in San Francisco. On the broad theme of professional development, Forrest Chisman will speak about CAAL's project on **certification and credentialing of faculty and staff in adult education**. Two CAAL project papers will be published early next year and announced in the E-News and on listservs. One is a background information paper by researcher Cristine Smith and the other is CAAL's main project report which includes findings from a related roundtable.

▶ [DOING BUSINESS TOGETHER: Adult Education and Business Partnering to Build a Qualified Workforce](#) is an upcoming report (early January) by CAAL Research Associate James Parker based on two surveys and a day of invitational roundtable discussions.

▶ CAAL's project on Advancing Adult Numeracy culminates on January 10<sup>th</sup> with an invitational roundtable in New York City. By Spring, CAAL expects to have three reports out, an information paper by researcher Lynda Ginsburg, a CAAL paper by Forrest Chisman, and a Reader. The reports will focus new attention on this often-neglected area of adult education, indicating why it matters and giving recommendations on how to improve service.

▶ Gail Spangenberg will give the keynote address at the January conference of the California Adult Education Administrators Association.

▶ National Commission on Adult Literacy Study Director Cheryl King, who serves on the CAAL board, will be a key panelist in a Kentucky Educational Television special on adult education being recorded by KET in February. She will speak about the findings of the Commission and activities related thereto. A future issue of the E-News will provide information on the show's national broadcast date.



### **POINT OF VIEW: Measure of America Reinforces Need for WIA**

by Gail Spangenberg  
President, CAAL

With funding from the Conrad N. Hilton and Lincy Foundations, the prestigious Social Science Research Council (SSRC) is taking "the measure of America" in its American Human Development Project. Modeled after a United Nations human development program, SSRC's work, begun in 2007, is reportedly the first ever effort to apply the U.N. approach to the United States or any developed nation.

Using the measures of access to health, education, and income level, SSRC presents "human development" rankings for U.S. states, congressional districts, and ethnic groups, and for men and women, hoping to go beyond GDP measures of how the economy is doing to how Americans are doing. It offers a different way to understand opportunities open, or not open, to different groups in American society. It shows that while large segments of the American society are doing well, especially whites and Asian-Americans, others are not. Further, some of the "largest gaps in well-being are found within a single city or among population groups living within a few miles of one another."

At base, the work of SSRC is about freedom and opportunity in America. It recognizes that

America is losing ground in its fundamental founding values because planners and policymakers are not always connecting the dots among all relevant variables, including individuals' aspirations, and they too often do not plan in ways that fully benefit all racial and ethnic groups.

CAAL and numerous other adult education and workforce skills organizations work hard to provide data, analysis, and reports for reforming and reauthorizing WIA and incorporating the Adult Education and Economic Growth Act. We do this because we know that these Acts, and the adult education enterprise at their core, are essential for human resource and economic development. We cannot meet individual needs or the nation's employment and competitiveness goals without them. But beyond our own field's focus of concern is the work of organizations that come at America's problems from different vantage points, such as the SSRC, and some of this work is every bit as important as ours. SSRC's voice, added to ours, should give even more weight to the already powerful case for reforming and reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act.

In November, SSRC released the second of two reports in its "quality of life" measuring effort, [\*The Measure of America 2010-2011: Mapping Risks and Resilience\*](#). The report spotlights a wide range of issues and problems and suggests various kinds of action that, with its focus on local data, can help planners design remedies customized to local demographics.

Here are just a few of the many findings:

#### Health Measure

- Americans born today can expect to live 78.6 years on average, nearly nine years longer than in 1960 (on a par with Chile, though Chile spends a tenth of what the U.S. does on health care). But there are dramatic exceptions according to ethnicity, race, income and education level, and geographic area. For instance--
- Whites in Washington, DC, live 12 years longer on average than African-Americans in DC. A white baby born in DC will live on average to age 83, four years longer than the national average. An African-American baby there has a life expectancy of 71 years, that of the average American four decades ago.
- Life expectancy in Virginia's Eighth Congressional District, in suburban DC, is a decade longer than in West Virginia's Third Congressional District, in a rural area.

#### Education Measure

The majority of adults in America have at least a high school diploma, and overall school enrollment is higher than at any other point in history. But, again, there are important exceptions. For example-

- More than a quarter of high school freshmen do not graduate in four years--if they graduate at all.
- In the birthplace of No Child Left Behind (District 29 in Houston), only 54 percent of adults over 25 have completed high school. In the suburbs of Denver, 97 percent of adults hold at least a high school diploma.
- The top five states in the SSRC Education index spend an average of about \$14,500 per K-

12 pupil, compared to the bottom five at \$9,000.

- In every ethnic and racial group studied except Asian-Americans, women have higher educational attainment and enrollment than men--e.g., more than 90 percent of white women today are high school graduates; more than 40 percent of Latino men are not.

### Income Measure

- The wealth of the top one percent of households in America rose, on average, 103 percent from 1983 to 2007, whereas the poorest 40 percent of Americans had a 43 percent decline in wealth during this time. To give one specific: median earnings for men in Michigan fell more than 12 percent between 2005 and 2008, from \$39,000 a year to \$34,000.
- The wealthiest 20 percent of households have a bit more than half of the nation's total income; the poorest 20 percent have 3.4 percent.
- In the wealthiest congressional district in the US, New York City's 14th has median earnings of \$60,000, whereas only a few subway stops away in the Bronx, the 16th district has median earnings of only \$18,000.
- By the end of 2007-09 recession, unemployment among the bottom tenth of U.S households, those with incomes below \$12,500, was 31 percent, a rate higher than unemployment in the worst year of the Great Depression. For households with incomes of \$150,000 and over, unemployment was just over 3 percent, generally considered full employment.
- African-Americans, Latinos, and Native-Americans earn less than Asian-Americans and whites in all of the 50 states.

The Measure of America 2010-2011 gives a wide range of other data as indicators of human development, hoping that it "will lead to better management of the conditions that create, or contribute to, those outcomes." "Particularly in times of budget cuts and hard choices," the report says, "good data are indispensable for wise decisions." The report is a tool "to pinpoint areas, some chronic, that will require sustained attention if America is to realize the promise of genuine opportunity for all its citizens. Furthermore, a more holistic analysis of which groups are surging forward and which are stalled or left behind is essential to helping the most vulnerable develop the resilience necessary to prevail in the face of financial crisis, recession, environmental catastrophe, or other challenges."

For access to this report and a range of peripheral resources, [click here](#). All reports from SSRC are designed for easy reading and wide public appeal. They aim to motivate action and policy at all levels according to values that reflect individual hopes and aspiration: "quality education, secure livelihoods, decent healthcare, and economic, personal, and community security." Let's hope that policymakers and others working to advance WIA pay close attention.



▶ **Talent Development Roundtable** - This theme was at the center of a roundtable sponsored by the Manufacturing Institute of the National Association for Manufacturing on December 1. Among the critical issues addressed were translating the economic and national security importance of the manufacturing sector into robust postsecondary programs of study, obtaining workplace credentials through competency-based education, and the use of technology and distance learning to achieve increased access and customized learning. [More information is available at the Institute website.](#)

▶ [\*\*Certificates Count: An Analysis of Sub-baccalaureat Certificates\*\*](#) by Brian Bosworth of Future Works, is a new report from Complete College America about the value of high-quality certificate programs for adult student success and economic competitiveness. It aims to double the attainment of certificates in five years to boost readiness for jobs and college. The report includes profiles of certificate production for all 50 states. A core strategy compellingly argued is that certificates can be the most direct path to college completion and career success and "can deliver greater income returns than associate and even some bachelor's degrees."

▶ Two publications are new from CLASP: (1) [\*\*Building Pathways to Postsecondary Success for Low-Income Young Men of Color\*\*](#) - This chapter written by Amy Ellen Duke-Benfield and Linda Harris of CLASP appears in a new book called Changing Places: How Communities Will Improve the Health of Boys of Color. (2) [\*\*Getting What We Pay For: State Community College Funding Strategies that Benefit Low-Income, Lower-Skilled Students\*\*](#) is a brief about how state funding and policy can realign community college financing to improve access to and success in college for lower-skilled and low-income adult students.

▶ The Migration Policy Institute of the National Center on Immigrant Integration and Policy has put out a fact sheet on [\*\*Top Languages Spoken by English Language Learners Nationally\*\*](#). Spanish predominates as the language most often spoken by English language learners (ELL) in all but seven states (HI, MT, AK, ND, SD, ME, VT). Among the other top ELL languages are Chinese, Vietnamese, French/Haitian Creole, Hindi, Korean, German, Arabic, Russian, and Miao/Hmong. Patterns of distribution by state are also indicated--e.g., Vietnamese is the third most predominant ELL language in six Midwestern states.

▶ It is no longer news that community colleges have a vital, indeed increasingly important role, in providing adult education, literacy, and workforce skills development. Three policy briefs published by the American Association of Community Colleges in 2010 are of special significance in this regard: [\*\*Doing More With Less: The Inequitable Funding of Community Colleges\*\*](#); [\*\*Just How Similar? Community Colleges and the For-Profit Sector\*\*](#); and [\*\*Rebalancing the Mission: The Community College Completion Challenge\*\*](#).



A new report by The Working Poor Families Project (WPFP), [\*Innovations in College Access: Including Adult Learners, Strengthening Student Success\*](#), looks at the scope and state-level use of the federal College Access Challenge Grant Program (CACG). CACG is a modest but significant source of funding to help states develop policy and practice to increase the college-going rates of "low-income and underserved student populations." The report indicates that most states focus their entire grant on a "narrow population: middle and high school students." Part of the reason is that students in public institutions and school districts are easier to serve: they are a captive audience while low-skilled out-of-school adults are dispersed in the workforce. WPFP recommends several ways that states across the country can learn from the handful of states that successfully use CACG to serve the harder-to-reach out-of-school groups, with Georgia, Texas, New Jersey, and Oregon leading the way.

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