

Executive Summary from

# ADULT LITERACY in Indiana

Results of the  
National Adult Literacy Survey

Lynn B. Jenkins and Irwin S. Kirsch

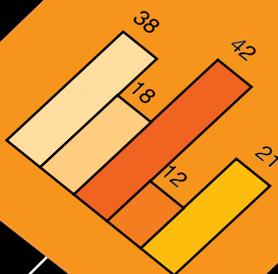


Table B3.14: Percentage of high school noncompletion among states born in the United States and foreignborn

| State                | Percentage | Sample Size | 95% CI   | 90% CI   | 99% CI   |
|----------------------|------------|-------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Alabama              | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Alaska               | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Arizona              | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Arkansas             | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| California           | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Colorado             | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Connecticut          | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Delaware             | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| District of Columbia | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Florida              | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Georgia              | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Hawaii               | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Idaho                | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Illinois             | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Indiana              | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Iowa                 | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Kansas               | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Kentucky             | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Louisiana            | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Maine                | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Maryland             | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Massachusetts        | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Michigan             | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Minnesota            | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Mississippi          | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Missouri             | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Montana              | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Nebraska             | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Nevada               | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| New Hampshire        | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| New Jersey           | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| New Mexico           | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| New York             | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| North Carolina       | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| North Dakota         | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Ohio                 | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Oklahoma             | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Oregon               | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Pennsylvania         | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
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| South Dakota         | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Tennessee            | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Texas                | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Utah                 | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Vermont              | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Virginia             | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Washington           | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| West Virginia        | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Wisconsin            | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |
| Wyoming              | 10.0       | 1,000       | 7.5-12.5 | 6.0-11.0 | 4.5-13.5 |

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 Educational  
Testing Service

MAY 1994

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## *Adult Literacy in Indiana*

This executive summary presents a portrait of adult literacy in Indiana based on the results of the State Adult Literacy Survey, an important research project in which 12 states assessed the literacy skills of their adult populations. The project, conducted in 1992, is a component of the National Adult Literacy Survey, a large-scale study funded by the U.S. Department of Education and administered by Educational Testing Service.

Many past studies of adult literacy have tried to count the number of “illiterates” in this nation, thereby treating literacy as a condition that individuals either do or do not have. We believe that such efforts are inherently arbitrary and misleading. They are also damaging, in that they fail to acknowledge both the complexity of the literacy problem and the range of solutions needed to address it.

The Indiana State Adult Literacy Survey, like the National Adult Literacy Survey of which it is a part, is based on a different definition of literacy and therefore follows a different approach to measuring it. The aim of this survey is to characterize adults’ literacy skills in English based on their performance on diverse tasks that reflect the types of materials and demands they encounter in their daily lives.

To gather information on the literacy skills of adults in Indiana, trained staff interviewed selected individuals age 16 and older during the first eight months of 1992. These participants were randomly chosen to represent the adult population in the state as a whole. In total, more than 1,400 adults in Indiana were surveyed, representing approximately 4.2 million adults statewide.

Each survey participant was asked to spend approximately an hour responding to a series of varied literacy tasks as well as questions about his or her demographic characteristics, educational background, employment, income, reading practices, and other areas related to literacy. Based on their responses to the survey tasks, adults received proficiency scores along three scales, each ranging from 0 to 500. The score points along these scales reflect varying degrees of skill in prose, document, and quantitative literacy. To provide a way to examine the distribution of performance within various subpopulations of interest, five levels of proficiency were defined along each scale: Level 1 (0 to 225), Level 2 (226 to 275), Level 3 (276 to 325), Level 4 (326 to 375), and Level 5 (376 to 500).

The full report offers a comprehensive look at the results of the Indiana survey. It describes the average literacy proficiencies and the levels of proficiency demonstrated by adults in this state compared with individuals in the region and nation, and explores connections between literacy and an array of variables. Some of the major findings are highlighted in the pages that follow.

### **Profiles of Adult Literacy in Indiana**

- The average prose, document, and quantitative proficiencies of adults in Indiana were similar to those of adults living in the Midwest region and higher than those of adults nationwide. In all three populations—the state, region, and nation—average scores were either in the high end of the Level 2 range (226 to 275) or the low end of the Level 3 range (276 to 325).
- Fifteen to 17 percent of the adults in Indiana demonstrated skills in the lowest level of prose, document, and quantitative proficiencies (Level 1). Though all adults in this level displayed limited skills, their characteristics are diverse. Many adults in this level succeeded in performing simple, routine tasks involving brief and uncomplicated texts and documents. For example, they were able to total the entries on a deposit slip, locate the time or place of a meeting on a schedule, and find a piece of information in a brief news article. Others did not perform these types of tasks successfully, however, and some had such limited skills that they were unable to respond to much of the survey.
- The characteristics of the Level 1 population differ in some important respects from those of the state population as a whole. For example, 6 percent of the Indiana residents who performed in Level 1 on the prose scale were foreign-born—twice the proportion of foreign-born adults statewide. Just 33 percent of the Indiana residents who scored in Level 1 on the quantitative scale had completed

high school or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate or attended a postsecondary institution, compared with 73 percent of adults statewide. Across the scales, nearly half (42 to 47 percent) of the adults performing in this level were age 65 or older, compared with 16 percent of adults in the general population. Twenty-eight to 30 percent had physical or mental conditions that keep them from participating fully in work, school, housework, or other activities, compared with 11 percent of adults statewide.

- Twenty-seven to 29 percent of the Indiana respondents performed in the next higher level of proficiency (Level 2) on each literacy scale. While their skills were more varied than those of individuals in Level 1, their repertoires were still quite limited. They were generally able to locate information in text, to make low-level inferences using printed materials, and to integrate easily identifiable pieces of information. Further, they demonstrated the ability to perform quantitative tasks that involve a single operation where the numbers are provided or can be easily found in text. For example, adults in this level were able to calculate the total cost of a purchase or determine the difference in price between two items. They could also locate a particular intersection on a street map and enter information on a simple form.
- Individuals in Levels 1 and 2 were sometimes, but not consistently, able to respond correctly to the more challenging literacy tasks in the assessment those requiring higher-level reading and problem-solving skills. In particular, they appeared to have considerable difficulty with tasks that required them to integrate or synthesize information from complex or lengthy texts or to perform quantitative tasks in which they had to set up an arithmetic problem and then perform two or more sequential operations.
- Thirty-four to 37 percent of the survey respondents in Indiana performed in Level 3 on the literacy scales. Adults who scored in this level on the prose and document scales integrated information from relatively long or dense text or from documents. Those in Level 3 on the quantitative scale demonstrated an ability to determine the appropriate arithmetic operation based on information contained in the directive, and to identify the quantities needed to perform that operation.
- Seventeen to 19 percent of the respondents in Indiana scored in the fourth level of prose, document, and quantitative literacy, and 2 to 4 percent reached the highest level (Level 5). These adults consistently demonstrated the ability to perform the most challenging tasks in this assessment, many of which involved long and complex documents and text passages.
- Older adults were more likely than middle-aged and younger adults to demonstrate limited literacy skills. On the prose scale, for example, average scores rise from 292 among 19- to 24-year-olds to 300 among 25- to 34-year-olds before declining across the older age groups--to 287 among 45- to 54-year-olds, 273 among 55- to 64-year-olds, and 229 among those age 65 and older.
- Since almost all Indiana residents (97 percent) were born in the United States or one of its territories, the number of foreign-born adults in Indiana was too small to permit reliable performance comparisons. In the Midwest population, however, the average literacy scores of native-born adults were 50 to 58 points higher than those of adults who were born in another country. Moreover, foreign-born adults who had lived in this country for more than a decade outperformed more recent immigrants by roughly 20 points on each scale.
- African American adults in Indiana, as well as in the region and nation, were more likely than White adults to perform in the lowest two literacy levels and less likely to attain the highest two levels. There were too few Latino adults residing in the state to provide reliable proficiency estimates, but in the regional and national populations, native-born Latino adults had higher average proficiencies than African American adults.

- Indiana residents who reported having physical or mental conditions that keep them from participating fully in work or other activities were more likely than adults without such conditions to perform in the lowest levels on each literacy scale and less likely to reach the highest levels.
- Women in Indiana displayed higher average prose proficiencies than men, but the average document and quantitative proficiencies of the two groups were comparable.

### **Education and Training**

- Indiana residents with relatively few years of education were more likely than those who completed high school or some postsecondary education to demonstrate limited literacy skills. In fact, average literacy proficiencies rise steadily across the entire range of education levels. On the prose scale, for example, the difference in average scores between those who had completed no more than eight years of schooling and those who had finished at least some graduate work is nearly 160 points.
- Differences in the average years of schooling completed by adults in various subpopulations tend to parallel the observed differences in literacy proficiencies. Older residents in Indiana had completed less schooling, on average, than younger residents (11 years, compared with 12 to 13 years). White adults in the state had completed more schooling, on average (13 years), than African American (12 years) or Latino adults (11 years).
- Adults who had not received a high school diploma were most likely to report that their primary reason for leaving school was going to work or into the military, personal or family problems, a loss of interest, or behavior problems. Older adults (age 65 or older) were more likely than younger adults to say they left school to go to work or into the military, while younger adults (age 24 to 39 and age 40 to 54) were more likely than older individuals to cite a loss of interest or behavior problems as their primary reason for dropping out.
- Thirty percent of the school dropouts in Indiana reported having studied for a GED or high school equivalency, and 57 percent of them said they had received their certificate. Nationwide, the average scores of adults who had studied for a GED or high school equivalency diploma were at least 50 points higher than those of dropouts who had not done so. The majority of GED program participants in Indiana were between the ages of 25 and 54.
- Indiana residents who were enrolled in school or college at the time of the survey had higher literacy proficiencies, on average, than adults who were not enrolled in an academic program. Nationwide, a four-year college degree was the most frequently stated goal of adults who were currently enrolled.
- Eighty-eight percent of the adults in Indiana reported having completed some of their schooling in the state. The literacy proficiencies of adults who had attended school in Indiana were equivalent, on average, to those of adults who had not.
- Seven percent of the survey respondents in the state said they were currently or previously enrolled in a course to improve their basic skills. There were no statistically significant differences between the average scores of those who had enrolled in such a course and those who had not enrolled.
- When asked what reason would most likely keep them from enrolling in a course or training program, Indiana adults were most likely to cite a lack of time or interest (38 percent). Other frequently cited reasons were an inability to pay and a lack of courses offered at convenient times. Adults who reported a lack of child care tended to have lower average proficiencies than adults who cited other reasons.

### **Employment, Economic Status, and Civic Responsibility**

- In each of the three dimensions of literacy, full-time and part-time employees in Indiana performed similarly in the assessment. Employed individuals were less likely than adults who were unemployed

or out of the labor force to perform in the lowest literacy levels, however, and were more likely to attain the highest levels. Unemployed adults in the state had higher average prose and document proficiencies than adults who were out of the labor force.

- Indiana residents who reported being in professional, technical, or managerial positions in their current or most recent jobs had higher average literacy scores (316 to 323 across the literacy scales) than those in other types of occupations, including sales or clerical (296 to 301), craft or service (281 to 283), or labor, assembly, fishing, or farming (267 to 277) positions.
- On each literacy scale, adults who performed in the higher levels had worked more weeks in the past year, on average, than individuals in the lower levels. Among Indiana residents, those who scored in the three highest literacy levels reported working an average of 34 to 44 weeks in the past year, compared with only 14 to 16 weeks for individuals who scored in Level 1.
- Across the scales, Indiana adults who performed in Level 1 reported median weekly earnings of \$223 to \$301, while those in Level 5 earned far more. Adults who scored in the highest level on the quantitative scale, for example, had median weekly earnings of \$540. Similarly, the annual household incomes of adults in the highest proficiency levels tended to be considerably higher than those of adults in the lowest levels.
- From 31 to 38 percent of Indiana residents designated as poor or near poor demonstrated skills in Level 1 on each literacy scale, and another 27 to 32 percent scored in Level 2. In contrast, only 31 to 38 percent of those classified as not poor performed in the two lowest levels. As a result, the average literacy scores of poor and near poor adults are far lower than those of adults who were not poor.
- The average literacy proficiencies of state residents who said they had voted in a state or national election in the past five years were higher than those of adults who had not voted.

### **Language Use and Literacy Practices**

- Almost all Indiana residents (94 percent) reported that English was the only language they learned before beginning school. Virtually all survey respondents in the state said they understand (100 percent), speak (99 percent), and read (97 percent) English well or very well; a slightly smaller proportion (93 percent) described themselves as writing it well or very well. The average literacy scores of adults who said they write English well or very well were 56 to 72 points higher than those of adults who said they do not.
- Indiana residents who reported having received early home support for literacy and learning--that is, those who said they were read to as children, helped with schoolwork, or had access to a variety of printed materials at home--performed far better in the assessment than those who said they did not receive these types of childhood support for literacy and learning.
- Three-quarters of the Indiana residents with children younger than age six reported reading with their children either every day or a few times a week. Across the literacy scales, these parents demonstrated higher average proficiencies than did adults statewide.
- Virtually all survey respondents in Indiana reported getting some or a lot of information about current events, public affairs, or government from nonprint media--that is, television or radio. Fewer (85 percent) said they get much of their information from print media, such as newspapers or magazines, while 65 percent indicated they get much of their information from friends or relatives. Respondents who get some or a lot of information from each of these sources tended to outperform those who get little or no information from that source.
- Slightly more than half of the adults in the state (55 percent) said they read a newspaper every day, while another 23 percent said they do so at least once a week. Eight percent reported reading a

newspaper less than once a week, and their average prose and quantitative proficiencies were lower than those of more frequent readers.

- Fifteen percent of the Indiana respondents said they do not read any magazines in English on a regular basis. Their average literacy scores were considerably lower than those of adults who read at least one or two magazines regularly. Similarly, 17 percent of the Indiana respondents said they had not read a book in English in the past six months, and their average scores were far lower than those of adults who had read at least one book.
- Twenty-nine percent of the adults in Indiana reported that they never use a library, and another 33 percent said they do so only once or twice a year. In general, individuals who reported using a library often (weekly or monthly) outperformed less frequent users.
- Virtually all Indiana residents said they watch some television every day, although 20 percent said they spend no more than an hour on this activity. Thirty percent of the state's residents reported watching four or more hours of television each day. The average proficiencies of individuals who watch the most television were far lower than those of adults who watch the least.
- There are large (49- to 108-point) differences in average prose proficiency between Indiana residents who read and write prose frequently, either for their personal use or for their jobs, and those who never engage in these activities. Similarly, the average document scores of individuals who use documents at least a few times a week are 56 to 83 points higher than those of individuals who do not use these materials. Finally, in the dimension of quantitative literacy, adults who said they frequently use mathematics outperformed those who rarely or never do so.

## Reflections on the Results

In reflecting on the results of this study, many readers will undoubtedly seek an answer to a fundamental question: Are the outcomes satisfactory? That is, are the distributions of prose, document, and quantitative proficiency observed in this survey adequate to ensure individual opportunities for all adults, to increase worker productivity, or to strengthen America's competitiveness around the world?

Because it is impossible to say precisely what literacy skills are essential for individuals to succeed in this or any other society, the results of the State and National Adult Literacy Surveys provide no final answers to such questions. As the authors examined the survey data and deliberated on the results with members of the advisory committees, however, several observations and concerns emerged.

Perhaps the most salient finding of this study is that such large percentages of adults nationwide performed in the lowest levels (Levels 1 and 2) of prose, document, and quantitative literacy. In and of itself, this may not indicate a serious problem. After all, the majority of adults who demonstrated limited skills described themselves as reading or writing English well, and relatively few said they get a lot of assistance from others in performing everyday literacy tasks. Perhaps these individuals are able to meet most of the literacy demands they encounter currently at work, at home, and in their communities.

Yet, some argue that lower literacy skills mean a lower quality of life and more limited employment opportunities. As noted in a recent report from the American Society for Training and Development, "The association between skills and opportunity for individual Americans is powerful and growing.... Individuals with poor skills do not have much to bargain with; they are condemned to low earnings and limited choices."<sup>1</sup>

The data from this survey appear to support such views. On each of the literacy scales, adults who were unemployed or out of the labor force and who earned low wages tended to demonstrate far more limited skills than those who were employed and who earned high wages. Adults who rarely or never read displayed lower average proficiencies than those who were at least occasional readers. Moreover, the

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<sup>1</sup> A.J. Carnevale and L.J. Gainer. (1989). *The Learning Enterprise*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration.

average literacy scores of individuals who received food stamps and who were poor or near poor were much lower than those of their more affluent peers.

Literacy is not the only factor that contributes to how we live our lives, however. Some adults who were out of work or who earned low wages performed relatively well in the assessment, while some full-time workers or adults who earned high wages did relatively poorly. Thus, having advanced literacy skills is not necessarily associated with individual opportunities.

Still, literacy can be thought of as a currency in this society. Just as adults with little money have difficulty meeting their basic needs, those with limited literacy skills are likely to find it more challenging to pursue their goals—whether these involve job advancement, consumer decision making, citizenship, or other aspects of their lives. Even if adults who performed in the lowest literacy levels are not experiencing difficulties at present, they may be at risk as the nation’s economy and social fabric continue to change.

Beyond these personal consequences, what implications are there for society when so many individuals display limited skills? The answer to this question is elusive. Still, it seems apparent that a nation in which large numbers of citizens display limited literacy skills has fewer resources with which to meet its goals and objectives, whether these are social, political, civic, or economic.

If large percentages of adults had to do little more than be able to sign their name on a form or locate a single fact in a newspaper or table, then the levels of literacy seen in this survey might not warrant concern. We live in a nation, however, where both the volume and variety of written information are growing and where increasing numbers of citizens are expected to be able to read, understand, and use these materials.

Historians remind us that during the last 200 years, our nation’s literacy skills have increased dramatically in response to new requirements and expanded opportunities for social and economic growth. Today we are a better educated and more literate society than at any time in our history.<sup>2</sup> Yet, there have also been periods of imbalance—times when demands seemed to surpass levels of attainment.

In recent years, our society has grown more technologically advanced and the roles of formal institutions have expanded. As this has occurred, many have argued that there is a greater need for all individuals to become more literate and for a larger proportion to develop advanced skills.<sup>3</sup> Growing numbers of individuals are expected to be able to attend to multiple features of information in lengthy and sometimes complex displays, to compare and contrast information, to integrate information from various parts of a text or document, to generate ideas and information based on what they read, and to apply arithmetic operations sequentially to solve a problem.

The results from this and other surveys, however, indicate that many adults do not demonstrate these levels of proficiency. Further, the continuing process of demographic, social, and economic change within this country could lead to a more divided society along both racial and socioeconomic lines.

Already there is evidence of a widening division. According to the report *America’s Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!*, over the past 15 years the gap in earnings between professionals and clerical workers has grown from 47 to 86 percent while the gap between white collar workers and skilled tradespeople has risen from 2 to 37 percent. At the same time, earnings for college educated males 24 to 34 years of age have increased by 10 percent while earnings for those with high school diplomas have declined by 9 percent. Moreover, the poverty rate for African American families is nearly three times that for White families.<sup>4</sup> One child in five is born into poverty, and for minority populations, this rate approaches one in two.

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<sup>2</sup> L.C. Stedman and C.F. Kaestle. (1991). “Literacy and Reading Performance in the United States from 1880 to the Present,” in C.F. Kaestle et al., *Literacy in the United States: Readers and Reading Since 1880*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. T. Snyder (ed.). (1993). *120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Labor. (1992, April). *Learning a Living: A Blueprint for High Performance*. Washington, DC: The Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS). R.L. Venezky, C.F. Kaestle, and A. Sum. (1987, January). *The Subtle Danger: Reflections on the Literacy Abilities of America’s Young Adults*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

<sup>4</sup> National Center on Education and the Economy. (1990, June). *America’s Choice: High Skills or Low Wages! The Report of The Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce*. p. 20.

In 1990, President Bush and the nation's governors, including Governor Clinton, adopted the goal that *all of America's* adults be literate by the year 2000. The responsibility for meeting this objective must, in the end, be shared among individuals, groups, and organizations throughout our society. Programs that serve adult learners cannot be expected to solve the literacy problem alone, and neither can the schools. Other institutions—ranging from the largest and most complex government agency, to large and small businesses, to the family—all have a role to play in ensuring that adults who need or wish to improve their literacy skills have the opportunity to do so. It is also important that individuals themselves come to realize the value of literacy in their lives and to recognize the benefits associated with having better skills. Only then will more adults in this nation develop the literacy resources they need to function in society, to achieve their goals, and to develop their knowledge and potential.