



# National Coalition for Literacy

## 2022 Year in Review

Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope. It is a tool for daily life in modern society. It is a bulwark against poverty and a building block of development, an essential complement to investments in roads, dams, clinics and factories. ...For everyone, everywhere, literacy is a basic human right.

These words, written by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan for International Literacy Day 1997, continue to inspire the National Coalition for Literacy as it engages in pivotal advocacy and awareness-raising work in support of adult education, family literacy, and English language acquisition across the United States. As an alliance of the leading national and regional organizations dedicated to advancing adult literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, NCL ensures that leaders and legislators make informed decisions about policies, regulations, and funding that will secure NCL's vision of a nation in which all adults are able to fulfill their potential and meet their goals through access to high quality adult education provided by an integrated system.

Here are some highlights of NCL's advocacy and awareness work in 2022:

- **ALL IN:** A pivotal part of NCL's work during the year has been its participation in the Adult Literacy and Learning Impact Network (**ALL IN**), the collaborative impact initiative convened by the Barbara Bush Foundation to carry out the **National Action Plan for Adult Literacy**. As a member of the ALL IN Coordinating Council, NCL participated in summits on adult literacy in 2021 and 2022 as well as regular planning meetings throughout 2022. In 2023, NCL will be continuing its role on the Coordinating Council and working with the ALL IN Subcommittee for Priority 1: Awareness Campaign.
- **Congressional action on WIOA:** Early in the year, NCL provided input on potential revisions to the text of WIOA Title II (the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) to House Committee on Education and Labor staff and others. NCL's input reiterated key points made in NCL's 2021 memo to the Senate HELP Committee:
  - Recognize the centrality of adult basic education to the success of workforce training and economic recovery efforts

- Amend deficit-based language that leads to deficit-based programming
- Reorient adult basic education accountability and outcomes reporting toward a competency-based approach
- Provide support for remote instruction models and the use of technology in adult education

In addition, NCL's input stressed the importance of including digital skills along with literacy and numeracy in the legislation's list of basic skill types. Each of NCL's suggestions was included in the WIOA reauthorizing legislation ([H.R.7309](#)) that was passed in the House in May. The suggestions were also included in the Adult Education WORKS Act ([S.5202](#)) that was introduced by Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Todd Young (R-IN) in December to move the WIOA reauthorization process forward in the Senate.

- **Digital Equity Act and National Telecommunications and Information Administration:** In early February the NCL office submitted a comment in response to the NTIA's [request for input](#) to inform the design and implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which includes the Digital Equity Act. NCL's comment addressed specific questions about the BEAD program and the Digital Equity Act, as well as several of the general questions included in the Request for Comment. The overall goal of NCL's comments was to articulate the overlap between the population of adult learners and the covered populations named in the legislation; to encourage NTIA to actively pursue involvement of adult education partners in all stages of planning and implementation; and to provide guidance on strategies for outreach and connection with such partners. NCL's comment stated that "As a basic tenet of its approach, NTIA should include the adult education community, including both adult learners and the organizations that serve them, at every level of planning and implementation, and should promote similar inclusion by states and subgrantees."
- **OCTAE and Department of Education interactions:** The NCL office was in contact with the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education on a regular basis throughout the year. OCTAE senior staff participated in the NCL spring members meeting on May 26, and Dr. Amy Loyd, newly confirmed as Assistant Secretary for OCTAE, and three senior staff members attended the fall members meeting on September 22. In addition, NCL participated in a series of invitation-only quarterly information-gathering sessions with senior OCTAE staff during the year. Each of these interactions allowed NCL and its members to update OCTAE on developments and activities in the field and maintain strong collaborative relationships with our federal partners.
- **WIOA performance indicators:** In November, NCL submitted comments on a [proposed rule](#) from the Department of Education and the Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration that would standardize the performance indicator for effectiveness in serving employers (the sixth of the primary indicators of performance articulated in WIOA). In the comment, NCL expressed concern that the pandemic had

interfered with states' ability to conduct the piloting process effectively and asked DOL/ED to extend the pilot period for an additional two years. More significantly, NCL observed that the performance indicator proposed by DOL/ED was based solely on employer retention, noting that such a metric would run counter to the career pathway vision articulated in the legislation because it would "discourage employers from supporting and offering education and training that would enhance workers' ability to change jobs and employers as they pursue career opportunities."

- **Civil rights:** Throughout the year, NCL continued its collaboration with the [Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights](#) as the Hub for adult education, addressing concerns related to the use of data from the 2020 Decennial Census and signing on to several other civil rights and human rights related communications throughout the year. In November, NCL submitted a comment in response to the Census Bureau's [request for input on 2030 Census Preliminary Research](#). On the basis of experience with the Mobilizing the Adult Education Community project conducted for the 2020 Census, NCL provided suggestions on effective ways of conducting outreach, using and supporting technology, contacting respondents, and providing respondent support services. The comment stressed the efficacy of working with adult education partners to reach the hard-to-reach populations whose participation levels challenge the Bureau at each Census iteration.
- **AEFL Week:** NCL's 2022 [National AEFL Week](#) activities in September focused on the pivotal role of adult education in enabling equitable access to societal resources, employment opportunity, and full participation in community life. In addition to providing [advocacy resources](#) to the field, NCL participated in two COABE advocacy podcasts with host Jeffrey Abramowitz. In the first, several NCL members weighed in on the importance of advocacy, speaking from the members' meeting at the American Library Association's Washington offices, and in the second, NCL Executive Director Deborah Kennedy spoke about NCL's advocacy work and priorities. In 2023, National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week will be observed from **September 18 to September 23**.
- **Honoring Representative John Yarmuth:** In conjunction with AEFL Week and the fall members' meeting, NCL nominated retiring Representative John Yarmuth (D-KY-03) for a recognition award from the [Committee for Education Funding](#). The award, which was presented at the CEF Gala on September 21, honored Congressman Yarmuth for his many years of advocacy and active support for education at all levels spanning early childhood, K-12, family literacy, and adult education, and in particular for his eight years as Democratic Co-Chair of the House Adult Literacy Caucus. The following day, Congressman Yarmuth dropped in on the NCL members meeting, so we had the opportunity to honor him in a more direct way.
- **Conference presentations:** NCL Board members provided advocacy-related presentations at major conferences throughout the year, including the annual

conventions of TESOL International, COABE, and AAACE, and at the biennial ProLiteracy conference. At the TESOL International conference, NCL participated in a half-day pre-conference session devoted to advocacy strategies that introduced participants to the [NCL advocacy framework](#).

- **Organizational growth:** NCL completed its second full year with an Executive Director supporting the Board in its leadership role. NCL membership has grown by 20 percent over the past two years, and the [NCL website](#) has been refreshed to provide advocacy-focused information on [programs that work](#) as well as links to effective [advocacy tools](#).

In 2023, as it celebrates the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding, NCL will continue its active pursuit of opportunities to promote adult education in policy-related matters. In 2023, we will

- Improve adult education’s visibility and messaging as a key influencer to ensure our purpose and contributions to the U.S. education system are understood by policy makers, stakeholders, and the field
- Increase awareness of the role adult education plays in digital equity, inclusive economic recovery, counteracting systemic racism, and social justice
- Promote broadening of the options for accountability in adult education
- Continue to work on organizational sustainability by increasing NCL’s membership base and securing external funding for our work

As always, we will conduct national public policy advocacy with Congress and keep our members connected with developments on Capitol Hill. NCL member organizations and individual friends will have opportunities to be involved in the national conversation on public policy through NCL’s semi-annual meetings, monthly public policy calls, conference panel discussions, and task groups.

For more information on NCL’s purpose and activities, visit our website at [www.nationalcoalitionforliteracy.org](http://www.nationalcoalitionforliteracy.org) or email us at [ncl@nationalcoalitionforliteracy.org](mailto:ncl@nationalcoalitionforliteracy.org).