

John Comings, Barbara Garner,
Cristine Smith, Editors

— Annual Review
of Adult Learning
and Literacy

Volume 3

A Project of

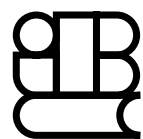
The National Center for the Study of
Adult Learning and Literacy



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The *Annual Review of Adult Learning and Literacy* is an important part of the Dissemination Initiative of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL). NCSALL is a collaborative effort between the Harvard Graduate School of Education and World Education, a nonprofit organization based in Boston. NCSALL's partners include The Center for Literacy Studies at The University of Tennessee, Rutgers University in New Jersey, and Portland State University in Oregon. NCSALL is funded by the Educational Research and Development Centers Program, Award Number R309B60002, as administered by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Innovation through its National Institute for Postsecondary Education, Libraries, and Lifelong Learning.

NCSALL is pursuing a program of basic and applied research that is meant to improve programs that provide educational services for adults who have low literacy skills, who do not speak English, or who do not have a high school diploma. Ongoing studies include research in the areas of learner motivation, teaching and learning, staff development, and accountability.

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Foreword

“So many books, so little time.” This phrase comes to mind whenever I’m confronted with the wide range of things to read in the library, a bookstore, or even on the bookshelves in my home. When will I ever have the time to read all the wonderful books I hear about and see around me?

As an instructor in an adult basic skills development program, I find myself voicing a similar refrain—“So many learner goals, so many instructional ideas, so many program requirements . . . yet so little time, money, space, equipment, and other resources.” How can instructors reconcile the desire to meet learner needs and program goals with the challenges we face: limited funding, part-time instructors, and conflicting programmatic concerns? Is it the role of adult basic education to prepare people for the workforce, to give them access to a right they were denied (universal education), or to give them equal access to that very valuable commodity, information? Sometimes instructors’ views clash with the philosophies of their programs; sometimes program philosophies clash with the mandates of program funders.

As in mathematics, these problems can be “worked” in several different ways: by trial and error; guess and check; working backward; solving an easier, related problem; eliminating wrong answers; making a systematic list; or looking for a pattern. Do these methods work? They work with math word problems, but the programmatic challenges we face as adult educators center on complex human concerns, not discrete, impersonal word problems. As instructors, we can’t afford the cost of failure that attends trial and error or guess and check. Learners arrive in our programs fragile, anxious, and in need. How can we focus on the most effective instructional strategies? How can we select the most appropriate means of professional development? How can we encourage learners to take ownership of their education?

Again, there are no easy answers. I have always found the best sources of guidance to be the experience and wisdom of my peers and

quality research. The term *quality research* raises questions. Where can it be found? How can I be sure that the information is valid and reliable? If I'm going to spend the limited time I have as a reader, I want to make sure that what I'm reading is the best.

This is where the *Annual Review of Adult Learning and Literacy* comes in. It's a one-stop source for the best, most current information on research, policy, and practice in adult literacy and learning. As an instructor, I value the information and analysis each volume provides on issues that I confront daily in the classroom. I need to be more knowledgeable about learning disabilities and how they may affect my students' performance. I need to have confidence that assessments of classroom activities are reliable measures of learner progress. I want the latest, research-based information on how adult learners achieve numeracy. This third volume of the *Review* contains this information and more, written by respected leaders in the field. Its contents will help me become a more effective instructor and will direct me to other valuable sources of information.

So many books, so little time? You have the solution in hand: read *this* book.

SUSAN K. COWLES

Preface

The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy and Jossey-Bass are pleased to publish this third volume of the *Annual Review of Adult Learning and Literacy*. The *Review* serves as the journal of record for the field of adult learning and literacy. The audience for the *Review* includes the policymakers, scholars, and practitioners who are dedicated to improving the quality of practice in adult basic education (ABE), adult English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and adult secondary education (ASE) programs.

The *Review* always begins with an overview of the significant developments in the field of ABE during the year (in this case, 2000). It concludes with a bibliography on a broad topic of current interest to the field (here, family literacy). The *Review* often presents a description of the adult literacy system of another country, but this was not possible for this volume. The country case studies will resume in Volume Four. This volume also continues several topical strands. Volumes One and Two contained chapters on reading instruction and writing instruction; this volume contains a chapter on numeracy instruction. Volume One contained a chapter on ESOL assessment, and this year the *Review* contains a chapter on ABE assessment.

In the foreword, Susan Cowles, an ABE teacher from Oregon, talks about teachers' need for research that helps them improve their practice. Since teachers in our field have so little time to access current information about topics on which to base good practice, she advocates the *Annual Review* as a reliable source.

In Chapter One, Lennox McLendon, executive director of the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium, captures the major policy and implementation activities of the year 2000. He describes the response of the ABE field to two important events: the first was the first full year of federal funding under the Workforce Investment Act. At state and local levels, the implementation of policies that focus on outcomes was and remains a challenge. The second

event was the publication of *From the Margins to the Mainstream: An Action Agenda for Literacy*, which grew out of the National Literacy Summit held in early 2000. Whether the *Agenda* proves to be an impetus for action will be reported on in next year's *Review*.

When the *Review* was established, the editors wanted it to be a place where the history of the field of ABE in the United States was recorded, but the first volume begins with coverage of the year 1998. Dr. Thomas Sticht fills in the missing centuries from Colonial America to the present in Chapter Two. Sticht identifies the beginning of federal government involvement as a literacy program for soldiers waiting out the winter at Valley Forge. Sticht uses four themes to describe the history of ABE: the role of the military; the shift of image from a self-improvement program to one of charitable education; the demands of education as a result of immigration; and a debate on whether the system should be focused on providing a liberal education or on developing human resources. This chapter surveys adult literacy in terms of the federal government's involvement. In future *Review* volumes, we hope to have chapters that look specifically at the history of adult literacy supported by other funding sources and to go deeper into some aspects of the history, such as how adult literacy has played a role in minority communities.

In Chapter Three, Mary Ann Corley and Juliana Taymans review the literature on adults with learning disabilities. They first explore the definition of *learning disability* and the prevalence of learning disabilities in the population served by the adult education and literacy system. The authors then describe the literature on adults with learning disabilities and discuss the components of effective service delivery to adults with learning disabilities. They conclude with a call for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to pay much greater attention to learning disabilities as a barrier to success for many of the students who come to adult literacy programs.

As a follow-up to the chapter on ESOL assessment in Volume One, John Kruidenier examines ABE assessment in Chapter Four. Kruidenier begins by providing an overview of the literacy skills that ABE assessments are measuring and the tools that are used to make those measurements. He then discusses the many reasons why assessments take place. Most of the chapter is focused on a detailed description and critique of the tools now available for assessing reading and writing skills in adults, concluding with an analysis of the current status of assessment in ABE and what should be done to improve assessment.

Chapter Five is the third in a series of articles that focus on instruction. Reading was addressed in Volume One, writing in Volume Two. This volume includes a chapter on numeracy. Dave Tout and Mary Jane Schmitt begin by exploring the many terms used to describe the learning of mathematics by adults, explaining why *numeracy*—making meaning with numbers and mathematical processes—is the term they chose for their overview. They then describe adult numeracy education in the United States, numeracy in the K–12 system, and adult numeracy in several other countries, with an emphasis on trends, best practices, and research. They conclude with a call to give more attention to numeracy in adult literacy programs and to provide more resources to improve practice and pursue research.

In Chapter Six, John Sabatini, Lynda Ginsburg, and Mary Russell explore recent efforts to professionalize the field of ABE through teacher certification. This chapter begins with working definitions of the terms *professionalization* and *certification* and by highlighting the value they hold for the field of ABE. It then describes K–12 and ABE experiences with certification. Case studies from Massachusetts and Texas allow the reader to see how a certification system might work. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the obstacles to change and the ways that new policies, changes in practice, and further research can support teacher certification that leads to a more professional workforce for the field.

In Chapter Seven, Vivian Gadsden reviews current areas of interest in the growing field of family literacy. She provides a brief history of the development of the field, articulates its many varied dimensions, and brings the reader up-to-date on issues of most concern and interest to researchers and practitioners, including parent-child literacy, emergent literacy, and means of assessment and evaluation. She follows up with a bibliography of publications that provide more information on each of the areas of interest she identifies in the chapter.

As the *Review* goes to press, a new administration in Washington, D.C., has yet to identify adult literacy as a national priority, but shows some signs of interest. The new Secretary of Education, Ronald Paige, was a supporter of family literacy in his previous position as superintendent of schools in Houston, Texas, and his public statements include a call to raise the visibility of adult and family literacy within the Department of Education. The field can learn from history. During the twentieth century, attention was paid to the field of adult learning and literacy when literacy skills were needed to address a national

problem. At times when large numbers of immigrants entered the country, during the two World Wars, and during the War on Poverty of the 1960s, adult learning and literacy were seen as part of the solution to these problems. In the beginning of the twenty-first century, the country needs a better-educated workforce, parents who can help their children succeed in a more demanding school system, and informed citizens who can make our political system work better. The *Review* can be a valuable source of information for those who will help the field make a case for how it can address these national issues.

JOHN COMINGS
BARBARA GARNER
CRISTINE SMITH
EDITORS

The Editors

John Comings is the director of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Before coming to Harvard, he spent twelve years as vice president of World Education. Comings worked on adult education programs in Nepal for six years and in Indonesia for two years and has helped design and evaluate adult education programs in several countries in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. In the United States, he has served as the director of the State Literacy Resource Center in Massachusetts, assisted in the design of instructor training programs, and directed projects that focused on improving the teaching of both math and health in adult education programs. His research and writing has focused on the impact of adult literacy programs on reading ability and life changes such as health and family planning practices, the program factors that lead to that impact, and the issue of persistence in learning in the United States and developing countries.

Barbara Garner is director of publications for NCSALL and a senior program officer at World Education. Having held many different positions in the field of adult basic education, including teacher, staff developer, program administrator, and curriculum writer, she currently edits the NCSALL publication *Focus on Basics*.

Cristine Smith is NCSALL coordinator and a senior program officer at World Education. Smith coordinates NCSALL's dissemination initiative, is directing a four-year study on adult basic education staff development under NCSALL, and is the national coordinator for Practitioner Dissemination and Research Network run by NCSALL. She has worked on staff development issues in the field of adult literacy for twelve years.

The Contributors

Mary Ann Corley is a principal research analyst with the American Institutes for Research in Washington, D.C., where she serves as director of the California Adult Literacy Professional Development Project. She is also founding director of the National Center for Literacy and Social Justice. As director of the National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center from 1996 to 1999, Corley led the research, development, and training on Bridges to Practice, a nationally disseminated training module for literacy providers serving adults with learning disabilities. She is an author of the Web site of the National Center for Learning Disabilities (<http://www.ld.org>). Former jobs include Maryland GED (general education development) administrator and adult basic education supervisor for Baltimore County Public Schools. In 1988, the Baltimore County Program she directed was named Outstanding Adult Education Program by the U.S. Secretary of Education. She has authored articles, textbooks, and professional development materials on adult literacy, with emphasis on GED preparation, workplace literacy, and learning disabilities. She serves on the board of directors of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, the National Association for Adults with Special Learning Needs, and the Professional Advisory Board of the National Center for Learning Disabilities.

Susan K. Cowles teaches classes in the adult basic skills development department at Linn-Benton Community College, Corvallis, Oregon. She directs the Science and Numeracy Special Collection of online resources (<http://literacynet.org/sciencelincs>) for the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), and she is a founding member and past president of the Adult Numeracy Network. She conducts professional development trainings at the state, regional, and national levels, with an emphasis on topics in numeracy, technology, and the use of science as a context in which to teach basic skills. Her publications include the

NIFL Fellowship Report, *Teaching and Learning with Internet-Based Resources*, “Technology Melts Classroom Walls” in *Focus on Basics*, “Using Internet-Based Resources in Math Instruction” in *Adult Learning*, and “Science for All Americans” in *U.S. Joint Global Ocean Flux Study News*. In recognition of her work, Cowles has been selected by the National Science Foundation as a participant in the program Teachers Experiencing Antarctica and the Arctic. In January 2002, she will join a scientific research team at Palmer Station, Antarctica, for a six-week expedition studying aspects of the Antarctic coastal ecosystem (see <http://tea.rice.edu>).

Vivian L. Gadsden is associate professor and director of the National Center on Fathers and Families in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania. Formerly associate director of the National Center on Adult Literacy at Penn and project director for the families and literacy strand, Gadsden focuses her research on intergenerational family development and literacy and the implications of parent-child literacy for schooling and learning across the life-course. A significant area of her work explores the learning and literacy needs of low-income, minority fathers and examines the issues of race, poverty, and gender in home, school, and social contexts. She is working on a longitudinal, intergenerational study of literacy in African American and Puerto Rican families, focusing on the transfer of knowledge and beliefs from mothers and fathers to children; a project on the development of young, urban fathers; and a project on father-child and mother-child literacy and the uses of technology among low-income children. She has published numerous journal articles and book chapters on issues related to families, learning, race, and culture and is coeditor (with Daniel Wagner) of *Literacy Among African American Youth: Issues in Learning, Teaching, and Schooling*.

Lynda Ginsburg is a senior educational researcher at the National Center on Adult Literacy at the University of Pennsylvania, where she focuses on adult numeracy research and instruction, educational technology, and assessment and evaluation. She directs the adult literacy components of the U.S. Department of Education’s NorthCentral and SouthEast Regional Technology Consortia and was the developer and executive producer for *Captured Wisdom*, a multimedia CD-ROM set highlighting effective practices of integrating technology into adult literacy instruction. She is also the external evaluator

for Pennsylvania State University's Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Network project to help adult basic education providers serve employers and incumbent workers. She recently coauthored "Learning Online: Extending the Meaning of Community," available online at <http://www.literacyonline.org>. She is also the author of articles on adult education and tutoring in the *Encyclopedia of Mathematics Education* (2001). Ginsburg is president of the Adult Numeracy Network, is a technical adviser for the Equipped for the Future Assessment Framework Consortium, and sits on the advisory board for National Institute for Literacy's Literacy Information and Communication System Numeracy and Science Special Collection.

John Kruidenier is an education consultant based in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, specializing in literacy and technology issues. Recent projects include work on a summary of adult basic education reading instruction research for the National Institute for Literacy. He has worked as a researcher at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the IBM T. J. Watson Research Center, and the University of Pennsylvania. In addition to private practice, his teaching experience includes work at the high school level as a learning disabilities specialist and at the adult level as an instructor at the Harvard Reading Laboratory for Adults. He is the author of several papers and conference presentations on adult literacy, the literacy development of students with learning disabilities, literacy instruction, the uses of educational technology, text processing, and literacy courseware.

Lennox L. McLendon is the executive director of the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium, the policy and professional development arm of the Adult Education State Directors. His more than thirty years of experience in the field of adult literacy include teaching adult basic education (ABE), adult high school, English for speakers of other languages, and preparation for the certificate of general educational development (GED). He spent twelve years as a state director of adult education and represented state directors for nine years on the National Coalition for Literacy, serving two years as chair. He is on the faculty of the ABE graduate program at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. His recent publications include *State Adult Education Management and Leadership Functions: A Self-Assessment for Adult Education State Directors* and a book coauthored with Kathi Polis titled *The Adult Education State Director's*

Going to Scale Guide for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating State Program Improvement Initiatives.

Mary Russell is a senior educational researcher at the National Center on Adult Literacy at the University of Pennsylvania. She is the project manager of the English Literacy/Civics professional development project, a Web-based system that will address the professional development needs of the nation's teachers of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) for adults. She is a cofacilitator for the Professional Development Kit team and project. She also manages Project CONNECT, which is developing distance learning materials to allow ESOL learners unlimited opportunities to access instruction through the Web. She has done research and program evaluation in areas related to classroom practice and professional development. Her most recent publications are "Learning Online: Extending the Meaning of Community," which is available online at <http://www.literacyonline.org>; "Understanding Assumptions About Teaching Writing to Adults," *Focus on Basics*, January 2000; and *Teaching by Design: New Models of Professional Development for Teachers*, forthcoming. She is a founding member of the Adult Literacy Professional Development Association and is secretary of the American Educational Research Association Special Interest Group on Adult Literacy and Adult Education.

John P. Sabatini is a senior educational researcher at the National Center on Adult Literacy (NCAL) at the University of Pennsylvania. He has conducted research, development, and evaluation in educational technology, cognitive psychology, reading acquisition and disabilities, and assessment. He is a designer of online assessment and instruction products in the LiteracyLink Star Schools project. He also designs and conducts research and formative evaluation for other NCAL research and development projects, including LiteracyLink, the Professional Development Kit project, Project CONNECT, and the English as a Second Language/CivicsLink. He is chair of the Research Committee of the National Coalition of Literacy and technical and research adviser to the Equipped for the Future Assessment Framework Consortium, the General Education Development (GED) Testing Service, the National Education Goals Panel, and the National Assessments of Adult Literacy. He is also a member of the NIFL/NCSALL Reading Research Work Group. He collaborated with Richard L. Venezky on the *Study of Adult Reading Acquisition* and is coediting with him a themed issue on adult

reading and disabilities for the Scientific Society for Study of Reading. A recent publication is “Teacher Perspectives on the Adult Education Profession: National Survey Findings About an Emerging Profession,” which is available online at <http://www.literacyonline.org>.

Mary Jane Schmitt is codirector of the National Science Foundation-funded Extending Mathematical Power (EMPower) Project at TERC in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The goal of EMPower is to extend mathematics reform to adults and out-of-school youth by building on standards-based K–12 math curricula. She also serves as coprincipal investigator for the Parent Involvement Project at the Massachusetts Department of Education, where she previously served on the project staff of the Statewide Systemic Initiative known as PALMS (Partnerships Advancing the Learning of Mathematics and Science). She has led the development of the ABE Math Standards Project and the National Institute for Literacy-funded Adult Numeracy Network *Framework for Adult Numeracy Standards*. She cochaired the first national Conference on Adult Mathematical Literacy (1994) and cofounded the Adult Numeracy Network (1995). She has served on the board of directors of Adults Learning Mathematics: A Research Forum and is a member of the Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey numeracy team.

Thomas G. Sticht is an international consultant in adult basic education. From 1983 to 1999 he was president and senior scientist of Applied Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences, Inc. He has taught at Harvard University and the University of British Columbia and is a recipient of the International Reading Association’s Albert J. Harris Award for research on learning disabilities, a member of the Reading Hall of Fame, and UNESCO’s International Literacy Prize Jury. He served on the National Governors Association’s Advisory Group for National Education Goal 6 (adult literacy), the California Workforce Literacy Task Force, the National Commission on Working Women, the National Commission on Testing and Public Policy, and the Secretary of Labor’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS). In 1997, the *Reading Research Quarterly* reported that his research on adult literacy was one of the thirteen most influential lines of research on literacy in the last thirty years.

Juliana M. Taymans is a professor of special education at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. She is lead faculty member for

the transition special education program and is active in teacher preparation. Currently, she serves as special education adviser for an urban partnership program between George Washington University and the District of Columbia Public Schools. She is a trainer and consultant in adult education for individuals with learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder. She is coauthor of *Unlocking Potential: A Post Secondary Guide for Individuals with LD and AD/HD* (2001).

Dave Tout started out as a secondary school mathematics and science teacher, and has specialized in numeracy and basic math in adult basic education since 1978, working within a range of programs in technical and further education colleges, universities, community education, adult multicultural education, and industry in Australia. He has had wide experience not only in teaching and training but also in working at state and national levels in research, assessment, curriculum and materials development, management, and policy development. He has been involved as a writer on most of Australia's significant adult numeracy curriculum and assessment tools and has helped to produce a range of teaching and training materials, including *Measuring Up: An Interactive Multimedia Computer Resource for Numeracy Learners*, *I Can Do That*, *Numeracy on the Line*, and *Adult Numeracy Teaching: Making Meaning in Mathematics*. He is the regional manager of and a numeracy consultant for Language Australia: The National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia.

Annual Review of Adult Learning and Literacy

Volume 3

The Year 2000 in Review

Lennox L. McLendon

 If the year 1999 was dominated by the intense efforts of the federal government to establish guidelines for compliance with the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998, the year 2000 was dominated by the field's efforts to implement plans to meet those guidelines. In addition to engaging in this time- and labor-intensive work, the field witnessed four significant events that influenced adult basic education (ABE) across the country: a national summit to develop an action agenda for the field; developments in federal appropriations, including the emergence of English literacy and civics funding in state grants; rekindling of discourse among the parties involved in national research and evaluation projects; and changes in leadership at the national level. This chapter provides an overview of these events.

CONTINUING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT

The year 2000 marked the second year of WIA implementation, and federal and state adult educators continued to grapple with their new roles. Under previous federal legislation requirements, practitioners