

Report

Of the Task Force on Adult Education and Literacy
To the Virginia Board of Education

and Recommendations

For Improving Literacy Services in Virginia

JUNE 2001



TO: Members of the Virginia Board of Education

We are pleased to offer the following report from the Board of Education's Task Force on Adult Education and Literacy.

The *Code of Virginia* places the responsibility for adult education clearly with the state Board of Education. After studying adult education programs in other states, we conclude that Virginia has a *modest* program of adult education programs and services.

Adult education, through a comprehensive family literacy initiative, is ideally situated to make a significant contribution to meeting the board's goal to raise standards for public education in Virginia. Illiteracy is intergenerational. Many of the children in our school system, who are struggling with the Standards of Learning, have parents who either dropped out of school themselves or were socially promoted. Data is conclusive that, as we improve the reading levels of parents, they become valuable partners with the school system in helping to improve the educational achievement of their children.

There has been no increase in state funds for adult education programs since 1988. The Task Force is recommending a modest increase to start family literacy programs in communities with the lowest Standards of Learning test scores across the commonwealth.

We are also recommending that the Board of Education appoint an Advisory Committee for Adult Education and Literacy. This group should be charged with the responsibility for sharing results and making additional recommendations to the board on a regular basis.

The Task Force on Adult Education and Literacy believes that the Board of Education can meet its statutory obligation and improve student performance through the recommendations that are included in this report.

Audrey B. Davidson
Co-Chair

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Executive Summary

As charged by the Board of Education, the Task Force on Adult Education and Literacy made the following recommendations:

- Family literacy should be a priority for the Board of Education.
- An organizational structure and resources should be provided to establish family literacy programs throughout Virginia.
- A state family literacy grant program should be developed. Initially, one million dollars will be needed to fund 20 grants. This fund should continue to grow until every locality in the commonwealth has at least one family literacy grant.
- The Even Start program, a federally-funded family literacy program, should become part of the program of the Virginia Department of Education's Office of Adult Education and Literacy.
- A Family Literacy Center should be established to identify best practices in family literacy, provide training to educators who deliver such services, and develop materials for use throughout the state. An allocation of \$300,000 would be required to operate the center.
- The Office of Adult Education and Literacy should be elevated to a division within the organizational structure of the Department of Education.
- The Board of Education should appoint an Advisory Council on Adult Education to report annually to the Board.

The *Code of Virginia* places the responsibility for adult education clearly with the state Board of Education.

The *Code of Virginia* defines an adult education program as “an instructional program below the college credit level provided by public schools for persons over the age of compulsory school attendance who are not enrolled in the regular public school program, including adult basic education, credit programs, cultural adult education, external diploma programs, general adult education and general educational development programs” (*Code of Virginia* §22.1-223). The *Code* further states that the Board of Education shall

1. Require the development of adult education programs in every school division;
2. Encourage coordination in the development and provision of adult education programs between school boards and other state, federal, and local public and private agencies;
3. Promulgate appropriate standards and guidelines for adult education programs;
4. Accept and administer grants, gifts, services, and funds from available sources for use in adult education programs; and
5. Assist school divisions with all diligence in meeting the educational needs of adults participating in adult education programs to master the requirements for and to earn a general educational development (GED) certificate or high school diploma (*Code of Virginia* §22.1-224).

Local school boards shall “provide adult education programs . . . for residents of the school division, and, in their discretion, may charge appropriate fees to persons admitted to such programs . . . school boards shall seek to ensure that every adult participating in such program has an opportunity to earn a general educational development (GED) certificate or a high school diploma” (*Code of Virginia*, §22.1-225).

Federal law emphasizes the importance of family literacy.

The *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998*, which is Title II of the *Workforce Investment Act of 1998*, defines adult education as services or instruction below the postsecondary level for the following individuals:

- Those who have attained 16 years of age;
- Those who are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law; and
- Those who
 - (i) lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to enable the individuals to function effectively in society;
 - (ii) do not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and have not achieved an equivalent level of education; or
 - (iii) are unable to speak, read, or write the English language (Public Law 105-220).



By including “family literacy” in the title, the federal law emphasizes the importance of the parent’s role in the education of the child. A parent who has low-level literacy skills may not be equipped to be the child’s first teacher. There is a wealth of research that validates the relationship of the level of the parents’ education and success of the child in school. Parents with more education have children who learn and perform better in school.

The placement of adult education with job training programs in the same legislation elevates the importance of basic literacy skills for individuals preparing to enter or to upgrade their status in the workforce.

Virginia currently has a modest program of adult education programs and services.

Nearly 700,000 Virginians have not earned a high school credential.

More than 31,000 adults attended adult education classes in 1999-2000. Adult education services provided in Virginia include adult basic education and literacy, General Educational Development (GED) classes, adult high school classes, family literacy, workplace education, workforce development, English for speakers of other languages, and classes for adults with learning disabilities. Of those served, 13,784 students were males and 17,427 students were females. These totals included 13,801 in adult basic education, 11,203 in English for Speakers of Other Languages, and 6,207 in adult secondary programs (which include the General Educational Development program, the External Diploma program, and the High School Diploma program).

Adult education is provided primarily by school divisions.



In 2000-01, there were 81 local and regional Adult Basic Education programs serving every locality in the state. Adult education and literacy services are provided by school divisions; community colleges; private, not-for-profit community-based organizations; correctional institutions; and other state institutions. Additionally, 35 community-based programs are supported with state funds to provide basic literacy services and English for Speakers of Other Languages.

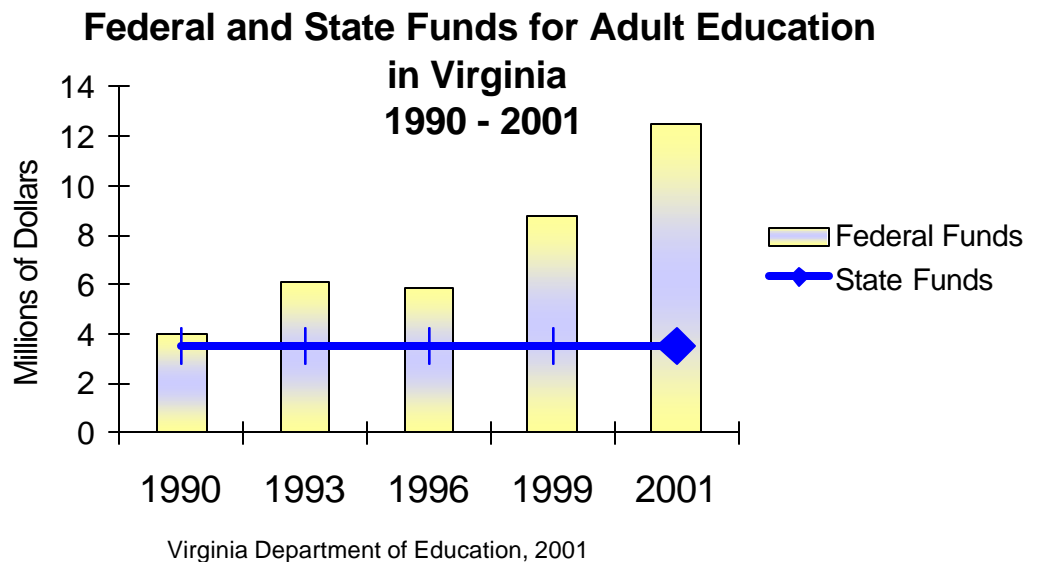
The Virginia Department of Education, Office of Adult Education and Literacy, funds seven full-time regional program managers to provide leadership and administrative services in certain areas of the state. There are other regions of the state that use funds available locally to employ a regional program manager. Additionally, 17 regional instructional specialists are funded by the state on a part-time basis to provide instructional leadership to adult education teachers through group staff development and one-on-one consultation.

Adult education is funded with federal, state, and local resources.

The primary source of funding for local programs is the federal *Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998*. In 2000-01, \$10,552,101 in federal funds were available to Virginia for adult education programs. Federal funds have increased over the last decade, but there has been no increase in state funds for adult programs since 1988. From 1990 to 2001, the state has made available \$3,500,000 annually for adult education programs.

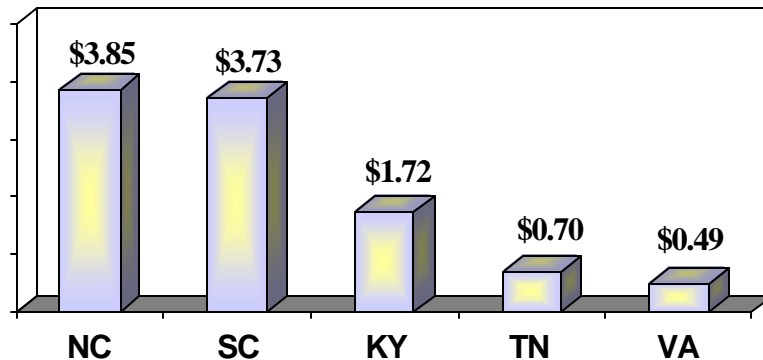
There have been minimal resources for projects related to adult education. Funds were allocated to inform the public about the new GED test in 2002. Additional funds were provided to expand testing sites to support the GED alternative education programs in Virginia high schools. The first technology-related training for adult educators will be funded in the 2002 fiscal year.

There has been no increase in state funds for adult education programs since the late 1980s.



Considering the population of the state, Virginia does not financially support adult education as well as other states.

Per Capita State Spending on Adult Education in Five States



US Census Bureau, 2001

Family literacy has not been given priority for funding in Virginia. There are no state funds for new programs.

Family literacy is an educational and public policy effort to serve parents and their children. Family literacy always has been an important component of adult education, but it never has received the funding to become a priority program in the state. From 1992 through 1997, family literacy projects were funded annually through federal grants for adult education. In 1998, the Department of Social Services made federal block grant funds totaling \$650,000 available to the Department of Education for family literacy sub-grants. Twenty projects were funded between December 1998 and June 2000 to establish new programs or share existing family literacy resources.

Currently, there are no adult education funds available to establish new family literacy programs. Fifteen community-based literacy centers continue to provide family literacy services in Virginia's communities. Additionally, 24 federally funded Adult Basic Education programs have family literacy components. Several communities that would like to continue or want to offer family literacy services are exploring private funding sources.

Adult education can contribute to meeting the Board of Education's goal to raise standards for public education in Virginia.

Children from low-level literacy families come to school lacking the readiness opportunities that are available to other children.

Virginia has a literacy problem that spans generations. Intergenerational illiteracy occurs when parents lack the academic and basic literacy skills to support their children's development in the early years of schooling.

While deficiencies in readiness to learn can be compensated at school, parents are their children's first and most important teachers—communicating the value of learning and helping children with the acquisition of basic skills. Parents have the greatest impact on helping children learn and perform well in school. Children who do not receive encouragement and help at home may struggle during the early years of school, feeling unsuccessful and believing that they are unable to do as well as their more successful peers.

When a gap occurs between what a student should learn and what he or she is learning, the school and the home have the difficult task of providing remedial programs for the child. Some children have difficulty closing the knowledge gap, especially if they need help in reading and math—help some parents are unable to give. Closing the gap is necessary if students are going to be able to meet the high educational standards set by the Board of Education in the Standards of Learning.

Children must have the readiness experiences and parental support that guarantee success in the early years of schooling.

The revised Standards of Learning (SOL), in place since 1995, provide a consistent framework of knowledge, processes, and skills taught in every school in the commonwealth.

Early success and continued parental support will foster academic progress throughout the elementary grades. If children are successful in the early grades, they should have the confidence they need to meet the challenge of higher level content in the middle grades. By demonstrating their ability to learn challenging content, these students will earn a diploma and break the intergenerational cycle of illiteracy inherited from their parents. They will be prepared to be contributing workers, citizens, and parents in the commonwealth.

According to their teachers, as many as one-third of the children entering kindergarten are unprepared for the challenges they will face.

Years of Promise
Carnegie Corporation

Family literacy supports the Standards of Learning by preparing the parent to accept the role of the child's most important teacher.

The readiness experiences and parental support children need for success are fostered by parents who have achieved high literacy levels and who know how to help their children in school. For parents who are not literate in reading, writing, and mathematics and are uncertain about how to help their children, the answer is family literacy. Family literacy provides instruction adults need to teach young children. Family literacy can provide the child with instruction related to Standards of Learning content and give the parent the skills needed to reinforce the standards at home.

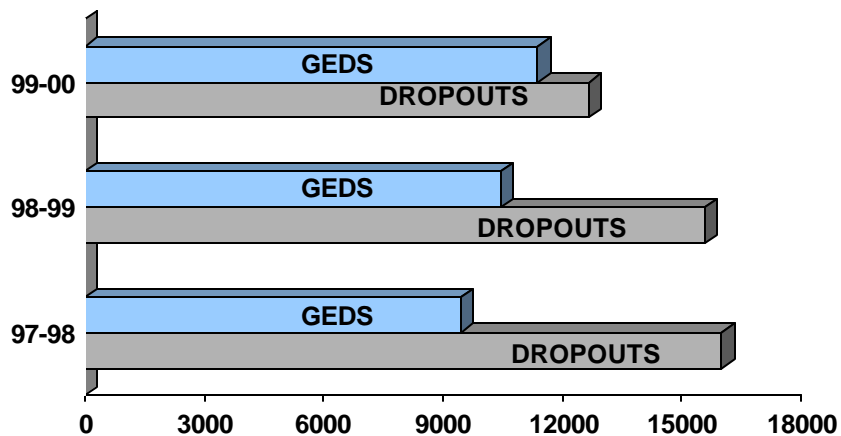
Numerous opportunities exist for raising the educational level of all citizens of the commonwealth.

Virginians without a high school diploma or GED credential need family literacy.

For many years, adult education programs have targeted adults who need preparation for the General Educational Development (GED) test. The GED credential is recognized by employers, higher education, and the armed forces as a key credential for workforce preparation, entry, and upward mobility. Census data show that men and women who hold a GED or high school diploma have earnings significantly higher than workers without high school education (32 percent higher for men and 34 percent higher for women).

The problem of under-educated adults is a challenge, as the number of students who drop out of high school each year (new dropouts) continues to exceed the number of GED certificates awarded each year.

Number of Virginians Who Earned a GED and Number of New High School Dropouts in Virginia for Three Years



The under-educated young people who drop out of school soon become part of the population starting families. The cycle of illiteracy continues unless these young adults enroll in adult education and continue studying for a high school diploma or GED certificate.

Family literacy programs can help young parents complete their high school education while they are providing educational services to their children. The children will receive the readiness skills needed for success with the Standards of Learning, and parents will learn how to address behavior or developmental problems before they become an impediment to their children's education.



We should not be surprised that the reading performance of children whose parents haven't finished high school has not significantly improved over the last 30 years.

Dr. Jo Lynne DeMary
Superintendent of Public Instruction

When families are involved in their children's education in positive ways, children achieve higher grades and test scores.

Strong Families, Strong Schools
US Department of Education

Adults who have a learning disability need family literacy.

One of Virginia's underserved populations are adult students who have a learning disability. Only in the last few years have the needs of learning disabled adults gained visibility among educators and employers. National data suggest that up to 40 percent of the adult population in need of basic education skills have learning disabilities. Many of these disabilities have never been diagnosed, so adults are unaware of what they can do to cope with the learning problem. A disability becomes a barrier for employment when an adult is unable to perform basic skills needed in the workplace.

Adults with learning disabilities have a difficult time helping their children with school work. Even with good intentions, a learning disabled parent has a major obstacle to overcome before he or she can help the child with reading, math, science, or social studies. The frustration felt toward school work by the learning disabled parent—especially when the problem is not diagnosed—may be passed on to the young learner.

Family literacy programs can help parents with disabilities by using research-based strategies and accommodations to learn. Skilled early childhood educators can teach a parent appropriate learning activities to use with the child. In addition to the help parents are receiving, the young child is receiving support with sound, SOL-related learning activities.

Adults in the workforce need family literacy.



The workplace is an appropriate setting for family literacy. Many employers offer GED courses or other basic skills development programs at the work site. When a workplace provides an opportunity for child care, adult education in the workplace is attractive to the parent. The child's time can be used for learning activities. Family literacy provides meaningful developmental activities for children at a place and time that are convenient for the parent.

Family literacy offers employers an incentive for training workers. The parents improve skills needed for work, giving the employer a better trained worker. Family literacy offers the adult an opportunity to improve his or her skills at work while ensuring that the needs of the child are not forgotten.

Virginia's second language population needs family literacy.

Virginia's population is growing and becoming more diverse. According to the 2000 census, the Asian/Pacific Islander population increased in Virginia from 159,053 in 1990 to 264,971 in 2000, a 67 percent increase. Hispanic or Latino Virginians grew from 160,288 in 1990 to 329,540 in 2000, an increase of 106 percent.



These growing populations require English language education, and they look to adult education programs for services. Areas of the state that have traditionally offered English for speakers of other languages cannot meet the demand for classes, and localities that have not offered these programs in the past are seeking resources for new English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

The documented increase in the immigrant population entitled Virginia to receive new federal funding for additional ESL services in 2001. Ten new or expansion programs were funded, but additional funds were not available for other programs that would have served an additional 4,000 students.

Virginia served over 11,000 adult learners in ESL classes last year, but the need for such classes stretches beyond Northern Virginia and Tidewater where waiting lists are common. The Shenandoah Valley, Southwest, Southside, and Central Virginia need educational resources for Virginia's newest families. Almost half of the new adult programs initiated in workplace settings offer ESL classes.

Family literacy can provide English language instruction to immigrant parents and help their children learn English and prepare for school. Family literacy programs can give those parents the tools they need to participate effectively in their children's education and help them to understand the importance of the Standards of Learning.

Adult Education Needs and Participation in Virginia by Ethnicity 1999-2000

Racial/Ethnic Group	Population Over 25	Over 25 That Did Not Receive High School Diploma or GED	Number Served in Adult Education
Asian/Pacific Islander	159,000	5,565	3,270
Black	837,000	200,043	9,063
White	3,554,000	408,710	12,229
Hispanic	159,000	44,043	6,469

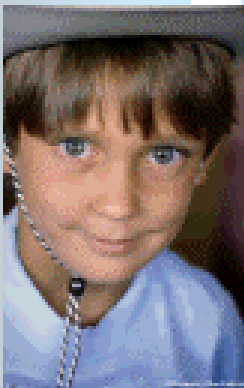
US Census and Virginia Department of Education 2001

Family literacy programs seek to break the intergenerational cycle of illiteracy by providing educational services to the parent and child.

Family literacy programs offered through adult education and Even Start¹, a federally funded family literacy program, are designed to improve the educational opportunities of families by integrating early childhood education and adult education into a unified program. Parents come to adult education for educational opportunities, and their young children become eligible to receive instruction that supplements early childhood education.

Family literacy programs typically consist of four components:

1. Education for the parent to improve basic academic and literacy skills;
2. Education for the child to support emergent literacy skills such as vocabulary building and verbal expression;
3. Structured time for the parent and child together in the classroom in order to teach the parent how to fulfill his or her role as the child's most important teacher; and
4. Time for the parent to study and discuss topics related to child nurturing, managing and coping with child behavior, and community resources.



Children in family literacy programs are poised for academic success. ...[T]he upward spiral that lifts parents toward success also moves these children.

Sharon Darling
National Center for Family Literacy

Children of mothers with high levels of education stay in school longer than children of mothers with low levels of education.

Office of Research
US Government

¹ Even Start was begun by the U. S. Department of Education in 1989, and it is designed to provide literacy training for parents while assisting children in reaching their full potential as learners in school. The program is designed for parents of children eight years and younger, who are, themselves, over 16 years of age, not enrolled in secondary school and weak in basic skills. Programs must provide integrated services to accomplish program goals.

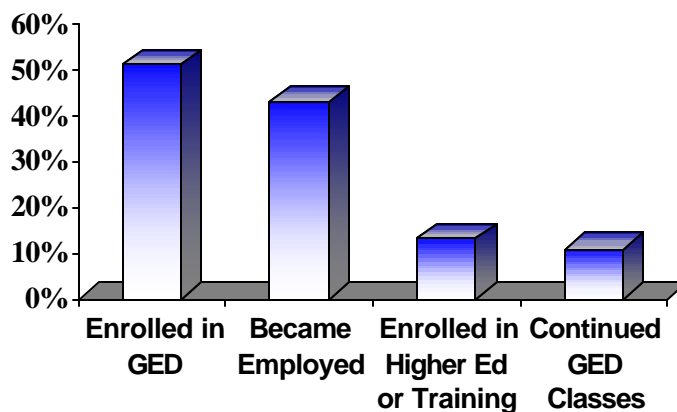


Family literacy has a history of success.

Participation in family literacy programs has been proven to help both the parent and child. Regardless of the reason the adult lacks basic skills (i.e., left school early, was socially promoted, speaks another language, or has a learning disability), returning to adult education to gain needed skills is a positive step toward a better future for the family.

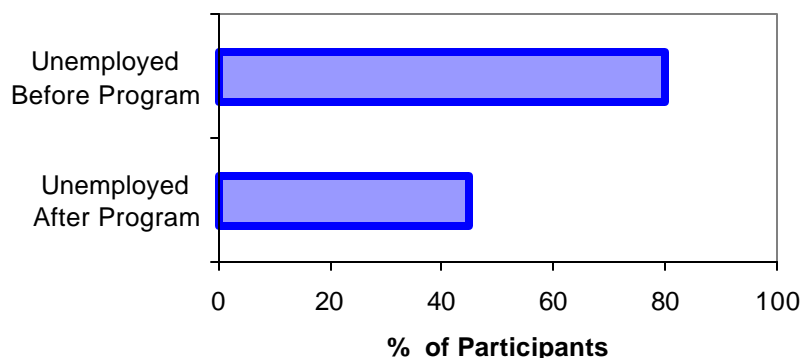
Adults who enroll in family literacy programs tend to stay in adult education and improve their employment status. Many adults enter community colleges or training programs after receiving the GED credential. One of the goals many Virginians have while in adult education is to qualify for a better job and find one.

Actions of Parents Participating in Family Literacy



National Center for Family Literacy Follow-up Studies

Employment Status of Even Start Participants



Follow-up Study of the Kenan Trust Family Literacy Model



Family literacy helps children become successful students.

Children participating in family literacy programs in 15 cities made gains at least three times greater than what was expected (National Institute for Literacy). In a study reported by the National Center for Family Literacy, more than 90 percent of at-risk preschoolers who completed family literacy programs were judged as ready for school with no expected academic difficulties. Two years later, none of the children had been held back in school. (More than 8,300 Virginia students were retained in kindergarten and first grade in 1999-2000.) As many programs report, family literacy raises the skill level and children's motivation to learn.

Family literacy requires parents to be involved in their children's education. The National Survey of Parents of Public School Students (1999) reported that 79 percent of parents believe increased parental involvement can improve education. Sustained interest in the academic performance of their children can occur when parents who feel disconnected from the school they remember are reconnected to education through family literacy.

In order for all children to be successful with the Standards of Learning, families that are under-educated must work harder to help their children succeed. Weak basic skills can impede a parent's participation in a child's learning process. Family literacy will provide basic skills instruction for the parent while he or she is learning how to help the schools provide the best opportunity for the child to learn, grow, and be successful.

Family literacy is an investment in Virginia's families, Virginia's students, and Virginia's future.

The substantial relationship between parent involvement and the reading comprehension levels of children is well documented. Where involvement is low, children scored an average of 46 points below the national average in reading, and where involvement is high, children scored 28 points above the national average—a gap of 74 points.

Reading Literacy in the United States: Findings from the IEA Reading Literacy Study
US Department of Education, 1996

The Task Force on Adult Education and Literacy makes the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION

1

Family literacy should be a priority for the Board of Education.

The citizens of Virginia expect all students to learn and perform well in school. The Board of Education has made a strong commitment to the Standards of Learning and its accompanying accountability program as a way of raising the educational floor for all students. Parents must be full partners in the learning process, and they can help their children learn and do well in school. However, many children continue to struggle with the content of the Standards of Learning and have been unable to pass the SOL tests.

Research confirms that the education level of the parent is a good predictor of how a student will perform in school. Regrettably, Virginia has about 700,000 adults who did not complete high school. Of this number, many are between the ages of 18 and 45 and are parents. The first and most important teachers of children are parents, but parents must possess the literacy skills that equip them for the tasks of reading, writing, speaking in English, computing, and solving problems. If parents and educators reach children before academic difficulties occur, children can be expected to meet our expectations of high performance. But if we overlook families that are not literate, the young children of illiterate parents are faced with barriers to their education that they do not have the power to overcome. The solution to this problem is to provide under-educated parents with their own learning opportunities in a family literacy program. As a result, they will become involved in the education of their children, and the children will have a greater opportunity to learn and perform well in school.

The Board of Education hopes to see every school reach full accreditation in the next few years. Teachers and principals are working hard, but they need the help of parents. Parents want their children to succeed in school, but many did not achieve the educational level needed to provide help at home. Family literacy programs will build a support system for the Standards of Learning by increasing the skills of parents, increasing the skills of students, and helping parents understand how important it is for them to help their children at home.

By communicating the importance of family literacy programs to parents, school administrators, teachers, citizens, and policy makers we will raise the level of awareness of family literacy and its potential for breaking the cycle of intergenerational illiteracy in Virginia.

Adult education is the responsibility of the Board of Education and the school divisions. Family literacy should become a primary delivery system of adult education and a key strategy for helping children prepare for and do well in school. The Task Force on Adult Education and Literacy believes that by declaring family literacy a priority, the Board of Education will send a strong message to parents, employers, and citizens that it is time to take illiteracy in Virginia seriously.

The Standards of Learning create a strong foundation upon which we are educating our children. Now it is time to help adults in Virginia who are challenged by the same basic skills of reading, writing, and using mathematics—especially those adults who can help their children learn.

RECOMMENDATION **2**

An organizational structure and resources should be provided to establish family literacy programs throughout Virginia.

To provide the structure and support needed for family literacy to become a priority in Virginia, the Task Force makes the following four recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION

2.1 – A state family literacy grant program should be developed. Initially, one million dollars will be needed to fund 20 grants. This fund should continue to grow until every locality in the commonwealth has at least one family literacy grant.

RECOMMENDATION

2.2 – The Even Start program, a federally-funded family literacy program, should become part of the program of the Virginia Department of Education’s Office of Adult Education and Literacy.

RECOMMENDATION

2.3 – A Family Literacy Center should be established to identify best practices in family literacy, provide training to educators who deliver such services, and develop materials for use throughout the state. An allocation of \$300,000 would be required to operate the center.

RECOMMENDATION

2.4 – The Office of Adult Education and Literacy should be elevated to a division within the organizational structure of the Department of Education.

A few family literacy programs, funded primarily with federal funds, are operating in Virginia. Most elementary schools have not been associated with such a program. Family literacy can impact parents and children only if we build the capacity to develop these programs. Building family literacy programs will take several years and will require funding for local programs and resources to train teachers.

Dr. Jo Lynne DeMary, superintendent of public instruction, has asked the Office of Adult Education and Literacy to coordinate family literacy activities so that providers in various offices of the Department of Education and other agencies and foundations can collaborate and share information. The Department of Education is seeking a federal Even Start Statewide Literacy Initiative Grant to support this coordination. This is a good start. The next step is to create a structure for long-term support for this effort and a strategy for securing needed resources for adult education.

There are several immediate concerns. First, the number of elementary schools that remain *Accredited with Warning* verify that many students need help with the content they are being taught and the skills being developed in the early years. Second, as long as the number of students dropping out of school exceeds the number of GED credentials earned each year, we will continue to have a significant number of parents of young children who are under-educated and are not able to help their children prepare for school. Third, the ESL population is large in several parts of the state and growing throughout the state overall. These adults need services to help them learn to speak and read and write in English. Finally, there continues to be a large adult population who can benefit from adult literacy classes. Therefore, the Task Force asks that funds be solicited immediately for family literacy programs that will focus on adult literacy, ESL and/or GED preparation for parents in addition to early childhood education.

The Office of Adult Education and Literacy is not staffed to support a major family literacy initiative. The Task Force recommends that a family literacy center be established under the direction of the Department of Education.² A center would offer the technical assistance and training resources needed to ensure that family literacy programs operate at an effective, results-oriented level. The early stage of this initiative is the time to be concerned with the quality of the program, and a center is the mechanism for ensuring good program results.³ The family literacy center would have the responsibility of facilitating communication and collaboration among stakeholders in the field.

The Task Force believes that grants for family literacy should be made by the commonwealth. To address the two major problems cited above—the number

² There are no state-funded positions in adult education except for those associated with GED testing administration, records maintenance, and GED alternative education programs in K-12.

³ The restrictions on the use of federal funds at the state level make it unlikely that existing federal resources can support the program development that is needed in the localities.

of persons without a high school education and the children who are unable to pass the Standards of Learning tests—a goal should be set to have a family literacy program in each locality. The Task Force suggests beginning this initiative with 20 programs in elementary schools that are *Accredited with Warning* or in communities whose schools have low Standards of Learning test scores. Following the initial allocation required to begin the family literacy initiative, funding should be increased annually until the goal of a program in each locality is met. Coordinating this initiative with the federally-funded Even Start program should take five years.

The Even Start model is well respected and serves as a good foundation upon which to build new family literacy programs. Combining the resources of Even Start with adult education funds will enable the state to maximize the number and consistency of programs in the commonwealth.

The Task Force recommends that the Even Start program be directed and managed by the Office of Adult Education and Literacy. It is currently administered by the Office of Compensatory Education in the Division of Instructional Support Services.

As the Task Force studied the components of adult education—family literacy being one type of service—it was clear that providing the leadership for these statewide adult programs is a major responsibility of the Department of Education. The Office of Adult Education and Literacy works with every school division, most of the private literacy providers, a number of community colleges, and regional jails to provide comprehensive adult education programs throughout the state. This office operates under memoranda of understanding among many state agencies, and contracts with several four-year colleges and universities to meet the obligations related to adult education in Virginia. The office also collaborates regularly with the Virginia Community College System, the Virginia Literacy Foundation, the Workforce Improvement Network, and many economic development groups to direct the services of adult education to the needs of the communities and employers in the state. In addition to adult education funding, programming, and evaluation, the Office of Adult Education and Literacy has full responsibility for the GED testing program and the distribution and maintenance of GED certificates and transcripts. During the past year, two additional programs have been added to this office. Proprietary Education is responsible for licensing all proprietary schools in the state. Veterans Education approves all programs in two- and four-year colleges and proprietary schools for which veterans can receive educational benefits.

The wide range of responsibilities assigned to the Office of Adult Education and Literacy and the new emphasis on family literacy within the Department of Education suggest that it is time this office be given more visibility within the overall structure of the agency. One strategy for accomplishing this recommendation would be to elevate the office to a division within the agency. The Division of Adult Education and Literacy would continue to house all of the services it now has, and it would begin managing Even Start programs—grants

to localities and the new statewide grant for which the Department of Education is applying. This division would have oversight of the family literacy center.

The Board of Education should appoint an Advisory Council on Adult Education to report annually to the Board.

The Task Force has spent the last 10 months learning about the magnitude of adult education programs. The perspective of individuals who represented a number of groups was of great value to the Task Force. The variety of viewpoints presented has challenged everyone's thinking about how adult education can be delivered more effectively when so many needs are expressed by learners, practitioners, program evaluators, and the community.

The Task Force believes that adult education in Virginia would be well served by a standing advisory council to the Board of Education. The advisory council could be structured similar to the Task Force, and it would represent the interests and views of several interested groups. It would have the responsibility for recommending approval of plans for federal and state programs, and would continue to make recommendations to the Board of Education on an annual basis. It would function very much like the board's other standing advisory groups.

The Task Force recommends that the advisory council be established shortly after the Task Force is discharged, so that the Office of Adult Education and Literacy can continue to use a lay board to help establish priorities for program initiatives and limited resources. The advisory council may also be valuable in establishing partnerships among adult education providers and future funding sources. There are a number of important issues that the advisory council would study—issues important to those who work in the field. These issues include: GED and ESL services, identifying learning disabilities and providing appropriate learning strategies to those identified, educational technology for teachers and learners, and the need for full-time teachers.

Charge of the Task Force

In the spring of 2000, Mr. Kirk T. Schroder, president of the Board of Education, announced that a Task Force would study issues in adult education in Virginia. He charged the Task Force to look internally and externally for solutions to the challenges facing adult education in Virginia.

The Task Force met regularly from September 2000 through May 2001. This report summarizes the conclusions reached after the Task Force studied how adult education is provided in Virginia, how adult education is structured and funded in other states, and the demands on adult education that are anticipated in coming years.

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Ms. Joan Powers	Virginia Community College System	VA
Mr. Richard Staton	Department of Correctional Education	VA

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APPENDIX A

ADULT EDUCATION TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (ABE)

Instructional programs that provide basic skills to adults who are performing below the ninth-grade level in reading, writing, computation, computer literacy, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills.

ADULT EDUCATION

Formal education programs for adults, including continuing education, continuing professional education, adult basic education but not higher education, vocational education, or technical education.

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT OF 1998

Same as Title II of the WIA of 1998; reauthorizes adult education and literacy programs for fiscal years 1999-2003; purpose is to create a partnership among the federal government, states, and localities to provide, on a voluntary basis, adult education and literacy services in order to (1) assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency; (2) assist adults who are parents to obtain the educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children; and (3) assist adults in the completion of a secondary school education. The first Adult Education Act was passed in 1964 and has been amended several times over the years, including the 1991 version known as the *National Literacy Act*.

ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION

Instructional programs that serve adults with less than a high school diploma (or equivalent) and with basic skills from ninth grade and above, including the General Educational Development credential (GED), high school credit programs for adults, and external diploma programs (EDP).

COMMUNITY-BASED LITERACY PROGRAMS

Funded by the Office of Adult Education and Literacy to provide support for the work of private, not-for-profit literacy organizations that offer tutoring and other one-on-one small group instructional approaches delivered primarily by volunteers. In most cases, the adult learners served by these programs need low-level literacy instruction.

CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Programs funded with federal adult education monies at local and regional jails to provide adult basic education and preparation for the GED.

ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (ESOL)

Instructional programs that provide basic educational services to adults who are not native speakers of English; primary goal is proficiency in English. (According to the 1998 NALS document "The State of Literacy in America," this population consists of those 18 years and over who either speak English "not well" or "not at all.") The English Literacy and Civics Education program, which was started by the United States Department of Education through funding from the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, provides high-quality, integrated English literacy and civics education services to immigrants and other adults in Virginia and certain other states with limited English proficiency.

EVEN START FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM

The purpose of the Even Start Family Literacy Program is to help break the cycle of poverty by improving educational opportunities for families. This is accomplished by integrating early adult literacy, adult basic education, and parenting education into a unified literacy program that provides educational experiences for adults and their children who are eight years and younger.

EXTERNAL DIPLOMA PROGRAM (EDP)

A nontraditional high school diploma program designed for adults who have acquired many skills through work and life experiences; participants must demonstrate a mastery of 65 skills expected of a high school graduate and must have an individual competency that can be documented (e.g., work experience, a special talent, or completion of a job entry level course); all tasks must be completed with 100 percent mastery.

FAMILY LITERACY

The concept generally means that a parent and a child are simultaneously developing their education and literacy skills. The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998 defines family literacy as “those services that are of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family and that integrate interactive literacy activities between parents and their children; training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children; parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency; an age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.”

GED INSTRUCTION

Provided by local school districts to individuals wishing to prepare to take the General Educational Development (GED) tests; fees may be charged for instruction and/or books, and pre-testing with the Official GED Practice Test is encouraged.

GED (GENERAL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT) TESTING PROGRAM

Requires successful completion of a battery of five comprehensive examinations in writing skills, social studies, science, interpreting literature and the arts, and mathematics; the American Council on Education that owns the test sets passing requirements in cooperation with the state.

LITERACY

An individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute, and solve problems, at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual, and in society.

PROGRAM MANAGER, ADULT EDUCATION

There is a program manager in each locality or region. The program manager should submit the annual application for adult education funds, manage the adult education budget, recruit adult learners, provide reports for the adult education data system, as required by the National Reporting System, and perform other management and administrative responsibilities.

REGIONAL ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM MANAGERS

A group of regional program managers who work with several local programs in the management of adult education funds and programs. Seven of these positions in targeted areas are funded with state funds.

REGIONAL ADULT EDUCATION INSTRUCTIONAL SPECIALISTS

A group of instructional leaders assigned to certain regions of the state to assist in improving instructional practices, staff development, and student performance in those regions. There are 17 of these positions funded with state monies.

REGIONAL LITERACY COORDINATING COMMITTEES (RLCC)

There are 18 of these committees in 18 regions of the state. Members represent the agencies that have a role in serving adult learners, and the major goal of the RLCCs is to promote effective collaboration among all agencies serving adult learners. Each RLCC has a lead agent who sits on the Council of Lead Agents.

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT (WIA) OF 1998

Replaced all previous job training legislation, except the Perkins Act, including the Job Training Partnership Act and the Adult Education Act, which is now called the “Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998” or Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

WORKFORCE EDUCATION

Job-related skill development to secure employment or to achieve an upgrade in employment.

WORKPLACE EDUCATION

Training programs sponsored by employers that provide adult education and literacy instruction as well as job-specific instruction for employees in the workplace. The Workforce Improvement Network (WIN) at James Madison University provides support for these programs.

