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ABSTRACT

Discussion of national language policy concerning adult English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) education examines conditions in American demographics and adult education, looks at kinds of policy required to meet predicted educational needs, and encourages ESL educators to become involved in the policy formation process. The first section discusses need for national adult ESL education policy, surveying trends in ESL instruction across federal and private sectors. It concludes with a call to action, suggesting three interdependent strategies for creating ESL-related policy. The second section elaborates on these strategies, examining key issues that must be addressed if the profession is to present a coherent, comprehensive ESL policy agenda to Congress. Characteristics of the adult ESL population and its educational needs are outlined, policy changes are suggested in areas of funding, recognition, and program quality improvement, and general policy recommendations are made. A concluding section describes actions that ESL professionals can take at the classroom, program, district, and state levels. Appended materials include notes on procedures for legislative review of the Adult Education Act, a timeline for involvement of ESL educators, glossary of acronyms, description of one adult ESL professional's experiences with policy formation, and list of related electronic message services. Contains 23 references. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

Issues in ESL LITERACY EDUCATION

2

A National Language Policy for ESL

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CONTENTS

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This paper is, in large part, an outgrowth of recent developments in thinking about ESL policy. Many of the ideas discussed are based on a 1993 study of ESL policy funded by the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund and conducted by Forrest E. Chisman, Heide Spruck Wrigley, and Danielle T. Ewen of the Southport Institute for Policy Analysis. The study involved a working group of ESL educators who debated ESL policy issues, wrote background papers, and supported the final recommendations. Several publications (Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993; Crandall, 1993a; Mansoor, 1994; Wiley, 1993; Wrigley, 1994; Wrigley, Chisman, and Ewen, 1993) developed as part of the study are available from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service.

During the summer and fall of 1994, ESL policy issues were further discussed by an ad hoc policy group, convened by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) in Washington, DC, and by a group of ESL educators from around the country brought together by the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). A number of ideas examined here were discussed at those meetings as well. The following people participated in one or more of those meetings and contributed their ideas: David Rosen of the Adult Literacy Resource Institute in Boston; Inaam Mansoor of the Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP) in Virginia; Dan Holt of the California State Department of Education; Robert Berdán and Terrence Wiley of California State University, Long Beach; Donna Christian, Sara Mélendez, Allene Grognet, Margo Pfleger, and Jeannette Lopez of CAL; Miriam Burt, Fran Keenan, and Joy Peyton of the National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE) at CAL; Klaudia Rivera of El Barrio Popular in New York City; Carol Clymer of El Paso Community College; Barbara Prete, an ESL literacy consultant from New York City; Elaine Bausch of the Fairfax County (Virginia) Adult ESL program; Dave Edwards of the Joint National Council on Languages (JNCL); Jim Lyons of the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE); Andrew Hartman and Sondra Stein of NIFL; Jeanne Lopez-Váladez of Northern Illinois University; K. Lynn Savage of the Staff Development Institute for California Adult Education; Gail Weinstein-Shr of San Francisco State University; Susan Bayley and Terry O'Donnell of TESOL, Inc.; Patricia De-Hesus-Lopez of Texas A&I University; Reynaldo Macías of the University of California, Santa Barbara; and JoAnn Crandall of the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

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However, the ideas expressed in this paper are ours, and we are solely responsible for its content.

INTRODUCTION

English as a second language (ESL) educators have a unique opportunity to inform national policy and shape federal legislation. In the late fall of 1994, the U.S. Department of Education held hearings and requested input from adult educators about the reauthorization of two important acts that shape what happens in ESL classrooms around the United States: the Adult Education Act (AEA) and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act (Perkins Act). Sometime in 1995, Congress will also hold hearings about this legislation. Issues of workplace training and pre-employment education for parents receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), one aspect of welfare, are likely to be part of the upcoming welfare reform debate. In addition, family literacy will continue to receive attention since the Head Start program now includes a literacy component for parents, as does Chapter I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, now called the Improve America's Schools Act, IASA). Hence, public schools must examine what role ESL and literacy will play in their parent involvement programs.

Because adults learning English comprise a significant part of the population being served under federal adult education programs—more than 40 percent in 1992 (Development Associates, 1993)—ESL issues *should* be considered as part of any proposed legislation. Whether ESL *will* be considered depends in large part on the efforts of those in the ESL field to influence the national debate. The involvement of ESL students, teachers, and administrators is essential to this effort, as is the participation of organizations involved in language minority issues, such as the following: the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), the Joint National Committee on Languages (JNCL), and Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL). National volunteer organizations such as Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) and Laubach Literacy International (LLI), as well as community-based organizations concerned with providing adult basic education (ABE) and ESL services to language minority adults, are also important participants.

ESL education shares many concerns with the adult education field at large: unstable funding and fragmentation of services, the lack of assessment models that inform instruction as well as policy, the lack of teaching standards and professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators, the inability of programs to effectively respond to the multiple needs of clients, the lack of adequate funding for the study and use of new technologies, and the danger that issues of employment and training might overshadow the need for adult basic education. These concerns must be addressed by all those who are interested in the future of adult education.[1]

[1] *ESL educators also share concerns with immigrant rights advocates. Joining forces can help both causes on such issues as equity, access, and the need for increased opportunities in education, employment, and training. The electronic forums now being established are a starting point for discussing these issues and forging a common agenda.*

If those involved in ESL make their voices heard, will anyone pay attention? What policies are in place now that need to be changed? If ESL students and teachers do speak up, what should they say, and how can they ensure that policymakers will listen? This paper suggests some answers to these questions. It gives a brief overview of the changing demographics in this country and the role of ESL in adult education and then outlines some national responses to ESL issues as evidenced in federal programs and legislation. Next, it examines some of the key issues that need to be debated if the field is to present an ESL policy agenda to Congress. Finally, in appendices A and B, it presents strategies for participating in a policy dialogue and advocating for change.[2] (Appendix C is a glossary of acronyms to facilitate reading this paper *and* participating in the dialogue; Appendix E is a list of ESL and literacy groups mentioned in the paper and how they can be contacted; and Appendix F includes subscription information for several electronic discussion lists mentioned in the paper.)

[2] *Although there is a strong need for the involvement of ESL professionals in policy discussions at various levels (program, community, state) and in various domains (education, pre-employment training, skills standards), this paper focuses primarily on opportunities for shaping adult education legislation in 1995, because legislative activity is of immediate concern to those involved in adult ESL.*

WHY HAVE A NATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICY?

Although adult ESL education has not played a major role in policy discussions at the national level, there are now signs of responsiveness from the federal government, particularly in light of recent statistics. Census numbers from 1990 indicate that 25.5 million adults speak a language other than English at home, and, of those, 5.8 million report that they speak English "not well" or "not at all" (Macías, 1994, p. 17). Because the Census only collected information about English-speaking ability in background interviews and since self-reported data on language proficiency can be unreliable, the number of adults who could benefit from ESL classes may be much higher. In fact, the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) reported that 11 million of the adults who scored at the lowest of five levels were immigrants. Since many of those who scored in the second lowest category of the NALS were immigrants as well, the true number of adults who need ESL services is likely approaching 12 to 14 million (Chisman, Wrigley, & Ewen, 1993).

Data on participation and retention rates of those receiving educational services reveal that adults who are new to English are highly motivated to learn, and that they flock to ESL classes to improve their skills. Existing ESL programs, especially in urban areas, often report long waiting lists and large classes of more than 40 learners (Chisman, Wrigley, & Ewen, 1993). And, according to the Department of Education, nearly half of the projects receiving federal funding under the National Workplace Literacy Program include ESL instruction at the worksite (Rosenblum, in press).

The U.S. Department of Education reports that ESL is now the largest of three components of services funded under the AEA, comprising 41 percent of reported 1993 enrollment in ABE, ESL, and adult secondary education (ASE) classes (Development Associates, 1994). When only ABE and ESL components are considered, ESL constitutes 55 percent of the total enrollment. Besides representing a high percentage of enrollment, ESL learners also tend to stay longer in classes than do most ABE learners; 70 percent of all instructional hours in adult education are ESL hours. Additionally, because the cost per seat hour goes down as people stay longer in programs, ESL instruction tends to cost less per instructional hour than do ABE and ASE.[3]

What are the implications of these numbers? This country is seeing a growing need for services to adults who need to learn English to communicate with English speakers, to become or remain employed, and to participate more fully in their communities.

[3] *M. Morgan, Associate Director for Data Analysis at Development Associates, December 1994, personal communication.*

Adult ESL education is growing in significance and requires policy reform so that the services provided are adequate in scope, appropriate to the need, and effective in terms of delivery and impact. In short, it is time to make ESL a priority in policy discussions.

ESL Across Federal Programs: Beyond the AEA

Adult ESL programs funded by the Adult Education Act are not the only programs that attract English learners eager for an education. A large number of adult learners sign up for job training and employment readiness programs funded through the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) programs and refugee programs. In addition, many immigrants seek to participate in vocational programs funded in part by the Department of Education (ED) under the Perkins Act. Also, family literacy programs funded through the Improve America's Schools Act attract a high percentage of adults wanting to learn English.

For many English learners, the motivation to attend employment preparation programs may not be to learn English per se, but to learn a skill, to gain entry into vocational training, or to prepare for a technical career. However, most vocational programs require English proficiency for entry, and the proficiency levels required are often kept artificially high by both the funding agent and the service provider.[4] Although adults enrolled in employment-related programs want and need English, they are often frustrated by requirements that they must take general ESL classes for several months, if not years, before they are eligible for skills training.

As the number of adults needing both ESL and skills training grows, the field must advocate for policies within DOL, HHS, and the Office of Vocational and Adult Education of the Department of Education that facilitate rather than impede transition of ESL learners from generic ESL programs into mainstream job skills training.[5]

Trends for the Adult ESL Field

As ESL enrollment continues to grow, the significance of the adult ESL field is starting to be recognized. There are several indications of this, especially on the part of the U.S. Department of Education, the National Institute for Literacy, TESOL, and some foundations.

- In 1995, for the first time in the history of the Adult Education Act, ESL is being viewed as an issue in its own right by the Department of Education. A task force established by ED has been briefed by ESL educators on the policy concerns of the field. ED has also asked teachers and other professionals in the

[4] In some JTPA-funded programs, entrants must have completed the GED to be eligible for training. Other programs set the threshold entry at a grade-level proficiency (for example, grade 7, as measured by the Test of Adult Basic Education, TABE). This may be unrelated to the language difficulty of material presented in the program. Previous experience and training with workplace content in the native language is often not taken into consideration when determining eligibility for skills training.

[5] Training models that integrate ESL with skills training or English language acquisition and academic/vocational skills have been around for years but so far have not caught the attention of policymakers. For further discussion of these issues, see Northern Illinois University, 1994. For a discussion of transition issues in adult ESL education, see Wiley, 1993; Wrigley, 1994; and Wrigley, Chisman, & Ewen, 1993.

ESL field at large to voice their concerns and submit ideas for the AEA's probable restructuring.

- The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), administered jointly by DOL, HHS, and ED, has placed ESL on its agenda to be addressed as a major issue relating to NIFL's work in family, community, and workplace literacy. In 1994, NIFL hosted a small group of ESL educators in Washington to discuss policy recommendations.
- TESOL has established the Adult Education Legislative Advisory Group, which is focused around restructuring of the Adult Education Act. An ad hoc policy group on ESL has also been convened by CAL in Washington, DC.

ESL is gaining visibility with funders outside the federal government as well. Several major private foundations have made a commitment to the education of immigrant youths and adults.

- The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has funded three projects in 1994 in the area of immigrant education and policy: a study on immigrant policies in the United States, being conducted by the Urban Institute; a project on workplace/workforce ESL being conducted by CAL; and a project on secondary school immigrant youth being conducted by CAL, California Tomorrow, California State University Long Beach, the Intercultural Development Research Association, and the University of Maryland Baltimore County.
- The Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund funded a year-long study on ESL policy in 1993, which was conducted by the Southport Institute for Policy Analysis. Over the next several years, the foundation will be supporting community-based adult ESL projects in San Diego, San Francisco, Chicago, and New York City.
- The Annenberg CPB Foundation has funded the development of a major video-based ESL series produced by WGBH, Boston, that will be broadcast on public television beginning in January, 1997, and that will be available on videocassettes for use at home and in classrooms.

This foundation interest in immigrant education is the result of changing U.S. demographics and the educational needs of the growing immigrant population. It provides refreshing contrast to the anti-immigrant backlash, appearing in parts of the country, that might induce policymakers to restrict rather than expand services to immigrants.

Along with these positive trends, there are some negative ones. Although there are strong supporters of ESL education in various federal departments, financial support for programs serving those learning English has shrunk in some governmental agencies and support for ESL classes has been reduced. Recent patterns of funding indicate that the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) at HHS places a higher priority on employment than on English proficiency. Given the priorities of the

JOBS Program, which in most states is implemented as a triage system (i.e., most of the money is spent on those who are most job-ready and can move through the system most quickly), it is likely that eligible adult immigrants who need a lot of ESL instruction will not be served at all, thus losing their chance for job training now and stable employment later. However, English proficiency does not have to be a prerequisite for training. Bilingual vocational training, a model that integrates ESL, native language support, and training, can also serve to get adults who are not proficient in English ready for jobs that pay a living wage. However, although this model has a track record of success, it has been poorly funded in the past, is currently not funded, and is likely to disappear altogether.

In many ways the bilingual model is ideal for helping immigrants receive state-of-the-art training; however, it has received little attention under the JOBS program. At the same time, there are other very bright lights at HHS: ORR has funded a number of projects that target priority needs in refugee families and communities. Several of these projects include ESL, citizenship instruction, and family literacy for refugees. In addition, in the fall and winter of 1994, ORR sponsored a series of ESL conferences throughout the United States, designed to build the capacity of the field to offer English language training to adult immigrants. It has also funded the participation of a group of refugees at TESOL's 1994 and 1995 conventions.

Why should ESL educators care about the apparent lack of priority given to ESL services at DOL and HHS? There are two reasons. First, since funds that will be available to the Department of Education are small compared with the monies requested in the administration's Reemployment Act of 1994 and welfare reform proposals (to be administered by DOL and HHS, respectively), it is extremely important that ESL issues be considered as priorities in these proposals. Second, several proposals have been put forth suggesting that ABE and job training monies be consolidated. Adult education and ESL professionals must work together to ensure that any new legislation takes language and literacy issues into account and protects the integrity of adult basic education. ESL educators, in particular, must bring issues of access and equity to the forefront of discussions so that language minority adults receive adequate services.

A Call to Action

To ensure that those who are learning English are not ignored in discussions about adult education policy and funding, those working in the field must develop three interdependent strategies:

1. Support and promote a set of principles to ensure that ESL issues are considered in all areas of legislation and, based on these principles, provide consistent input to policymakers as new legislation is introduced and debated;
2. Reach a consensus on several key issues that need to be addressed in the Adult Education Act or any other legislation that concerns education and training for language minority adults, and form a unified vision of how to address ESL issues;
3. Develop a plan for policy involvement based on a campaign of grassroots advocacy to present recommendations to policymakers. (See David Rosen's description of grassroots advocacy in Appendix D.)

The remainder of this paper addresses these strategies, first outlining ESL issues to be considered in legislation and then presenting ideas on how educators can get involved in policy discussions.

ESL ISSUES IN ADULT EDUCATION LEGISLATION

Given the demographics of the United States and the well established need for language and literacy education, ESL issues must be addressed in all major pieces of legislation related to education, training, workforce literacy, and family literacy. To help this process, the ESL field needs a set of principles and talking points that can form the basis for discussions with policymakers concerned with all adult education legislation.

Principles of this sort were developed in the fall of 1994 by an ad hoc policy group in Washington, DC that included representatives from CAL, the National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE), the Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP), JNCL, TESOL, Aguirre International, and the University of Maryland Baltimore County. The purpose of these principles (listed below) is to guide discussion in the field and to prepare for a policy agenda that ESL educators across the country might put forward as opportunities for input into federal legislation arise.

Principles Regarding ESL in Adult Education Legislation

The Adult Education Act (AEA) should be reauthorized and adult education programs strengthened to better meet the needs of the nation's increasingly diverse population. Adult English as a second language (ESL) services should be coordinated with and incorporated into related federal reform efforts. Adult education legislation should reflect an understanding of the following principles:

- Consistent with Goal Six, that "every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship," English language instruction is essential for a growing segment of the adult and out-of-school youth population. It serves as a natural partner for transitioning them into effective citizenship and employment, as well as further education and training.
- The adult ESL population in this country represents an important national resource, with language and cross-cultural communication skills that can strengthen our

nation's position in the evolving international economy. The potential of this resource is limited if this population does not have access to English language instruction.

- Effective ESL programs take into account the unique linguistic and cultural backgrounds of this population and provide opportunities for them to learn English as well as to develop proficiency in their native languages, in order to more fully participate in and contribute to American society.
- Funding for adult ESL programs is an investment in human resource development and should be increased and better targeted to reflect demographic trends.
- To maximize investment in this human resource, funding must be provided not only for quality programs but also for information collection and dissemination, networking, technical assistance, capacity building, and research at the national level. The federal government should continue to support such programs as the National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education, the National Institute for Literacy, and the State Literacy Resource Centers.
- Consistent with Goal Four, which emphasizes the need for high standards for learning, citizenship, and employment, there should be support for states to 1) develop appropriate standards and measures of accountability for the education of the nation's adult ESL population; 2) provide standards and measures of accountability for the preparation of qualified, well-trained ESL professionals; and 3) provide access to and professional development for the use of technology in adult education (Ad hoc policy group, 1994).

In addition to these general principles, more specific talking points need to be developed as adult education legislation is considered. Policymakers will want to hear about what presents the greatest barriers to building an effective service system for ESL learners and will look for specific ideas on how to improve the system. They might be most responsive to ideas that are part of a reform agenda. Three such reform issues are (1) supporting the development of quality standards and accountability systems that are appropriate for ESL; (2) building the capacity of the field to deliver services that are likely to have a significant impact; and (3) supporting programs and states in developing outcome measures that reflect the needs and goals of ESL learners.

Distinct Features of Adult ESL

ESL education differs inherently from adult basic education for native English speakers because ESL learners born outside the United States have backgrounds and educational needs different from those of learners for whom the system was originally designed. Adult ESL should not be viewed as "ABE with an accent." Here are some of the facts that learners, teachers, and others involved in adult education can present to policymakers.

1. ESL is not a remedial service or a compensatory program. ESL programs present an opportunity for immigrants to the United States to learn English and to participate more fully in an English-speaking environment. While ABE programs are often regarded as second-chance programs for adults who were unsuccessful in school, immigrant adults have never had the opportunity to become fluent in English; therefore, ESL instruction constitutes a first-chance program for them (Crandall, 1993a). Furthermore, the adult ESL population is very diverse. Some adult ESL learners are recent arrivals to the United States and need newcomer services. Others, including those who became legal residents under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), have lived in the United States for a number of years and may be quite familiar with U.S. customs and laws. Any policy for ESL education must take into account that programs for newcomers require special cultural orientation and counseling components to help new immigrants adjust to their surroundings and learn their rights and responsibilities as U.S. residents.

2. Adults who are new to English need more than just literacy instruction. Unlike their ABE counterparts, adult ESL learners need to develop proficiency in spoken English along with skills in reading and writing English. In fact, learning how to speak English and how to understand what is said are often the primary goals for adults who come to English classes, especially at the beginning levels. Nonnative speakers of English must acquire a whole new language system (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, word forms, and sentence structure) while developing skills in speaking, understanding, reading, and writing. Along with the language system, they must also learn the rules that govern communication in various contexts—in neighborhoods and communities, at the workplace, at social service agencies, and in the schools. Since many of our metropolitan communities are now multilingual, ESL learners must develop competence in cross-cultural communication along with competence in English.

3. Adult ESL learners who speak little or no English require bilingual or translation support. In order to access basic information about available services and to make informed decisions about their future, those who speak little English need basic information in a language that they can understand (just as Americans doing business in a foreign country ght). Since the present educational system is often not responsive to

occasional needs for interpretation in counseling sessions, needs assessments, and program orientations, many adult ESL learners do not find their way to appropriate service providers. As a result, many waste time and effort and can end up taking classes not appropriate to their needs.

4. Adults in ESL classes represent a much wider range of educational backgrounds than English-speaking adults in ABE programs. In fact, only 50 percent of adults in ESL classes lack a high school diploma or its equivalent from their home countries. Many of the rest have at least some post-secondary training, and some have advanced degrees from their home countries. Their profile thus differs significantly from the students for whom the adult basic education system was designed, those without a high school degree or its equivalent. Those with some education in their home countries may still be new to English and therefore need ESL instruction, but for many ESL learners, the most pressing need is the kind of English that moves them quickly into academic or training programs so that they can attain employment commensurate with their education.

ESL learners are represented at the opposite ends of the spectrum as well, exhibiting educational levels that are significantly lower than those of native English speaking program participants. A significant number of adults in ESL classes have had little or no schooling in their home countries and have not had the chance to develop literacy skills in their mother tongue. For this group, merely learning English is not enough. These adults need an opportunity to develop basic literacy skills before or while they are acquiring spoken English. In many cases, literacy classes in the native language[6] (Spanish, Haitian Creole, Hmong) can act as a bridge to English, facilitating the transition to English literacy. At present, the adult education system does not take this distribution of language proficiencies into account, and there are no guidelines for considering the range of native languages possible when designing literacy programs.[7]

5. ESL learners represent a national language resource. Adult ESL learners are, by definition, in the process of becoming bilingual or, in many cases, multilingual. Given the demands of the global economy, implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the prominence given to foreign language acquisition in the National Education Goals, adult immigrants and linguistic minorities born in the United States constitute a national language resource. Historically, adult basic education has failed to recognize the linguistic and cultural resources that immigrants bring to schools, communities, and the workplace. Our present model of education treats lack of English as a deficiency that defines the individual. This is clear in the use of terms such as "limited English proficient adult" or "LEP adult," for example. Seeing language minority adults as a resource, not a problem, and providing sufficient access to ESL programs so that refugees and immigrants can become fully proficient in two languages will enrich our workplaces and communities.

[6] See Gillespie, 1994; Rivera, 1990; Spener, 1994; and Wrigley & Guth, 1992, for discussion of native language literacy issues.

[7] For a discussion of learners who have only a few years of schooling, traditionally known as "literacy learners," see Gillespie, 1994; and Wrigley & Guth, 1992.

Suggested Policy Changes

If the adult education system is to work for the millions of adults who are learning English, significant changes will have to be made in adult education legislation. Primary among those changes are (1) modifications in the funding formula; (2) the establishment or designation of an office responsible for setting, implementing, and monitoring ESL policy; and (3) development of a capacity-building system to improve program quality.

Change the Funding Formula

The present funding formula within the Adult Education Act does not account for thousands of ESL students in its allocation of basic grant funds to the states.[8] At present, monies appropriated for adult basic education and ESL are allocated to states by a formula that asks each state to document the number of adults who have not completed high school (based on census data) and to request funding from that estimate. For ESL programming, that number is problematic for two reasons. First, language minority adults were significantly undercounted in the 1990 Census (Macías, 1994, p. 30), and many immigrants have come to the United States since then. Therefore, the number of potential ESL learners who could generate funds under the formula is likely to be much higher than census data indicate.

Also, as discussed above, half of the adults in ESL classes have the equivalent of a high school diploma from their home country. Given that they have not had the opportunity to learn English, they still may need beginning and intermediate ESL classes. Because this group is not counted as part of the funding formula, states with a significant percentage of these ESL learners do not receive federal funds commensurate with their need to provide instruction.

Both the ESL and ABE systems suffer from this funding formula, which underfunds for ESL learners. With only half of the ESL population generating funds, every local program must target the funds they have to (1) those without high school diplomas who *have* generated funds (their numbers are reflected in the funding formula) and (2) the actual people who come to their doors seeking classes, many of whom are ESL students *with* high school diplomas.[9] Since the formula is not based on actual program participation rates, meager resources are often stretched to serve twice as many students as were intended in the legislation.

A second problem resulting from the present formula is that ESL classes in cities with large immigrant populations are often overcrowded or have long waiting lists. Because many of the ESL learners in these programs have not generated funds according to the formula, the program must limit the number of ESL classes that are offered, leaving many learners without services.[10]

[8] The Adult Education Act provides for basic grants to the states for (1) ABE/ESL and (2) ASE, which covers most GED programs (Part A, sec. 313). All adults and out-of-school youth who need ESL services (regardless of educational background) can be served by the Act, although there is no mandate that requires that adults who need ESL must be served. ESL is an "allowable" service under the Act; that is, ESL students may be served with AEA monies, along with the homeless, disabled, and others. (Part B, subpart 4, section 342 (a)(3)(B)(c)(3), and (6))

[9] According to Development Associates (1993), in 1991 and 1992, 11 percent of new ABE and ASE clients had a diploma or GED certificate compared with 53 percent of new ESL clients.

[10] In Boston, for example, ESL learners must often wait for a year or more to get admitted to classes. New York City has instituted a lottery system to determine the ESL spaces available (Sontag, 1993).

The present [illegible] process is clearly inequitable. To create a fairer system, the fu[illegible]g formula for the distribution of federal funds to the states must be readjusted to reflect the target population for ESL instruction including the large number of immigrant adults not reported in the 1990 Census data. One option is to divide national adult education monies between ESL and ABE and to base state allocations on the number of ESL and ABE students served in the previous year, an option supported by the Southport Institute's recent study (Chisman,Wrigley, & Ewen, 1993). This is potentially divisive because it could put ABE and ESL in the position of competing for limited funds. In addition, this option might hurt ABE learners who need services but do not yet participate in programs, since it would replace a system based on potential need with one that reflects actual demand for services.

Another option is to consider nonformulaic methods of funds distribution somewhat like the "impact" funds used in high-risk or at-risk schools and regions under Title VII of the Improve America's Schools Act. Additional funds can be appropriated in the form of impact aid to those states with high numbers of language minority adults taking ESL classes. These funds will help ensure that these states do not have to weigh the needs of the ABE population against those of the ESL population. With these additional targeted funds, access to ESL programs can be improved while ABE programs remain easily accessible. Yet another option is to incorporate additional variables in the current formula, such as immigration rate and the number of foreign-born residents in the state.

Recognize the Importance of Adult ESL Education

Although ESL learners constitute nearly half of the adult basic education enrollment, the significance of ESL education has not been recognized by policymakers (Chisman, Wrigley, & Ewen, 1993). There are some strong advocates for ESL, and their efforts on behalf of ESL learners are noticed by programs and practitioners. However, it is also true that although there have been no policies at the federal level consciously designed to hurt adult ESL or native language literacy efforts, there have been no policies that actively promote them either. Consider the following:

- ESL has no official advocates, and no one in the present administration, including the Department of Education, has been designated to develop a coherent set of policies for adult ESL. Set-asides to states for ESL that were authorized as part of the English Literacy Grants (Adult Education Act, Section 372) have received no appropriations since 1990. Even the English Literacy Grants, which provided funding for NCLE, have not been funded since 1993.

- There is no federal infrastructure to strengthen the ESL system and to help ensure that ESL students are served adequately. There is no equivalent to the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA) at the adult education level. Federal efforts are not coordinated, and the place of ESL in programs funded through DOL, HHS, and the Office of Vocational and Adult Education is not defined.
- There is no accountability system for ESL that tells the nation or Congress how much money states spend on ESL and how federal funds compare to state and local funding amounts. Although it is known that adults requiring ESL instruction come from all levels of education and language proficiency, it is not known how many fall into each level and how many at each level reside in each state. The federally funded NALS does not shed much light on language proficiency either, because it does not assess proficiency in spoken English; nor does it assess literacy in languages other than English (Gillespie, 1994; Wiley, 1994; Wrigley, Chisman, & Ewen, 1993).
- States are not required to show how the performance and quality standards they are developing (as mandated by the National Literacy Act) relate to ESL learners. There are neither requirements nor incentives for states to work with ESL practitioners, professional associations, and teacher educators to consider ESL-specific standards such as access to programs for nonliterate, non-English-speaking students or outcome standards for oral communication skills. Neither are states encouraged to develop certification standards appropriate for adult ESL, although the lack of teaching standards for ESL has long been identified as a priority issue by ESL educators and researchers.[11]

Develop a Capacity-Building System to Improve Program Quality

To date, California is the only state to have developed ESL program quality standards. Other states are holding hearings and meetings to work on quality indicators and other performance measures, although it is not clear to what extent ESL issues are being taken into account. Since about half of those enrolled in adult education are individuals whose first language is not English, some formal body devoted to the development of quality standards and appropriate technical assistance for ESL is justified. In addition, the following are needed to build the capacity of the field to serve ESL learners:

- **The field needs a program of research and innovation designed to examine adult ESL issues, improve programs and practices, and advance the field.** Established centers have focused research and instructional innovation on bilingual students in grades K-12. Where research in

[11] *For a discussion of the need for professional standards in adult ESL, see Clymer-Spradling, 1993; Crandall, 1993a, 1993b; Mansoor, 1994; Wrigley, Chisman, & Ewen, 1993; and Wrigley & Guth, 1992.*

adult literacy has been carried out, ESL has not received the attention it merits according to the numbers it represents (Crandall, 1993a; Wrigley, Chisman, & Ewen, 1993; Wrigley & Guth, 1992).

- **The field needs stable technical assistance programs to help states develop quality ESL systems and support practitioners in the field.** Currently, many states fail to address ESL issues in a coherent and systematic fashion. In fact, ESL is often seen as a temporary problem that will go away. Teachers are hired on a contingency basis, often without much experience in teaching English to immigrant adults. Short (often one-year) funding cycles contribute to staff turnover, and thus any ESL professional development that has been provided tends to leave the system after two or three years as staff leave the project (if not the field) when funding is over.[12] Three-year funding cycles would permit the hiring of staff for a sufficient period to build quality programs and encourage full-time employment. A substantial portion of adult education program budgets should be set aside to provide ongoing professional development for adult instructors. This would enable staff development that is sensitive to the populations served; where a large ESL population is served, staff development should include understanding the backgrounds and needs of that population.

[12] *See Crandall, 1994, for a discussion of this issue.*

Recommendations

As policy debates get under way, now is the time for teachers, students, and administrators to work together to end the marginalization of the ESL field. What are recommendations that practitioners and their professional organizations might make? The following should be considered as priorities:

- **Given the growing need for ESL services, the federal government or the states must provide leadership in ESL and create an institutional infrastructure for ESL.**[13] Minimally, a specific bureau or office must be designated to set policies, improve practice, and monitor the quality of ESL services. The designated agency must help ensure that the ESL population be served adequately and must set up a system of accountability for adult ESL. In addition, such an agency should formulate education indicators to ensure that language minority adults learning English are served by federally funded pre-employment programs and are not kept out of training and academic programs because of unreasonably high English language thresholds.

[13] *OBEMLA (The Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs) could serve as a model for the building of such an infrastructure. OBEMLA has also developed a series of initiatives that can guide capacity building in adult ESL (see Crandall, 1993b, for details).*

- **To help build a solid infrastructure, research and evaluation studies must be commissioned that address ESL-specific issues and provide guidance to the field.** Studies are needed on the effectiveness of native language literacy programs[14] and on the dissemination of models that integrate content knowledge and language acquisition for adults (e.g., civics and ESL; skills training and ESL).

[14] *See Gillespie, 1994.*

Especially needed are efforts that connect theory and practice, involve ESL program staff in both the design and analysis of the studies, and help identify the factors and conditions that promote program success in particular contexts.

- **Regional technical assistance centers must be designated so that programs can effectively respond to the growing need for ESL education.** Such centers could address assessment and evaluation issues specific to ESL, support the development of ESL standards across agencies, and help programs to diversify their services. Through the involvement of ESL practitioners, these centers should develop and disseminate model practices in priority areas such as workplace and family literacy, integrated skills training, and citizenship. Such centers would provide a mechanism for programs to share information on what works, to learn from one another, and to prevent duplication of efforts.

  Instead of creating new centers, perhaps service to ESL learners could become a higher priority of the current State Literacy Resource Centers (SLRCs), as well as of existing technical assistance groups such as the Literacy Assistance Center in New York City, the Adult Literacy Resource Institute in Boston, the Texas Adult Literacy Clearinghouse at the Texas Center for Adult Literacy and Learning in College Station, and the Adult Learning Resource Center in Des Plaines, Illinois.

- **Policies and regulations must provide incentives for states, municipalities, and service delivery areas (SDAs) to focus on transition issues.**[15] Service providers need adequate funding to build a coherent, well-articulated system that links ESL to other services in a community and is based on a community needs assessment. In addition, federal and state governments should fund local initiatives to develop models that effectively move language minority adults into greater social and civic participation and provide access to stable employment and meaningful training. A focus on transition is needed so that ESL learners do not get stuck in the "black hole of ESL" and so they are not denied access to mainstream services. Promoting effective transitions should become a quality standard for all states, and the role of community-based organizations within that system must be recognized and rewarded.

  Finally, policies are needed that promote the development of a solid core of full-time, fully trained teachers who can provide continuity of services and who are capable of designing and delivering quality ESL services. Policies that promote the development of career ladders for part-time teachers and provide benefit pools for contingency teachers are also needed. Care must be taken so that bilingual teachers, who come from the communities of the learners, are not shut out of the system but recognized for the contributions they can make.

[15] Service delivery areas are geographical divisions within a state for the delivery of employment-related education and training services. Federal JTPA funds, for example, which come to a state agency, are in turn passed on to the SDA, and then to programs sponsored by the SDA itself, or to various agencies (schools, community-based organizations, community colleges, and others) with whom they contract to strengthen the delivery system.

- **Given that proficiency in languages other than English was not addressed in the NALS, the federal government should initiate a comprehensive national assessment of the need and demand for ESL instruction, including a thorough profile of adults who are learning English.**[16] Such an assessment would identify the skills, resources, and abilities that language minority adults possess, along with their proficiency in spoken and written English.[17] Such a profile would show to what extent language minority adults are able to meet the English language and literacy demands that they are likely to encounter in their communities, at work, and in their schooling. An assessment of this kind should be designed so that it helps states and local programs plan and implement ESL programs appropriate to the diversity of the learners they serve.

These issues represent some of the key changes that those working in the field of adult ESL education might support. Many of these issues are of concern also to the adult education field at large.

[16] For a discussion of the shortcomings of the NALS (and its commercial counterpart, the TALS), see Wiley, 1994; and Wrigley, Chisman, & Ewen, 1993.

[17] A number of studies on the literacy backgrounds of the Spanish-speaking population have been conducted (e.g., the National Chicano Survey of 1979). For an analysis, see Macías, 1994; and Wiley, 1991.

CONCLUSION: FROM POLICY TO ACTION

Policymakers respond largely to pressures from the field. Those concerned with the education of adult ESL learners must work together to create a groundswell of concern that cannot be ignored. ESL teachers and students must play an active role in defining and expressing their views and in making their voices heard. This might be done in the following ways.

- **At the classroom level,** teachers can encourage adult learners to write about why they need ESL instruction and what it means to them. Teachers can work to help students express their views and to set up coalitions with learners in other programs so that they can make their voices heard at the appropriate levels.
- **At the program level,** teachers can meet with one another and discuss their concerns. Separating local issues from state and federal issues, they can develop a list of issues that must be addressed by the appropriate source if their programs are to be part of a quality ESL system. Student groups can be organized to discuss issues and prepare for hearings.
- **At the (school) district level,** teachers, administrators, and learners can meet to discuss concerns, raise questions, and identify key issues to be addressed. They can also work with immigrant advocates to develop a joint agenda for action. Individuals who have the desire and skills to do the job can work with other practitioners to develop a strategic plan for change to be taken to the district, the state, or the federal government.
- **At the state level,** teacher-led coalitions and student forums can work together to demand that the state be accountable to ESL learners, answer questions related to policy, and address key issues. Professional organizations such as local TESOL affiliates can play a key role, as well, in developing an agenda for action. Coalitions might also demand that their state directors of adult education advocate for federal policies that provide access to full-time positions, promote and reward excellence and innovation, and help programs respond to the diversity of needs.

Finally, ESL educators need to reach national policymakers through their home districts. All relevant local agencies need to be involved in this effort. If a legislator gets a call from a state ABE director or local program director who sees these efforts as a threat because local folks were not involved, that policymaker's support

will be lost. The packaging of these efforts is also very important. A policymaker is likely to be swayed (perhaps even moved) by the argument that ESL services are part of the integration of immigrants into the mainstream, a step along the way to becoming a fully participating citizen.

Success lies in aiming high, in selecting those ideas that will make the greatest difference in providing services to adults learning English, and in finding advocates and allies willing to fight for what is right. The legislation passed this year concerning adult education will last for five years. If we are not happy with funding for adult ESL programs now, how will we feel about the situation in the year 2000? We need to take the time to develop a strategy for change, build a coalition, and be among the voices in the debate.

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Appendix A
What Is the Process the AEA Will Go Through?

This year, ESL teachers, students, administrators, and policymakers will have a rare opportunity to influence the federal component of ABE/ESL programs. The Adult Education Act (AEA) is scheduled for review in 1995. This means that every component of the Act could be rewritten or combined with other pieces of legislation, such as the Reemployment Act.

Periodically, Congress reviews and continues, terminates, or revises existing programs. This process involves the federal agency that implements the program, the sitting administration, and Congress.

Every program enacted by the federal government must be passed by Congress and signed by the President. When new programs are created, Congress usually writes fairly broad guidelines for the implementing agency or state. In general, Congress clearly defines the goals of the program, the eligible populations and jurisdictions, and other relevant criteria. In amending the Adult Education Act with the National Literacy Act of 1991 (P.L. 102-73), Congress mandated that the program would serve adults who lack "basic literacy skills, defined as the ability to read, write, and speak English, to compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential."

In addition to setting these parameters regarding who will be served, Congress specifies a time during which the program will exist. This is usually anywhere from 1 to 5 years. The process of program review gives Congress an opportunity to reevaluate program priorities and the cost-effectiveness of programs and to end programs that have fulfilled their original purpose. In practice, many programs are continued, but often they are changed to reflect new legislative priorities or to improve the original program. Sometimes, if Congress does not like the way that an agency has implemented a program, they will attempt to correct the problem. Committees reviewing legislative changes or initiatives will also recommend the level of funding they think is appropriate for the programs under their jurisdiction.

During this process, people who are affected by a program—in this case, students, teachers, and administrators of adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), and English as a second language (ESL) programs—have an opportunity to promote improvements in it. Members of Congress hold hearings, and their staff meet with field representatives in the process. For most members of Congress, this is a welcome opportunity to learn about programs. Therefore, timely education and lobbying efforts can be extremely effective.

The AEA comes up for review this year. The Act has not been changed significantly since 1966, although a number of discretionary grant programs have been added or deleted as legislative priorities have changed. The National Literacy Act of 1991 amended the AEA to

establish the State Literacy Resource Centers and the National Institute for Literacy, amended the Basic Grants to States program to require the development of indicators of program quality, and increased set-asides for demonstration projects and teacher training.

Both House of Representatives and Senate members must vote on the status of a bill. In each chamber, the relevant committee develops and recommends legislation. When a House bill is introduced and passed, the Senate version of the same bill is voted on and must also pass. Soon thereafter, a conference committee, composed of members from both chambers, is formed to develop consensus legislation. That legislation must be passed by both chambers and then must be signed by the President to become law.

In the House, the AEA will be considered first by the Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education, Training, and Lifelong Learning of the Committee on Economic and Educational Opportunities and then by the whole committee. In the Senate, the bill will be heard by the Subcommittee on Education, Arts, and Humanities of the Committee on Labor and Human Resources and then by the whole committee.

These committees can recommend programs but do not mandate funding levels. This is done in the appropriations committees. These committees set the budget for every program each year. Appropriations committees operate independently of the creating committees; as a result, programs can be created and authorized, yet never funded.

The AEA is funded separately in both the House and the Senate by their respective Committees on Appropriations and Subcommittees on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. The Senate and House then go to conference to negotiate what the actual amount will be. A final bill, with final funding appropriations, will go to the Department of Education.

Appendix B
How ESL Educators Can Get Involved

Before the end of 1995, the U.S. Department of Education will write the Administration's version of legislation for adult education programs, other legislation may be introduced by members of the House and Senate, the relevant committees will schedule hearings and receive information from across the country, bills will be rewritten to reflect current priorities in Congress, and the House and the Senate will send a final bill to the President. The following is a brief description of the timeline for consideration of the Adult Education Act and specific suggestions for how those in the field of adult ESL education can get involved.

Background: September-December 1994

The Department of Education (ED) defined legislative priorities and published questions for comment in the *Federal Register*. The *Federal Register* is a log of all that is happening in the government that affects the public. This past year, the U.S. Department of Education's requests for comment appeared in volume 59, number 181, September 20, 1994, pages 48366-48373.

When an agency publishes questions or proposed regulatory changes in the register, it is inviting the public to comment. The agency must then publish responses to the comments received. In the case of the AEA, the Department of Education was looking for ideas on how to improve the program, where specific regulations or rules make the program hard to manage, and what the priorities of the program should be for the next five years. Anyone—whether they were involved in AEA-funded programs or not—could respond to these questions.

The Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) held a series of five public hearings in San Francisco, Nashville, Chicago, Boston, and Dallas for the field to present testimony about the AEA. At these hearings students, practitioners, and administrators spoke directly about services funded under the AEA and why they thought support for the Act should be continued. Under contract with the Department of Education, Pelavin Associates prepared a summary of the written responses sent to ED as well as of oral testimony given at the hearings.

January-October 1995

After it received the public's input from the *Federal Register* notice, the Department of Education began drafting the new legislation and will send its draft bill to Congress sometime in the spring of 1995. This is generally a closed process, in which the administration puts its priorities into the new program.

Congress will probably hold hearings on issues that the committees considering the legislation have determined are important. For adult education legislation, this may include funding levels, new allocation formulas, and separate programs for ESL and ABE. Witnesses are

called by the committees to present oral or written testimony, which is included in the committee hearings transcripts and is in the public record.

After hearings, the congressional committees will "mark-up" the legislation, a process in which different amendments are incorporated. Once the subcommittee and full committee approve a version of the legislation, it is sent to the floor for a vote. After a conference version of the legislation, incorporating the priorities of both the House and the Senate, has been passed by both chambers, it will go to the President for his signature.

The Department of Education will publish new proposed regulations in the *Federal Register*. These can be commented on by the public and are subject to change.

Everyone Can Participate

How can ESL practitioners influence legislation and advocate for their field? Most people think of a public policy advocate (commonly known as a lobbyist) as a Washington insider, someone who has special access to members of Congress. They certainly don't think of themselves as lobbyists.

Lobbyists, however, are just people who speak up—loudly. Anyone can be a lobbyist on issues that they care about. All ESL teachers in the field—and their state and local TESOL affiliates—can and should be lobbyists during the consideration of the adult education legislation. Every administrator and every student should be encouraged to join the ranks and help lobby Congress.

The reason is simple. Everyone in the ESL field has ideas about how ESL programs can be improved. The goal is to take those ideas and express them in one voice. That voice, spoken into enough ears, can effect change. Who better to improve these programs than those people involved in the daily activities of ESL learners? Who better to tell members of Congress what is wrong—and what is right—than those people who are on the front lines in delivering services?

There are two levels on which every person in the ESL field can get involved in the effort. The first is as an individual. The second is as a member of a group.

The Roar of the Crowd

Unfortunately, one voice can sometimes get lost in the crowd. But many voices can focus Congress' attention on an issue. This takes a lot of organization, but the effort can pay off in the end. For adult education legislation, TESOL and its state affiliates need to take the lead in advocating for change in ESL programs. Ideally, TESOL would join with the American Association of Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE), with state ABE directors, and perhaps with members of the National Coalition for Literacy, to focus on common concerns. To be effective, legislative priorities, a strategic plan, and a strong coalition should be in place before Congress begins holding hearings in 1995.

The first and most important step for a group or coalition is to develop a game plan. What are the most important issues? How do you want to address them? What will constitute victory? What will mean failure? What is your top priority? Unless you answer these questions, you will be an ineffective lobbyist for the ESL community. As part of this process, go through the existing legislation, isolating ESL issues, evaluating the language and effects of the legislation, and drafting proposed changes. Discuss with students their needs and concerns and try to integrate this perspective into a coherent statement.

Once a strategy has been elucidated and accepted by your group, you must make it known to as many potential allies as possible. Again, communication is the key. Contact your local adult organization and other interested organizations to identify areas of tension and areas of agreement. Begin jointly to build a coalition. Think creatively when forming coalitions. In addition to those education programs serving adults, include those that serve children. If there is a publisher of ESL texts in your area, get the organization involved in your coalition. Get local politicians involved—the mayor, the school board, state legislators, the governor. Be sure that the voices of students are included—they are the real constituents for programs. Remember that the more people that are involved, the more voices are heard—all promoting the same message. To avoid the problem of too many conflicting messages from various interest groups, it would be advisable to form a public policy committee at the state or service delivery area (SDA) level. Perhaps state TESOL affiliates (such as WATESOL, CATESOL, MinneTESOL) could work together using the TESOL central office in Washington, DC as a link. Companies with workplace ESL programs can be powerful, private-sector advocates that help convince Congress about the need to fund adult basic education programs to help their employees speak better English. An organization comprised of these various groups needs to be built from the ground up, from program, to SDA, to state, to national level. But these levels have to work closely together, and the strategies for achieving change might have to be developed at the national level.

At the program level, teachers, administrators, and students need to work on courting senators and members of Congress. When a policymaker is found who listens, hears, and wants to work with the organization, this needs to be communicated upward to state and national level groups. From the national level, strategies and timelines need to be communicated down to the program level.

Use the technology available to communicate within the advocacy group. Subscribe to electronic listservs that are ESL specific such as TESL-L and TESLIT-L as well as the adult literacy policy lists such as NLA and WEC-L and post messages about your concerns. (See Appendix F for information on subscribing to these lists.)

Congress—Where the Action Is

Identify key legislators. Begin with the members of Congress you can reach—the ones from your state. Send letters and literature discussing your proposals and extolling the virtues of your program. Have students write letters and articles detailing the impact that ESL classes have made in their lives. Invite members to see the programs in their districts. In particular, target those members from your state that are on the relevant Senate or House committees. Remember to be sure to cover the same issues and to make your priorities clear every time you communicate with a member. Have the different members of the coalition contact Congressional members so that the message is heard again and again.

It is also important to become known to the members of the legislative committees. The best way to communicate with them is both to write a letter from your organization to the committee chairperson, outlining your priorities, and to contact the committee staff person who will be working on the issue. This is a valuable way to form a contact who can keep you updated on the process. Volunteer to help the committee in any way—provide information, provide testimony or witnesses at hearings, discuss proposed new legislation. Finally, identify members who have been active in adult education, bilingual education, and immigration legislation before, as well as members from heavily impacted states and districts. Books such as *The Almanac of American Politics* published by the National Journal and *Politics in America* from Congressional Quarterly give biographies of every member and brief discussions of their voting records and their legislative priorities and are available at many public libraries.

Speak Out—In Person

Members of Congress are very busy. They face many competing interests, and it is difficult to get their attention. However, five people sitting in an office cannot be ignored. Call for an appointment with your Representative or Senator well in advance. Confirm with a letter and then reconfirm the day before. Send several individuals from your coalition to meet with him or her. If possible, include a student in the group. Remember to arm your group with a coherent and concise message, one or two pages in length, emphasizing the importance of ESL in any legislation concerning adults. Follow up with letters, phone calls, newsletters, program updates, and graduation notices. Keep the member and appropriate staff people apprised of each deadline in the legislative process. Again, be creative. The coalition does not have to go to Washington to be seen and heard. Watch for opportunities to meet with the member of Congress during trips to the home district. Send invitations to schools, discussion forums, honoring breakfasts, lunches, or dinners.

So Much to Do, So Little Time

Lobbying can be a full-time job, and most of us already have one of those. While focusing on adult education legislation may not be a good reason to quit your job, it is a good reason to devote a little more time to the ESL field. A letter to the right member or a meeting with the right staff person can produce huge rewards. Appendix E gives a list of groups to contact.

Appendix C
Glossary of Acronyms

Here is a list of some of the acronyms frequently used in this paper.

ABE	adult basic education
AEA	Adult Education Act
AFDC	Aid to Families with Dependent Children
ASE	adult secondary education (see also GED)
CAL	Center for Applied Linguistics
CBO	community-based organization
DOL	Department of Labor
ED	Department of Education
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESL	English as a second language
GED	General Educational Development
IASA	Improving America's Schools Act (was ESEA)
JOBS	Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program
JTPA	Job Training Partnership Act
HHS	Department of Health and Human Services
NALS	National Adult Literacy Survey
NCLE	National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education
NIFL	National Institute for Literacy
OBEMLA	Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs
ORR	Office of Refugee Resettlement
OVAE	Office of Vocational and Adult Education
SDA	Service Delivery Area
SLRC	State Literacy Resource Center
TESOL	Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
VESL	vocational English as a second language

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Appendix D
Organizing in Massachusetts: An Adult Educator's Reflections

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In the Beginning, No One Knew Anyone

In the early 1980s, a small group of adult literacy and out-of-school-youth program practitioners created an informal, Boston area collaboration known as the Boston Network for Alternative and Adult Education. Many of these people worked in underfunded community-based organizations. Some had a commitment to social change. All of us felt isolated.

Our members met regularly, spent time learning about one another's organizations and about one another, arranged for professional development sessions for ourselves, and began to try to address some of the persistent and unsolved problems in the field such as our lack of knowledge about what other programs were doing, our need for more training, inadequate funding for our programs, and low wages for teachers. This was one of the first attempts by Massachusetts practitioners to make some changes in the field.

As We Began to Know Each Other a Little Better We Also Got Better Organized

In the mid 1980s, three Boston-area practitioners called a meeting to suggest organizing a Literacy Day to bring public attention to adult literacy issues. The ambitious-minded group that showed up decided what was needed instead was a statewide adult literacy organization. Thus was born, in 1987, the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Literacy (MCAL). Originally an entirely volunteer organization, it soon won a grant from the Gannett Foundation that was then supporting establishment of statewide literacy organizations in several states across the country. The MCAL Board hired paid staff: a director and a full-time state literacy hotline coordinator. It also firmly established its volunteer public policy committee to inform legislators about the issues and to begin to organize the field.

MCAL's goals were to (1) increase public awareness of adult literacy in Massachusetts; (2) facilitate the coordination of information on available ABE services (through the statewide hotline and publications); and (3) seek increased resources for ABE programs in Massachusetts. We accomplished this work through several committees. One of these, the Legislative Committee, later known as the Public Policy Committee, sponsored legislative briefing days and established a telephone network through which we could reach programs quickly with critical information concerning public policy activities.

MCAL Hit Hard Times

In 1989, when the Gannett grant ended, we had no more money to pay staff. The MCAL Board continued to carry on the most important of our organization's work through volunteer efforts. Adjusting to having no staff and almost no money wasn't easy. The Public Policy Committee persevered, although it became more difficult without any staff assistance. The statewide hotline service also survived but under the sponsorship of another organization, the state System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES).

Creating One Strong Organization out of Two Weak Ones

In 1991, we merged MCAL with the Massachusetts Association for Adult and Continuing Education to form a new, stronger organization, the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education (MCAE). This organization has received funding from the state Department of Education to support its professional development activities. We also have revenue from memberships and from a successful statewide annual conference. With these funds MCAE has been able to hire a coordinator and a part-time staff assistant. Nevertheless, almost all the public policy activities are carried out through a well-organized volunteer public policy committee. This committee has continued and expanded many of the earlier efforts. For example, we:

- hold regular monthly meetings;
- sponsor "Tax Teach-ins" to help students understand state tax policy and where their tax dollars go;
- hold legislative briefings;
- inform adult literacy program staff about opportunities to testify at state and regional adult education hearings;
- sponsor postcard campaigns through which students who are put on long waiting lists for adult education services can inform their state representatives about the need for more services;
- collaborate with other Massachusetts organizations such as the Committee on Adult Education, advising the Board of Education, and the state ABE Directors' Council, to develop new adult literacy public policy;
- spearheaded a successful effort to include language in the Massachusetts Educational Reform Act which, for the first time, included adult basic education as part of statutory language.

Fast, Effective Communication Requires Planning

Massachusetts has over 400 adult literacy/basic education programs. They are sponsored by community-based organizations, community colleges, volunteer organizations, public schools, corrections institutions, public libraries, companies, unions, and other organizations. Through the state Adult Literacy Hotline, MCAE has information about all of these programs. Using this information and its regularly updated list of members (currently nearly 700), the MCAE Public Policy Committee has organized a telephone tree, which is updated annually and is used to reach practitioners across the state. Increasingly, MCAE members are also using fax machines and e-mail. An electronic list to promote discussion nationally about policy issues has been formed by the National Literacy Alliance (NLA; see Appendix E).

We Work Closely With Legislators

Over the past several years, MCAE has worked with key legislators in Massachusetts who have, in turn, formed a legislators' literacy caucus. This group meets periodically, files and supports legislation, and attempts to influence the budget process. We have found that having this kind of leadership and organization within the legislative body is essential. Building and maintaining the interest in adult literacy among legislators is a critical function of a state literacy public policy group. The literacy caucus provides a way for adult literacy practitioners to keep legislators informed. It provides opportunities to strategize together to find or make opportunities for possible new resources. Also, it has protected adult literacy programs from being dismantled under the current efforts to consolidate employment-related services. Caucus members have also provided us with important insights about our state's legislative process.

We Follow "Tip" O'Neill's Advice

But how do legislators become interested in adult literacy as an issue? Former U.S. Speaker of the House Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill used to say "All politics is local." We have many examples of legislators—and former Governor Michael Dukakis as well—who were moved by someone who said he could not read or write and needed help or someone who was helped to read or write by a literacy program. These are often people whom the politicians know or who are in jobs where their literacy was taken for granted.

When literacy programs invite their local representative and senator to visit the program and talk with students, this makes a difference. Inviting legislators to speak at graduations also has an impact. Here are a couple of examples of what working at the local level has done for us. Early on, during the Boston Network days, a group of practitioners working in one area of Boston invited three representatives to breakfast at a local restaurant. (The legislators paid for their own breakfasts.) These representatives had worked together before on other issues, but

only one was aware of adult literacy. After they learned about how great the need was for adult literacy services, they agreed to co-sponsor an increase in the adult literacy line item. For two of these representatives, this was a basic services issue for their constituents. For the third, it was primarily a moral issue; although her constituents did not need these services, she felt that everyone deserved the opportunity to learn to read and write.

In the late 1980s, when half the funding for the Boston Adult Literacy Initiative was lost because of cuts in Community Development Block Grant funds, adult literacy programs that would have lost funding convinced their representatives and senators to see to it that the state made up for these lost funds. With the support of the powerful Senate President, they added a significant $2,000,000 to the statewide Department of Education line item for adult basic education.

We Create a Statewide Public Policy Agenda Each Year, But....

The MCAE Public Policy Committee forms an annual agenda early in the year, often seeking advice and information from practitioners. However, this agenda is usually buffeted by the unpredictable winds of politics. One year we began with a goal of increasing funds and ended up fighting efforts to subsume all literacy services under an employment and training agenda. Another year we began with the same goal and spent the year fighting disasterous cuts in funding. One year we claimed victory because adult basic education was the only discretionary line item in the state Department of Education budget that wasn't cut. One year we focused on more funding and settled for getting the first statutory language recognizing the legitimacy of adult basic education. In some years we have succeeded in getting line item increases in the state budget. We are hoping 1995 will be one of these years.

We Are Beginning to Link with National Efforts

Recently the Public Policy Committee has shown interest in national adult literacy issues and has been exploring how we might contribute to having an impact at this level. The reauthorization of the Adult Education Act, unsuccessful efforts to include adult literacy programs in the technology section of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (now Improve America's Schools Act), and concern about proposed national efforts to consolidate literacy in employment and training agendas have drawn our state organization into the national arena.

Some members of the Public Policy Committee have joined the NLA electronic list because they believe that it has the potential to do for adult literacy nationally what the Boston Network for Alternative and Adult Education did for us locally—introduce us to each other and provide a forum for discussion. Perhaps out of this, and other national organizing efforts, will grow a strong national coalition of adult literacy public policy advocates, a coalition made up of strong local and state coalitions.

Appendix E
ESL and Literacy Groups

American Association for Adult & Continuing Education (AAACE)
1200 19th Street, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20036-2401
Tel: 202/429-5131 Fax: 202/223-4579

Joint National Council on Languages (JNCL)
1118 22nd Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037
Tel: 202/466-2666 Fax: 202/466-2892

Laubach Literacy International (LLI)
1320 Jamesville Avenue
P.O. Box 131
Syracuse, NY 13210
Tel: 315/422-9121 Fax: 315/422-6369

Literacy Assistance Center
840 Williams Street, 14th Floor
New York, NY 10038
Tel: 212/803-3300 Fax: 212/785-3685

Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA)
Widewaters One
5795 Widewaters Parkway
Syracuse, NY 13214-1846
Tel: 315/445-8000 Fax: 315/445-8006
Internet e-mail: lvanat@aol.com

National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE)
Center for Applied Linguistics
1118 22nd Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037
Tel. 202/429-9292, ext. 200 Fax: 202/659-5641
Internet e-mail: ncle@cal.org

National Coalition for Literacy
c/o Peggy Barber
American Library Association
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611
Tel: 312/280-3217 Fax: 312/280-3224
Internet e-mail: peggy.barber@ala.org

National Institute for Literacy (NIFL)
800 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20006
Tel: 202/632-1500 Fax: 202/632-1512

TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages)
1600 Cameron Street, Suite 300
Alexandria, VA 22314-2705
Tel: 703/836-0774 Fax: 703/836-7864
Internet e-mail: tesol@tesol.edu

Appendix F
Electronic Discussion Lists

NLA—National Literacy Alliance Public Policy List—an electronic mail list specifically focused on discussions of adult literacy policy issues.

To join, send the message **subscribe nla**
to **majordomo@world.std.com**.

TESLIT-L—a discussion forum for researchers and practitioners concerned with adult ESL literacy issues, a sublist of TESL-L.

To join, send the messages **Sub TESL-L**
Sub TESLIT-L
(with each command on a line of its own)
to **listserv@cunyvm.cuny.edu.**
Then send the message **Set TESL-L no mail**
so you are not overwhelmed with messages from the larger list.

WEC-L--Workplace Education Collaborative List for Workplace Educators—a forum for informal discussion among workplace educators.

To join, send the message **info wec-l**
to **listserv@netcom.com**.
Then send the message **subscribe wec-l**
to **listserv@netcom.com**.

National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education

NCLE

NCLE is the only national clearinghouse focusing on literacy education for adults and out-of-school youth learning English as a second language.

Its mission is to provide practitioners with timely information on adult ESL literacy education.

NCLE is an adjunct ERIC clearinghouse established at the Center for Applied Linguistics.

CAL

Center for Applied Linguistics

1118 22nd St., NW, Washington, DC 20037