

Excerpts from Keynote Address by Barbara Bush

“Another reason why literacy matters is because I believe, and the experts will tell you, that if more people could read, write and comprehend, we’d be much closer to solving many of the serious problems that we face today - such as teen pregnancies, drug abuse, and violent crime. You’ve heard of “crimes of passion”; but when you think about it, the problems I just cited are more like “crimes of hopelessness” -- and literacy can help fill that void, giving people more hope in their future. Literacy can change lives. I know this is true. Like many of you, I’ve seen it happen.”



Former First Lady of the United States, Barbara Bush.

“Like any ‘movement’, the literacy cause is led by many people hailing from different walks of life - from both the public and private sector. And the wonderful turnout we have today at this national literacy forum is a testimony to the fact that few people from the public sector have done more to advance the cause of literacy than the distinguished Senator (Paul Simon) from Makanda. That goes for SIU President Sanders, too, who served as acting Education Secretary under George for several months.”

Special thanks to those who helped draft the Literacy Recommendations.

They include the following: Michelle Calabaza, adult learner; Ed Castor, UAW/GM Joint Education Program; Dr. Sharon Darling, National Center for Family Literacy; Joyce Harper, adult learner; Andrew Hartman, National Institute for Literacy; Mabel Hayes, John A. Logan Community College; Mary Arnold Hemlinger, Newspaper Association of America; Christopher Hopey, National Center on Adult Literacy; Alice Johnson, National Institute for Literacy; Sheila Murphy, Lila Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund; Satia Orange, American Library Association; Jacquelyn Power, Blackwater Community School; Ron Pugsley, U.S. Department of Education; Judith Rake, Illinois Secretary of State’s office; Duane Rankin, Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville; Honorable Tom Sawyer, U.S. House of Representatives; Paul Simon, Public Policy Institute; Benita Somerfield, Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy; Jean Stephens, State Literacy Resource Centers Association; Marsha Tait, Literacy Volunteers of America; Dr. Peter Waite, Laubach Literacy; Archie Willard, adult learner; John Zickefoose, adult learner.



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Lit•er•a•cy

From the Trenches...

Literacy Recommendations for the Next Century



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The Challenge

The United States faces its most critical skills gap in this century. Millions of Americans either do not - or will not - possess the fundamental skills needed to attain and perform good-paying jobs in the 21st Century. Without an able workforce, the nation will be unable to sustain economic growth in an increasingly competitive global economy and assure a high quality of life for all Americans.

The National Adult Literacy Survey of 1992 indicated that nearly 40 million adult Americans lack the skills to be fully productive members of their local communities, to be effective workers, citizens and parents. It is imperative that community coalitions work together to address this important issue.

How can this be achieved?

The Recommendations

- ◆ Increase the number of people interested in this problem and organize their efforts more effectively. Library directors in the largest community in each county, working with groups already in the literacy field, should call a small meeting of leading educators, religious leaders, welfare officials, community college representatives, adult education leaders, officers of groups with community social concerns and representatives of business and labor.
- ◆ Strengthen and clarify the role of libraries in providing literacy programs and services.
- ◆ Recognize literacy training as an effective anti-crime tool. Every prison should have a required literacy program, with incentives for prisoners to improve their skills.
- ◆ Launch a major campaign to encourage people who have skill deficiencies to seek help.
- ◆ Offer significant tax incentives to employers to foster greater work-place literacy and educational opportunities.

- ◆ Escalate and expand efforts to identify and analyze learning disabilities, particularly in early childhood.



- ◆ Incorporate the opportunity to obtain basic literacy skills into all human service activities, particularly at welfare offices and employment offices, which deal with huge numbers of our citizens, many in great need of these skills.
- ◆ Expand family literacy and recognize parents are central to increasing the focus and quality of education services, particularly those in the preschool and early elementary years.
- ◆ Encourage public schools to support high school completion beyond the established age restriction by working with GED, adult literacy and other community agencies to ensure access to needed educational services for adult students.
- ◆ Encourage more volunteers and at the same time develop a greater cadre of well-trained professionals in the field of higher education.
- ◆ Make the field of adult education and literacy training more professional by implementing certified courses of study and regular training opportunities for teachers and volunteers.
- ◆ Interview those who have dropped out from literacy programs to determine what changes are needed to retain students.
- ◆ Explore the disparity between where adult education is most urgently needed and where such programs are made available.
- ◆ Provide more assistance, such as day-care and transportation, to adult learners while they are being trained.
- ◆ Expand efforts to measure the progress of literacy efforts. A National Literacy Report Card should be published at least every two or three years.
- ◆ Implore communities and the corporate sector to expand literacy instruction beyond traditional program settings to a continuum of literacy and training services in settings such as the workplace, home, libraries and other community sites.