

ADDRESSING THE EDUCATION, SKILL, & WORKFORCE NEEDS OF ADULTS
WITHOUT A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR EQUIVALENT:
REPORT OF THE VIRGINIA ADULT LEARNING PANEL



REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR

SEPTEMBER 2008

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The Panel wishes to thank the following individuals who assisted in the development of this report:

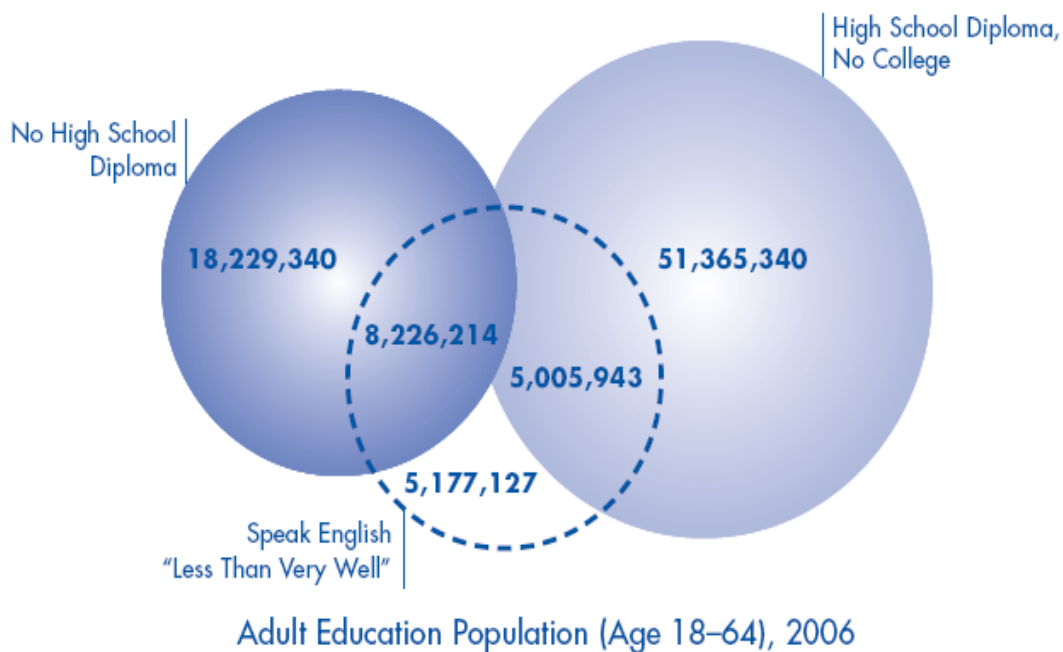
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Introduction

The National Commission on Adult Literacy entitled its report to pose a challenge to the nation and the individual states - Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce. In its June 2008 report, the Commission members called for “a fundamental transformation of the adult education enterprise in America.” Labeling America’s adult education system as “obsolete and ill-equipped to meet 21st Century needs,” the Commission report is a call to action for the Congress and state governments to pursue “an aggressive approach that leads to the acquisition of credentials, certificates, and degrees” for those adults without high school diplomas.

The National Commission on Adult Literacy cited an analysis by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) which identified as many as eighty-eight million adults as having at least one significant education barrier: no high school diploma, a high school diploma but no college credits, and limited English skills.

88 Million Adults Have At Least One Education Barrier



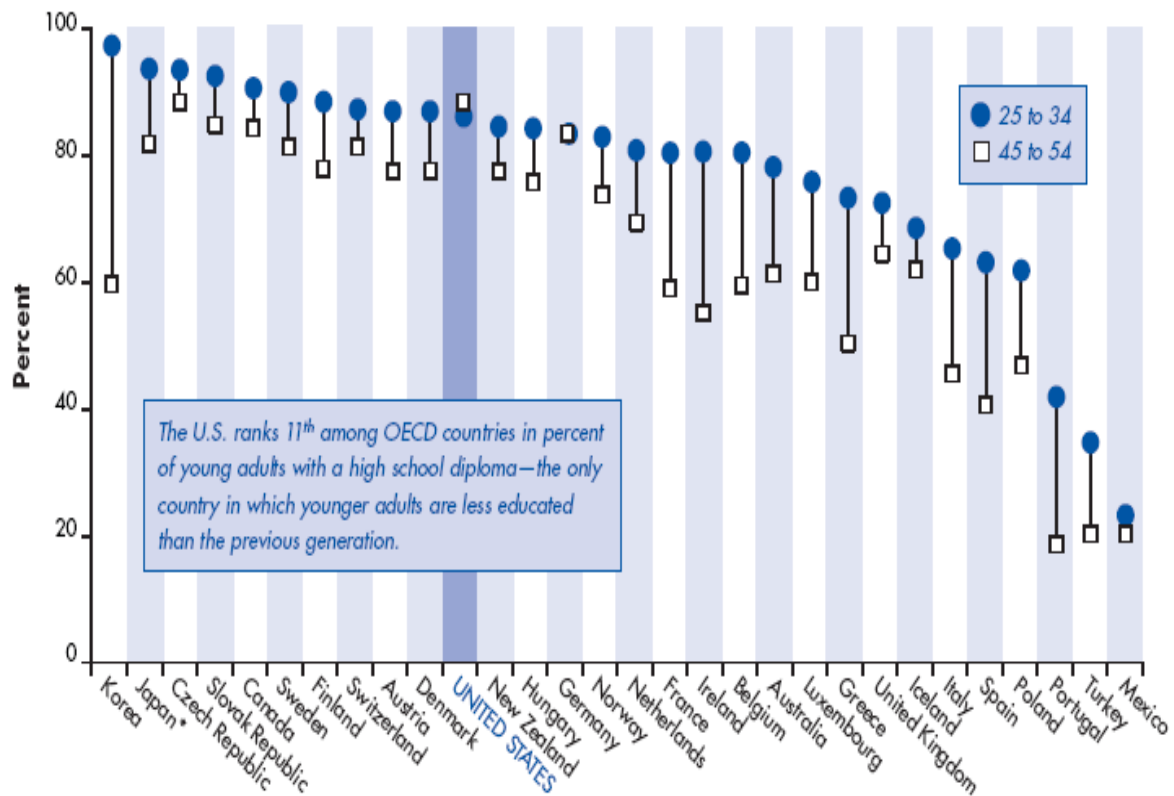
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey (Public Use Microdata Samples); prepared by National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). Unduplicated population = 88,003,964.

*National Commission on Adult Literacy Report, “Reach Higher, America” June 2008.

Moreover, as of 2006, national enrollment in adult education programs had declined to only 2.4 million, a decline of nearly 10 percent from 2001. The United States

is also the only democratic, industrialized country where young adults are less educated than the previous generation, ranking 11th in the percentage of adults with a high school diploma.

High School Attainment of Younger and Older Adults—U.S. and OECD Countries, 2005



Source: Education at a Glance, 2007, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); prepared by National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS).

*Japan data is from 2004.

* National Commission on Adult Literacy Report, “Reach Higher, America” June 2008.

Cheryl King, the Study Director for the National Commission on Adult Literacy and former Commissioner of Adult Education and Workforce Development in Kentucky, concluded that with regard to adult education, the United States is “going backward, simply going in the wrong direction.”

Highlighting the recommendations of the National Commission on Adult Literacy is a call to Congress for a comprehensive new Adult Education and Economic Growth Act to overhaul and expand adult education and workforce skills training. While

acknowledging the need for strong national leadership, the Commission also identifies the following actions which need to be taken by the states:

- States should engage in comprehensive planning and establish goals to improve educational attainment and workforce skills of their adults in light of their economic development goals.
- The states should legislate authority for coordination and alignment of systems consistent with their postsecondary education, workforce, and economic development goals. In some cases, a cross-agency planning body already exists; in others it may need to be created. In some states, a cabinet level position might be either established or strengthened. Whatever the approach, the involvement of the governor's office is essential.
- States must invest in the skills of their workers so that increased productivity helps offset the effect of low-cost labor furnished by developing countries. Business must be an active partner in this effort.

Virginia's response to these action items and the huge challenge facing the Commonwealth will be illuminated and addressed in this report. According to a ranking by the National Commission on Adult Literacy, as of December 31, 2006, only 13,173 persons in Virginia attained GEDs out of a population of 587,097 adults from ages 18 to 64 without a high school diploma¹. That achievement translates into a 2.2 percent recovery rate of GEDs attained as a percentage of need. While that percentage is above the national average of 1.5 percent, it is nothing to brag about.

Existing funding levels and solutions to reach adult learners and connect them with the workforce and postsecondary education and job training are falling well short of what is needed. The Report of the National Commission on Adult Literacy concluded with a challenge for enhanced coordination of adult education efforts:

¹ Data reported to the National Commission on Adult Literacy is static representing GED passers during strictly the 2006 calendar year. The Virginia Department of Education database is dynamic, allowing the number of 2006 GED passers to increase to 15,178 since the Commission study. The increase is the result of a tester, for example, having completed testing requirements of the GED in 2007 though he or she originally attempted the test during the 2006 calendar year. As a result, this data would be credited to the initial year of attempt, 2006.

Current federal adult education and workforce skills programs need to be overhauled, redesigned, and connected more effectively to state and local programs. We cannot make it with services that operate in isolation - each with different eligibility requirements, reporting systems, and performance metrics. We must have an integrated system that serves millions of Americans in accessible, affordable, and accountable ways - on the job, online, and in the classroom.

Virginia has its work cut out for it if it is to respond successfully to the workforce challenges of the 21st Century. Failure to act boldly and comprehensively will leave the Commonwealth at a distinct disadvantage in meeting its workforce and economic development goals.



Quick look at Adult Learning in Virginia

- 2.4 million adults in Virginia have either no high school diploma, a high school diploma but no college credit or did not speak English “well.”
- In Virginia, 587,097 adults from ages 18-64 had no high school diploma in 2006.
- 32,502 adult learners were enrolled in Virginia’s adult education and family literacy instructional programs for 2006-2007. Funding for the DOE adult education programs is provided by federal and state funds.
- 21,884 Virginia adult learners took the GED in 2006-2007.
- 15,178 passed the GED statewide in 2006-07. Of this number, 3,306 earned a GED through the VDOE adult instructional programs.*
- Two thirds of adult learners (11,872) earned a GED absent direct involvement with the state’s Adult Basic Education programs. This may have been accomplished by working and studying independently through GED On Demand, online through eLearn Virginia, Middle College programs at five community colleges or through the Virginia Department of Correctional Education.
- GED on Demand offers 39 courses in preparation for the GED and is available across 1.1 million households.
- In 2005, seven percent of 25-44 year olds in Virginia without a high school diploma were enrolled in adult education programs. The U.S. average is 11%.
- ESOL - English Speakers of Other Languages – comprise 50% of enrollment in federal-and state-funded instructional programs.
- Demographic data shows that women and Hispanics are the largest enrolled groups in adult education programs.
- 18-44 year olds comprise the majority of learners enrolled in adult education programs administered by the Department of Education.
- 2006-2007 data shows that 505 students were enrolled in the Middle College Program provided at five community colleges. Of those, 408 earned a GED for an 81% completion rate. For the same year, the Middle College Program posted a 59% postsecondary rate – or rate of students who then enrolled in college.

- During fiscal year, 2006-2007, the total number of adult inmates enrolled in adult basic education was 10,241. GED certificates were awarded to 927 inmates.
- Virginia ranks 37th nationally in state expenditure for adult education and literacy.

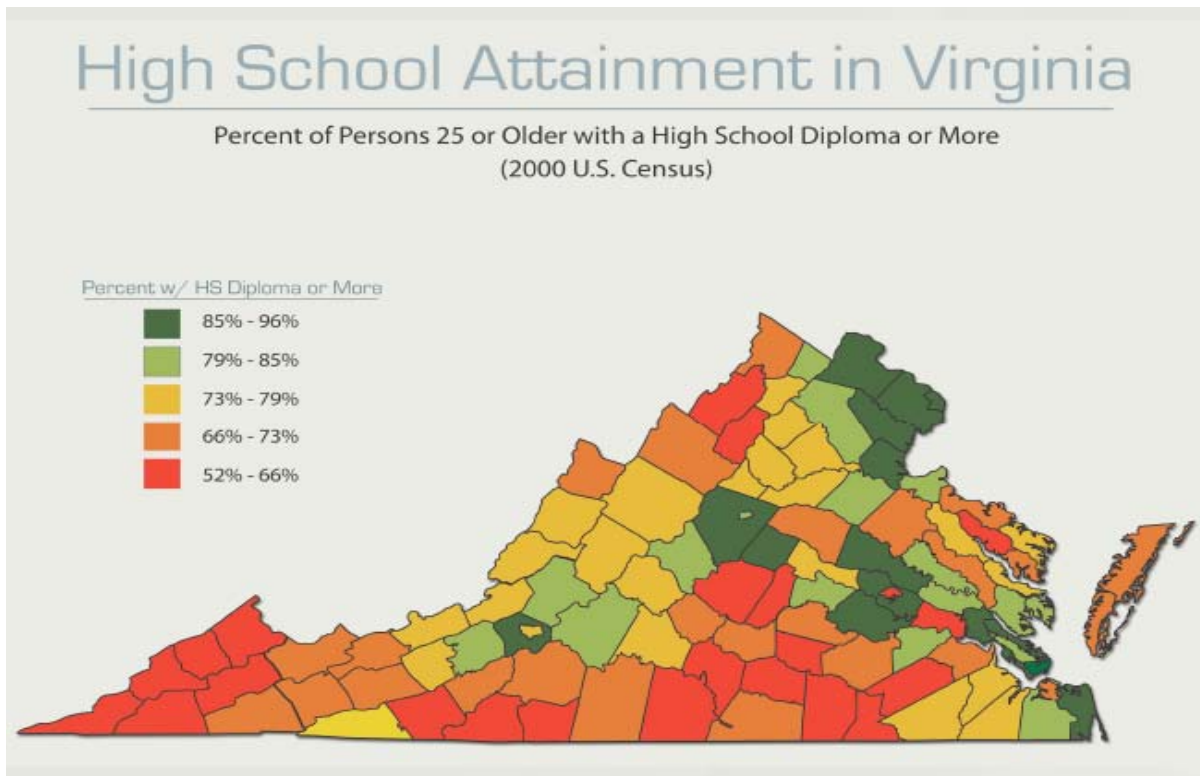
** Testing database NRSPro.com includes GED completers beyond 12.31.06 who began the testing process in 2006.*

Sources:

*Virginia Department of Education Adult Education & Literacy Annual Report
U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Department of Education
Virginia Community College System
Virginia Department of Correctional Education Strategic Planning Report
National Commission on Adult Literacy Report, "Reach Higher, America"
June 2008.*

The Virginia Adult Education Landscape

High School attainment statistics paint a disturbing picture in Virginia. The map below of 2000 census data shows that 48 counties or cities have a high school attainment rate of less than 70%. The majority of these localities are located in the southern part of the state, bordering North Carolina and in the southwest region of the state. High school attainment rates are highest in regional pockets throughout the state including: Hampton Roads, Central Virginia, Northern Virginia and the Roanoke region.



To reach out to the population of non-high school graduates in Virginia, adult education services are provided through a number of agencies and community organizations. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), through its Office of Adult Education and Family Literacy (OAEL) is responsible for federal and state dollars that flow to localities. The VDOE manages federal programs that include Adult Basic Education (ABE) for adults functioning at eighth grade level or below and English Literacy/Civics Education for English language learners. Federal funds for 2008-2009 are \$10,448,927. There is a required state match of at least 25% for federal funds (cash and in-kind) and a 15% match by localities which may also be cash or in-kind. Virginia

exceeds the required minimum 25% state match with a match of 51% of federal funds. *However, this match pales in comparison to the contributions of other states.* At the same time, many localities across the Commonwealth understand the need and exceed the 15% match.

Additionally, VDOE manages state funds of \$5.6 million that includes Adult Literacy Services, General Adult Education, Race to GED and Expanded GED. Community organizations are also awarded competitive grants from the VDOE to deliver adult education services. For 2008-2009, twelve community based organizations received grants to serve as fiscal agents and deliver services to the non-high school graduate adult population: Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle (Charlottesville); Catholic Charities of Arlington (Arlington); Skyline Literacy Coalition (Harrisonburg); Hispanic Committee of Virginia (Falls Church); BEACON Adult Literacy (Bristow); Literacy Volunteers of Roanoke Valley (Roanoke); The READ Center (Richmond); Tidewater Literacy Council (Portsmouth); Eastern Shore Literacy Council (Belle Haven); Literacy Council of Northern Virginia (Falls Church); Escuela Bolivia (Arlington); and Refugee & Immigration Services of the Catholic Diocese (Richmond).

The General Education Diploma (GED) consists of five tests that measure the skills considered to be the major outcomes of a high school education. The tests focus on the general abilities to analyze, evaluate, and draw conclusions.

There are a variety of delivery models for adult education. Thirty-two localities provide adult education services through their school division. Seventeen regions (80 localities) provide services through a regional program and 14 localities subcontract adult education services to their local community college, including the Eastern Shore Community College, New River Community College, Southside Community College and Patrick Henry Community College.

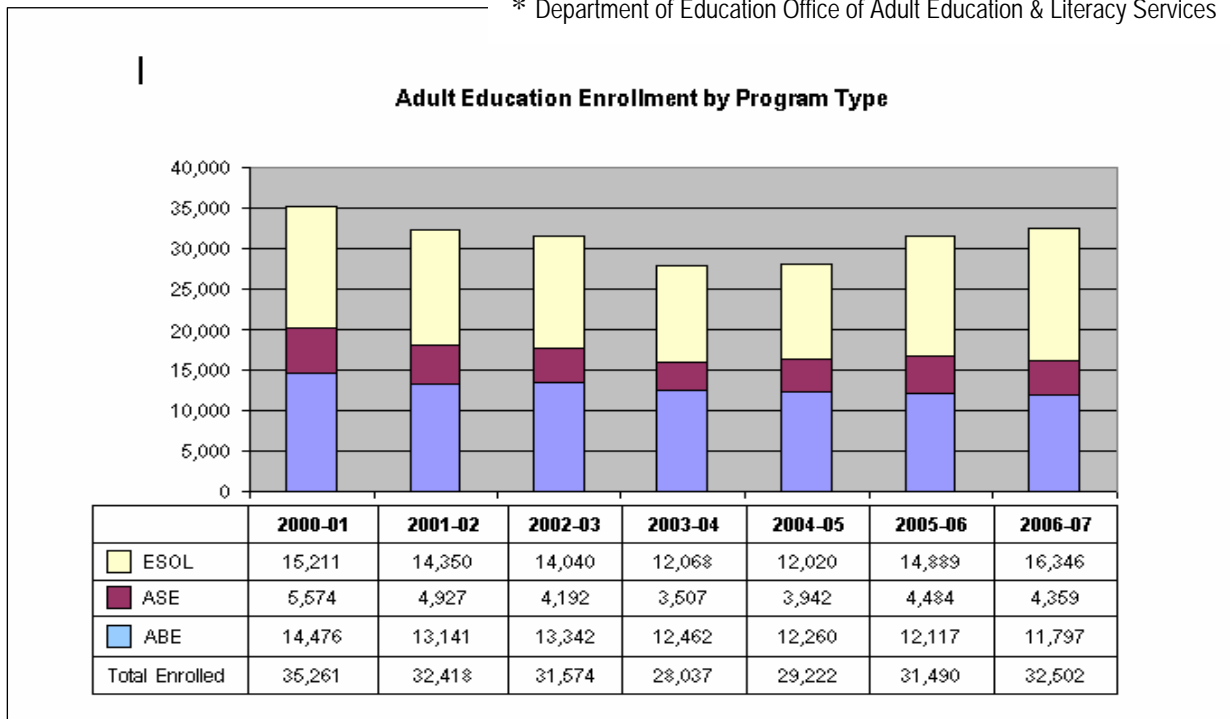
The three primary adult education programs provided through the Virginia Department of Education are as follows:

- Adult Basic Education (ABE) – ABE consists of instruction that provides basic skills for adults who are performing below the ninth grade level in reading, writing, mathematics, and other basic skills.

- English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) – ESOL language instruction is designed for adults with limited English proficiency. Additionally, there are Community Based Literacy Organizations (CBLO) providing ESOL instruction as well as low-level literacy instruction, workforce development, and family literacy. Virginia EL/Civics Education classes also provide increased access to English literacy programs linked to civics education. Participants are able to increase their English proficiency in order to understand and navigate governmental, educational, and workplace systems and key American institutions, such as banking and health care. Approximately 50% of enrollment in adult education is in ESOL classes.
- Adult Secondary Education (ASE) – Adult secondary programs include instruction above grade nine which provides adults with the opportunity to earn a GED or a high school credential. Three diploma program options are offered to serve this need: the Adult High School Diploma, the External Diploma Program, and the General Achievement Diploma. (See Diploma descriptions at end of this section.)¹

Enrollment by adult education program type has remained essentially static since 2001-2002.

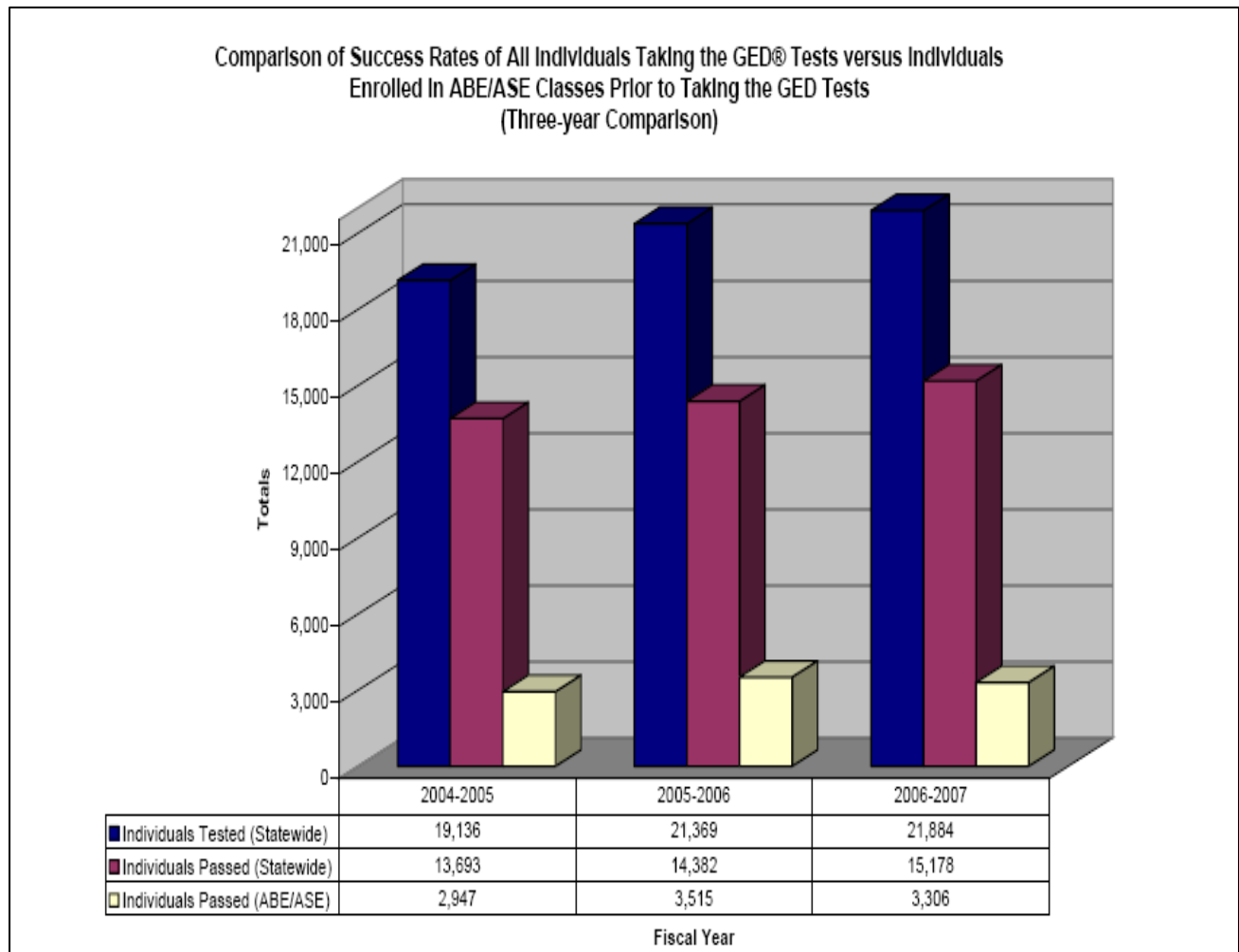
* Department of Education Office of Adult Education & Literacy Services



Demographic Data: Adult Learners Reported			
Fiscal Year	FY2004-2005	FY2005-2006	FY2006-2007
State Enrollment	29,222	31,490	32,502
Gender			
Male	12,137	13,324	14,018
Female	17,085	18,166	18,484
Enrollment by Age			
16-18	2,560	2,394	2,431
19-24	6,678	7,176	7,389
25-44	14,718	16,019	16,582
45-59	4,399	4,865	5,050
60 and older	867	1,036	1,050
Enrollment by Ethnicity			
American Indian or Alaskan Native	101	96	102
Asian	3,173	3,251	3,386
Black or African American	8,472	8,807	8,758
Hispanic or Latino	8,779	10,023	11,657
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	36	52	47
White	8,661	9,261	8,552
Participant Statuses			
Employed	14,671	16,156	17,101
Unemployed (In the Labor Force)	6,822	7,442	7,676
Unemployed (Not in the Labor Force)	7,729	7,892	7,725
On Public Assistance	1,398	1,271	1,038
Corrections	2,654	2,981	2,923
Family Literacy	946	475	560
Disabled	654	505	458
Other Institutional Setting	35	57	74
Rural	8,438	9,032	8,907
Source: Department of Education Office of Adult Education & Literacy Services			

As reflected in the chart above, Hispanics made up the largest block of total enrollees (36%) for 2006-2007. The number of African American and white participants for the most recent data period are about the same (27% each). The Hispanic enrollment has continued to grow over the past three years, while the numbers for other groups has not changed significantly. Additionally, for 2006-2007, over 50% of those enrolled in adult education were employed (17,101) and another 24% were available to work and/or looking for work (7,676). Over the three years cited, women continue to enroll in adult education programs in greater numbers than men, consistently representing over 56% of the total enrollment.

Exciting initiatives for adult learners who need a more flexible schedule to complete their GED are available online through eLearn Virginia and *GED on Demand*. The latter program was launched in the fall of 2007 with Cox Communications and Comcast cable companies. The VDOE worked with the two cable providers to develop the initiative which integrates GED preparation videos into the on-demand programming that each company offers free to its digital cable customers. There is no charge for the GED prep courses. Recently, Charter Cable has added the GED on Demand to its system. Currently, there are thirty-nine GED courses available to over 1.1 million households. The options for individual preparation are especially significant when looking at the GED pass rates. Of the 15,178 adult learners who passed the GED in 2006-2007, only 3,306 were enrolled in VDOE adult education programs. Two-thirds of adult learners passing the GED that year (11,872 students) prepared through other means.



The Virginia Community College System offers adult education services through the Middle College program at five community colleges. Middle College is a “college recovery” program for non-high school diploma learners. This program allows

MIDDLE COLLEGE SITES
Danville Community College
Germanna Community College
J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College
New River Community College
Southside Community College
*Rappahannock Community College (Opening Fall 2008)

individuals without a high school diploma to increase their income and employability by simultaneously pursuing a GED, community college education and/or workforce certification in a college environment. Over the five years since program establishment, more than 70% of active students have received a GED and over

50% of GED completers are enrolled in a post-secondary education program. A sixth Middle College site will be added in fall 2008 at Rappahannock Community College.

The Virginia Department of Correctional Education provides adult education services to the adult inmate population and appropriate educational services to incarcerated juveniles. The adult population has access to academic programs, including adult basic education, pre-GED and GED classes. There are a limited number of postsecondary programs offered as well. Incarcerated juveniles have mandatory education requirements that may lead to a high school diploma or GED. Career and Technical Education courses are offered to both adult and juvenile inmates. Training is available to the adult inmate population in 36 different trade areas and 26 trade areas are available to juveniles. Since 2006, the nationally recognized Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) Program has been available to incarcerated adults. This program assesses work readiness skills through the three WorkKeys tests and awards certificates at three levels: Gold, Silver, and Bronze. Over 3,000 adult inmates have taken the WorkKeys assessment since 2006. The pass rate over this period has been 93%. Of those passing, 67% earned a Gold or Silver certificate. In the fall of 2008, the Career Readiness Certificate program will be available to incarcerated juveniles.

Disabled Virginians without high school diplomas make up a small but important part of the Virginia landscape. A smaller percentage of disabled students graduate from high school, and they have a higher dropout rate for grades 7-12 when compared to all students. The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) requires each state to report state-level data on a number of indicators including graduation and dropouts. The 2005-2006

Special Education Performance Report from the Virginia Department of Education compares the percent of youth with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) graduating from high school with a Standard Diploma or Advanced Studies Diploma to the percentage of all youth in Virginia graduating with a Standard or Advanced Diploma. In grade 12, 48.6% of students with disabilities graduated compared to 85% of all students in grade 12. A second indicator compares the percent of youth with IEPs dropping out of grades seven through 12, (2.23%) to the percent of all youth, (1.90%), dropping out of grades 7 through 12. Enrollment numbers from VDOE indicate that 458 disabled adult learners participated in a state or federally funded program in 2006-2007.

¹ Adult Secondary Education Diploma options are available but only a small number of adult learners take advantage of these options. In 2006-2007, local programs reported 151 adults completing an Adult High School Diploma and 50 completing the External Diploma. VDOE does not collect information on the General Achievement Diploma (GAD) and does not have data on all school divisions offering diploma programs.

- ❶ Adult High School Diploma - The Adult High School Diploma program enables an adult no longer enrolled in public education to complete the required courses/activities to earn an Adult High School diploma, with the local high school scheduling classes and determining course requirements in accordance with standards established by the state.
- ❷ External Diploma Program - The External Diploma Program (EDP) is a program developed for adults, age 21 and older, who have not had recent schooling or test-taking experience, but who now have acquired high school level academic skills in other than curriculum-based programs. It is an assessment program and not an instructional program. The program structure offers considerable flexibility. The program consists of two phases: the Diagnostic Phase and the Assessment Phase. In the Diagnostic Phase the applicant receives a series of evaluations of the adult's basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics, as well as entry-level job skills. During the Assessment Phase, the applicant demonstrates 65 competencies through a simulation of varied realistic tasks. Upon demonstrated mastery of the competencies the Adult High School diploma is awarded through a local school board.
- ❸ General Achievement Diploma (GAD) - The requirements for the GAD include prescribed standard units of credit and a passing score on the General Educational Development (GED) examination. Standard credits required for the GAD may be earned in a variety of educational settings including a public school, community college or other institution of higher education, adult high school program, correspondence, distance learning and online courses.



The Findings

The Virginia Adult Learning Panel met in August 2008 to address the issues of adult learning across the Commonwealth. Robust discussion ensued and together the panel highlighted the scope of the challenges to success for adult education. As chair of the Adult Learning panel, Mark Musick stated, “It is agreed that the work underway in adult education needs to be substantially expanded and done without stepping on each others heels. This is not about pointing fingers or placing blame, it is about moving Virginia forward, and helping many more Virginians earn diplomas, certificates and degrees while collaborating to make a difference.”

While members recognize services must be improved for the adult population without a high school diploma, the panel quickly brought the adult education problem into a P-16 perspective. Innovative service reform and additional resources are necessary for adult learners. Senator Frank Ruff noted that the issue must be addressed beginning at the K-12 level. As a result of high school dropouts alone, another quarter million adults in Virginia are added to the rolls of those without a high school diploma every ten years (SCHEV Education Pipeline Data). It is this “leaking bucket” of students lost in the education pipeline (approximately 25,000 each year) who are then difficult to recapture through adult education programs.

Without progress at the secondary level, the problem of recapturing adults will continue to be a challenge. Jane Kusiak, Executive Director of the Council on Virginia’s Future, said that in order for this shift to happen there must be a college-going culture in place. Not only must there be an emphasis on the value of postsecondary opportunities including college, technical training and apprenticeships but also there “must be a way to elevate the issue above an inner circle workforce discussion to something much bigger in order to create a sense of urgency.” In response, Marcus Newsome, Superintendent of Chesterfield Public Schools, commented that to focus on on-time graduation data creates

greater awareness of the challenges and provides another opportunity for communities to address this issue in a more aggressive way.

In accordance with the panel's finding that it is essential to capture students all along the K-12 education continuum, leaving no student behind or falling through the cracks, Bob Leber pointed out that progress is being made to address this gap and better integrate these at-risk students into the system. Commonwealth Scholars, a business-driven program that encourages all students to take a more challenging course of study in high school, is raising the bar of student success. The Governor's Career and Technical Academies are designed to expand options for the general student population to acquire STEM literacy and other critical skills, knowledge and credentials that will prepare them for high-demand, high-wage and high-skill careers. The Commonwealth is part of a network of 33 states working on the American Diploma Project and dedicated to aligning standards, graduation requirements, assessments and accountability policies with the demands of college and careers. Initiatives like Commonwealth Scholars, Career and Technical Academies and the Commonwealth's work with the American Diploma Project are efforts to patch the leaking pipeline.

Contrary to the improvement trends listed above, there is still concern regarding students rising to the challenge. According to one panel member, only one in four students who had been recognized as having the potential to succeed in AP classes based on the AP Predictor of the SAT test chose to enroll in the challenging courses offered by one school system. In other words, 75 percent chose the less challenging route. In the discussion about how to reach students having left the system without a high school diploma through adult education, attention must be given to recapturing the disengaged student. By engaging the disinterested student, we strengthen the education pipeline and its continuum of services.

Understanding the urgency and the critical need, the panel recognized that increased and enhanced collaboration and communication are necessary in order to provide a more comprehensive continuum of services to adult learners. The need for

increased collaboration in working with adult learners is evident from the magnitude of the problem. More than 500,000 adults in Virginia have no high school diploma. Fewer than six percent are enrolled in adult programs of any kind. One of the panel members identified the bridge to progress in terms of the 4C's: collaboration, communication, continuum, and curriculum. Speaking from the perspective of the National Commission on Literacy, Dr. Cheryl King highlighted the need for workforce, postsecondary and adult education to work together to connect the pieces for better and more inclusive services.

One of the major challenges of adult education is attainment of additional training and education beyond the GED, what could be called GED-PLUS. Increased emphasis on the first three of the four C's mentioned above will be essential to meeting this challenge: improved *collaboration* between public programs and community colleges, better *communication* to adult students about postsecondary options, and assurance that all stakeholders are committed to the *continuum* from adult education to additional training and education. Just as the high school diploma is not a terminal degree in today's economy, passage of the GED should not be an end game. Much like the educational attainment message "What's Your Game Plan After High School?" we need to ask, "What's Your Game Plan After the GED?"

Dr. King noted that the goal of adult education is not just the attainment of a GED. The GED is an entry ramp on the road to a better job, further training, industry certification and even postsecondary education. The National Commission on Adult Literacy concluded that the GED does not adequately prepare one for postsecondary education, especially in math. Adult education and literacy programs should be teaching the *curriculum* required in the 21st century.

Adult learners in the program often fail to see the connection between education and the competitiveness of the workforce. Bonnie Moore, Director of Adult Education for Fairfax County Public Schools, pointed out that these students understand the need for a GED or high school equivalent for the purpose of maintaining or receiving a job but they fail to understand the bridge between education and the workforce, and the need to

pursue some form of postsecondary education. Opportunities for expanded services include more Middle College programs, greater use of the Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) program, PlugGED In, GED On Demand and on-line and Dual Enrollment for GED students.

Middle College allows individuals without a high school diploma to increase their income and employability by simultaneously pursuing a GED, community college education, and a workforce certification in a college environment. The program offers targeted remedial courses, access to workforce readiness courses, enrollment in community college courses applicable to a degree or industry-based certificate, and comprehensive support services. The five middle college sites (J. Sargeant Reynolds, Danville, Germanna, New River, and Southside) have demonstrated this model works. The chart below shows the success of middle college activities as 70% of active students have received a GED and over 50% of GED completers are now enrolled in a postsecondary education program.

Summary of Middle College Activities & Outcomes						
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08 (preliminary data)	Total
Activities						
Enrollment	73	310	452	594	717	2,146
Active after one month	54	240	384	505	620	1,803
Attained GED	34	175	392	408	439	1,348
Attained CRC	19	136	191	211	232	789
Continued to Postsecondary Education	22	134	171	239	220	786
Outcomes						
GED Rate	63%	73%	76%	81%	71%	75%
CRC Rate	35%	57%	50%	42%	37%	44%
Postsecondary Rate	65%	77%	59%	59%	50%	58%

Career Readiness Certificates (CRCs) are available to adult learners at all community colleges, workforce-training programs, One-Stop Centers and the Department of Corrections. As a measure of increasing the priority and visibility of skills

development, Virginia tracks the number of total CRCs issued in the state. This number includes all certificates earned in the community colleges, workforce and corrections system. To guarantee increased success, the Governor committed \$250,000 in Workforce Investment Act funds to be matched by \$616,000 of other resources to support the Career Readiness Certificate Program. The CRC is a nationally recognized credential that uses the three WorkKeys test to assess work readiness and employability and awards certificates at three levels: gold, silver and bronze.

2007 & 2008 Career Readiness Certificate Data						
	Certificates Earned			Total Bronze, Silver, Gold CRC Recipients	Total Number Taking Required Assessments	Total Percentage Passing Required Assessments
	Bronze	Silver	Gold			
2007 CRC Data	953	1,788	498	3,239	3,572	90.60%
2008 CRC Data	1,273	2,319	701	4,293	4,802	89.40%

The PlugGED In program in Russell County is as a response to technology employment opportunities in Southwest Virginia where there is a higher than average dropout rate and less than adequate technology skills training. The pilot curriculum of PlugGED In will integrate GED instruction into an innovative technology skills course for 18-25 year old dropouts who show educational and employment potential but have had little success in traditional educational settings. The program is project based and supported by professional mentors. Students who successfully complete this six month curriculum will graduate with a GED credential and a portfolio of technology products, an in-depth understanding of potential technology sector skills and valuable professional contacts. This pathway will enable students to pursue entry level work or additional post-secondary education and training.

Dual enrollments opportunities for adults seeking a GED may encourage their transition to community college and increased employments opportunities. There is

nothing that prohibits states from dual enrolling students in both adult education and community college courses, as long as federal funding streams are appropriately identified.

GED completers working on their own or through a volunteer organization need to be linked with their local community college for follow up. Those adults who are preparing on their own and taking the tests without significant instruction are prime candidates for further education. The panel brought up a number of significant related questions: Is there the potential for the state GED administrator to share contact information with the community colleges? How effectively are we currently tracking adult education GED holders into postsecondary education or training? Are there effective and efficient ways to track GED students beyond the completion point? Are we setting goals for educational attainment that meet the state's needs?

The panel agreed that employers, community colleges and adult education programs need to work together to expand opportunities for adult learners and provide effective transitions between programs. The National Commission on Adult Literacy urged states to pass legislation that brings workforce, postsecondary and adult education together with economic development to create a state plan for adult education that goes beyond federal requirements. The creation of the state's one-stop centers provide needed assistance and are excellent examples of agency collaboration.

It was a consensus among panel members that Virginia needs to invest more in the adult learning effort. There is insufficient funding to adequately address the needs that exist. While Virginia exceeds the 25% federal minimum funding match at 51%, the state still ranks 37th in funding for adult education. Twenty-eight states and the District of Columbia exceed the required state match, ranging from 103% to 1134%. The chart below, as reported by the National Commission on Adult Literacy, shows the percentage of adult education state match monies to federal dollars in 2008 for all 50 states, Puerto

Rico and the District of Columbia.

STATE	STATE APPROPRIATION ¹	FEDERAL GRANT AMOUNT ²	STATE MATCH PERCENTAGE
California	700,000,000	61,781,581	1133%
Washington	70,000,000	7,403,214	946%
Florida	227,507,229	27,026,081	842%
Minnesota	40,347,000	5,873,453	687%
North Carolina	61,546,187	14,264,484	431%
Connecticut	20,596,400	4,849,063	425%
Vermont	4,000,000	988,854	405%
Arkansas	21,447,968	5,350,811	401%
Oregon	19,000,000	4,854,156	391%
Massachusetts	30,101,348	8,404,421	358%
Hawaii	6,182,009	1,793,047	345%
Utah	9,781,008	2,867,013	341%
Kentucky	27,200,000	8,320,098	327%
New York	104,324,700	32,045,634	326%
Maine	5,039,332	1,913,858	263%
District of Columbia	3,180,000	1,251,423	254%
South Carolina	19,168,119	7,677,682	250%
Alabama	22,000,000	8,867,545	248%
Alaska	2,098,500	953,231	220%
New Mexico	6,415,100	3,376,557	190%
Illinois	34,808,298	19,222,473	181%
Michigan	24,000,000	14,313,762	168%
Indiana	14,000,000	9,352,744	150%
Wyoming	1,148,178	831,835	138%
New Jersey	16,639,835	12,689,312	131%
Pennsylvania	23,434,000	18,635,266	126%
Georgia	16,016,600	14,515,435	110%
New Hampshire	1,742,089	1,687,524	103%
Iowa	4,000,000	3,884,984	103%
Rhode Island	2,000,000	2,040,097	98%
West Virginia	3,693,116	3,768,888	98%
Maryland	6,400,000	7,389,856	87%
Missouri	5,371,137	8,908,557	60%
Louisiana	5,041,312	8,960,540	56%
Arizona	4,468,900	8,436,753	53%
Tennessee	5,700,000	10,926,213	52%
Virginia	5,600,000	10,931,242	51%
Idaho	987,263	1,993,143	50%
North Dakota	550,000	1,132,036	49%
Wisconsin	3,474,600	7,326,580	47%
Ohio	7,876,701	16,640,578	47%
Oklahoma	2,315,297	5,829,556	40%
Montana	525,000	1,346,220	39%
Delaware	495,100	1,385,195	36%
Kansas	1,200,000	3,638,676	33%
Mississippi	1,800,000	6,117,508	29%
Puerto Rico	2,425,788	10,709,036	23%
South Dakota	200,000	1,282,655	16%
Texas	6,000,000	39,975,649	15%
Nevada	450,000	3,498,242	13%
Nebraska	245,000	2,350,879	10%
Colorado	200,000	5,525,506	4%
TOTAL U.S.	1,602,743,114	475,109,146	337%

¹State appropriations: David Rosent/Jim Parker, 2008 (Puerto Rico 2007)

²Federal grant amount: U.S. Department of Education, 2008 Estimates

Panel members identified the challenges of transportation and childcare as barriers to reaching adult education learners. Many who are in need of adult education are often working more than one job to make ends meet. As a result, flexible scheduling is also essential for these learners. Disabled Virginians face additional barriers of access and technology.



Virginia's Response to the State-directed Recommendations of the National Commission on Adult Literacy

- *States should engage in comprehensive planning and establish goals to improve educational attainment and workforce skills of their adults in light of their economic goals.*

The Governor's Workforce Development and Economic Development Strategic Plans were developed in tandem in 2006, and this collaborative process was codified by the General Assembly in 2008. Goal Three in the Workforce Development Plan, requires the state to respond to long-range and near-term talent and skills needs of business. A primary strategy for this goal is to increase the priority and visibility of skills development, career and technical education and postsecondary opportunities for adults. Action Items for this goal are as follows:

- Provide alternative approaches to organizing postsecondary skill development, remediation and workforce training programs for adults throughout the state to increase availability and access to these programs.
- Develop a statewide career pathways plan
- Increase use of the Career Readiness Certificates (CRCs)
- Create skill development opportunities for at-risk population sectors that face barriers to employment

In response to this strategy, a launch meeting was held in June 2008 to announce the development of a statewide career pathways plan. This plan, developed in conjunction with various state agencies will be released by the end of 2008. This plan or framework will link the state's education, workforce and economic development systems at all education and training levels. Meanwhile, as called for above, there has been increased use of the Career Readiness Certificates and a commitment to continue to increase the number awarded (see page 21).

- *The states should legislate authority for coordination and alignment of systems consistent with the postsecondary education, workforce and economic development goals. In some cases, a cross-agency planning body already exists; in others it may need to be created. In some states, a cabinet level position might be either established or strengthened. Whatever the approach, the involvement of the Governor is essential.*

In 2006, the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation establishing the Governor as the Chief Workforce Development Officer, inclusive of the responsibility for ensuring that the Commonwealth's workforce development efforts are implemented in a coordinated and efficient manner, by among other activities, taking appropriate executive action to this end. Additionally, the Governor was authorized to delegate his responsibility as Chief Workforce Development Officer to a senior person on his immediate staff.

Governor Kaine designated the Chief Workforce Development Officer duties to Daniel LeBlanc, the Senior Advisor to the Governor for Workforce, which is a Cabinet position. By Executive Order Sixty-One (2008), the Workforce Sub Cabinet was formalized consisting of the Senior Advisor to the Governor for Workforce and the Secretaries of Administration, Commerce & Trade, Education, Finance, Health & Human Resources, and Public Safety. The Superintendent of Public Instruction, the VCCS Chancellor and the SCHEV Executive Director are also members. The Workforce Sub Cabinet ensures Cabinet-level focus on workforce, postsecondary education and economic development issues and facilitates the efficient implementation of workforce development and training programs by cabinet secretaries and agencies responsible for such programs.

The responsibility for staffing the Virginia Workforce Council (VWC) was transferred by legislation to the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) as of July 1, 2008. The VWC is a business-led Council that provides policy direction to local workforce investment boards under the federal Workforce Investment Act. This body should also play a role in assisting the Governor in coordination of alignment of systems consistent with postsecondary education, workforce and economic development, as the relevant Cabinet Secretaries are also members of the VWC.

The Workforce Sub Cabinet has been an effective mechanism over the past two years for bringing about better coordination and alignment of the state's workforce system.

However, additional options may be necessary to comply with the recommendations of the National Commission on Adult Literacy for Congress and *state governments* to “**set the mission of the adult education and workforce skills system to attainment of postsecondary and workforce readiness.**” One option could be to vest the Virginia Workforce Council with more responsibilities for adult education. All educational entities delivering adult education services need postsecondary and economic development representatives. In short, it will be necessary to open up the adult education system in order to ensure improved coordination and communication.

- *States must invest in the skills of their workers so that increased productivity helps offset the effect of low-cost labor furnished by developing countries. Business must be an active part in this effort.*

One overriding finding stands out in the review of Virginia’s adult education results: *the number of adults served annually by adult education programs in Virginia has been essentially static over the past six years at either a little below or just over 30,000 individuals.* There is no doubt that Virginia is currently not doing enough to meet the educational needs of adults without a high school diploma and simply doing more of what is currently being done will not be enough either. Virginia needs to set ambitious goals for adults to attain both more GEDs and CRCs. Furthermore, to be responsive to the higher skill levels required in today’s economy, Virginia has to do a much better job of setting and achieving goals for improving adult learners’ transition into college, certificate programs and apprenticeships.

The ultimate goal for adult education is GED-PLUS, that is to say, just as additional postsecondary training and education is needed for high school graduates, it is also necessary for GED holders. Once goals are set, individual adult education and Middle College programs must be held accountable for the number of adults served, the number entering or retaining employment, the number attaining a GED or high school diploma, and the number receiving a postsecondary credential or degree. Those persons passing the GED as a result of their own independent study or on-line and video instruction should be contacted and encouraged to pursue further credentials and/or diplomas.

The high school attainment rate (see state map, page 9) varies for different regions of Virginia. A limited number of jurisdictions have percentages exceeding 85% for persons 25 or older with a high school diploma or more. Numerous jurisdictions, however, have 20 percent or much higher percentages of their adults without a high school diploma. As new funding is devoted to adult education, it would make sense to assign some priority funding to those areas.

As evidenced by the responses above to the recommendations of the National Commission on Adult Literacy, Virginia has made significant progress in the coordination and alignment of the workforce development, economic development and education system. The Commonwealth has also provided for the close collaboration of planning and goal setting for workforce and economic development. Nevertheless, the low percentage of persons served by adult education programs as well as those receiving a GED or alternative high school diploma and proceeding to postsecondary training and education suggests the Commonwealth is not doing enough and not getting satisfactory results. It is not simply a matter of money but Virginia's 51 percent state match to federal adult education grants will not get it done; twenty-eight states and the District of Columbia exceed the federal grant and many of them by several times the grant amount. In the final analysis, more funding and innovative, collaborative programs and approaches are required in order to reach a much larger number of under-educated adults in the Commonwealth.