

Fall Newsletter

The **Open Door Collective** (ODC) assists poverty reduction initiatives to take advantage of, expand, or improve adult basic skills services to meet the needs and broaden the economic opportunities of low-income adults. We advocate for effective policies and program designs that will reduce poverty, narrow income inequality, and provide free basic skills education for all adults in the United States. Improved policies and programs will enable adults living in poverty to increase their incomes as well as enjoy more economic stability and better health. These outcomes will diminish the need for social services, increase tax revenues, and lower overall healthcare costs. Expanded adult basic skills services will, therefore, pay for themselves.

Steering Committee Members

John Comings	john.comings@gmail.com
Eric Nesheim	enesheim@mnliteracy.org
Margaret Peterson	margaret@researchallies.org
Steve Reder	stevereder@gmail.com
David J. Rosen	djrosen123@gmail.com
Jen Vanek	jen_vanek@worlded.org
Gwenn Weaver	gwwork50@gmail.com

ODC Issues Groups

- Affordable Housing
- Labor and Workforce Development
- Public Libraries and Adult Basic Skills
- Digital Inclusion
- Health and ABE
- Safety Net Services Advocacy
- Criminal Justice Reform
- Immigrant and Refugee Education and Integration
- Public K-12 Education and Intergenerational Literacy

ODC's mission is to help adult basic skills advocates make common cause with advocates for other issues (health, employment, incarceration, libraries, etc.) in order to build an integrated approach to ending poverty. The ODC advocacy issues groups, therefore, are the engines of ODC's efforts. They produce advocacy papers, presentations, and videos that set out the common cause within each ODC issue group. We do this because we believe that the efforts taking place within other issue areas will be more successful if adult basic skills advocates and practitioners support them and they support adult basic skills. In addition, we believe that an integrated approach to ending poverty that includes adult basic skills and all of the other issues groups is the only way to be successful.

COABE 2019 ODC Strand and Proposal Submissions

The Open Door Collective has proposed a strand at the COABE 2019 Conference March 31- April 3, in New Orleans. ODC members have submitted six proposals:



The Power of Partnerships: Adult Literacy and Libraries

Kristin Lahurd, Gwenn Weaver, Michele Diecuch, presenters

Abstract

Part of the Open Door Collective strand, this session will explore the partnership developed between the American Library Association and ProLiteracy—and with national leaders from the Open Door Collective—to highlight the role of public libraries in helping meet the adult literacy need by establishing and expanding their services for adult learners. Attendees will become familiar with a variety of resources beneficial for both library staff and literacy practitioners, including Adult Literacy through Libraries: an Action Agenda and the free companion online course, the Open Door Collective's Public Libraries Issues Group, and the American Dream Literacy Initiative, a grant program for public libraries to expand services for adult English language learners or adults in need of basic education and workforce development.

Criminal Justice and Adult Education: Unmasking the Potential for Incarcerated Immigrants and Basic Skills Learners

Margaret Patterson, presenter

Abstract

Recent topics the criminal justice reform issues group in the Open Door Collective have considered are 1) reducing incarceration and alleviating poverty through basic skills education, and 2) the intersection of immigration and incarceration and how immigrants' contributions are interrupted when they are incarcerated. This session begins with a short overview of two issues briefs based on current research. The presenter will guide participants through interactive activities on the implications of both topics for society and for learners in correctional settings.

Reducing Poverty through Partnerships between Adult Ed Programs, Health Centers, Libraries, and Safety Net Advocates

David J. Rosen, Judy Mortrude, Alicia Suskin, and Kathy Harris, presenters

Abstract

The Open Door Collective is a national group of adult educators and others committed to reducing poverty and income inequality. We will describe the Open Door Collective's efforts and invite discussion about community partnerships that support adult basic skills, community health, libraries and safety net services advocacy.

**How Two Urban Programs Are Helping Adults Develop Basic Skills,
Family-Sustaining Employment, and Stronger Communities**
Paul Jurmo, Leicester Johnson, Laureen Atkins, and Lisa Soricone, presenters

Abstract

Since the 1980s, adult basic skills programs have been encouraged to work with other stakeholders to help job seekers and incumbent workers attain, succeed in, and advance in employment. While significant work in workplace literacy and career pathways has developed useful models, current efforts too often are limited in their ability to recognize and respond to learners' employment challenges and opportunities. In this session, we will identify those challenges and opportunities, share strategies that adult educators and other stakeholders can use, and share resources adult educators can use for professional development and collaboration in this area.

**What Research is Telling Us about How Basic Skills Services Can Support
Family-Sustaining Employment and Stronger Communities**
Paul Jurmo, Lisa Soricone, Leicester Johnson, Laureen Atkins, presenters

Abstract

This session will build on the "How Two Urban Programs Are Helping Adults Develop Basic Skills, Family-Sustaining Employment, and Stronger Communities" workshop and focus on what experience and research in work-related basic education are telling us about the realities of such programs nationwide. We'll review strategies recommended by researchers and funders; challenges that programs face; and actions stakeholders can take to further strengthen and expand basic skills development supports for workers. Audience members will have opportunities to share their experience in these areas and to connect with resources (e.g., materials and resource persons) for further collaboration and professional development.

At the Digital Crossroads: The Intersection of Adult Literacy and Digital Inclusion
Gwenn Weaver, Jennifer Maddrell, Jen Vanek, and Stephen Reder, presenters

Abstract

A part of the Open Door Collective strand, this session is a product of the Digital Inclusion Issues Group of the ODC, and will introduce case studies, examples, research results and other information to help participants to learn about the intersection of adult literacy and digital inclusion, and to consider potential strategies for practical application. Digital technology has become the driving force for many aspects of life, including education/learning, financial management, e-government/public service, working, shopping, health & wellness, transportation & travel, entertainment, creativity, etc. Consequently, adult learners need more than just basic skills and conventional computer skills training to engage with life in the 21st century. Digital inclusion is a concept that allows people to embrace the digital world to the fullest.

Issues Groups and Task Force Updates

Criminal Justice Reform

In late summer CRJ completed its new Criminal Justice and Adult Education Resources. This annotated list includes reports, toolkits, and other online resources. It is available at:

<http://www.opendoorcollective.org/criminal-justice-and-adult-education-resources.html>

Work on a second brief is ongoing. The topic of the brief is sentencing differences that immigrants experience, and immigrant economic contributions, vs. what they cannot contribute if they are imprisoned. The brief is planned to be completed by the end of 2018.

Labor and Workforce Development

Who We Are

The LWD Issues Group is presently composed of about eight individuals who have worked in various capacities (e.g., program administrators, researchers, curriculum developers, evaluators, advocates) in the fields of adult basic skills education, workforce development, job training, union-based education, and prisoner re-entry. We hope to expand the numbers of members and bring in people from other fields.

Our goals

We recognize that we have limited resources (e.g., no funds, no paid staff) and that, as a result, we need to be efficient and targeted to clear, relevant goals. With that in mind, we are currently focusing on helping key stakeholder groups to:

1. Better understand why investment in basic skills of current and potential workers is important, to meet a range of economic, workforce, and social development goals.
2. Better understand practical actions that key stakeholders can take to support the creation and sustaining of effective basic skills development opportunities for current and potential members of the workforce in their communities, states, and nation.
3. Build trust, communication, and collaboration on this issue within particular stakeholder groups and across groups.
4. Strengthen ODC as a voice and leader for a collaborative approach to worker basic skills development.

Strengths we bring to this work

- a commitment to creating an economy and society that lives up to our nation's principles of equal opportunity.
- significant expertise and networks related to adult basic education, workforce development, and related fields.

Actions completed and underway

Since the beginning of 2018, the LWD Issues Group has:

- Written and disseminated (on the ODC web site and otherwise) an ODC “Making the Case” paper titled “Basic Skills, A Key to advancing the Workforce.”
- Chosen a LWD Issues Group Chair (Paul Jurmo, www.pauljurmo.info).
- Created a Google Drive where group members can edit documents.
- Developed an initial action plan for the group.
- Developed a LWD Issues Group resource page on the ODC web site where interested readers can access LWD Issues Group materials.
- Developed a 36-page, annotated “Archive of Work-Related Basic Skills Resources” and posted it on the LWD Resource Page. (The archive presents summaries and links for many kinds of reports, articles, guidebooks, curricula, policy papers, and other resources on the topic of work-related basic skills. These can be used by various stakeholders (e.g., adult educators, workforce development specialists, employers, union representatives, advocates for various population groups, researchers) who want to learn about how this topic has been discussed and developed since the 1980s. This Archive was written in particular to help stakeholders’ access and benefit from significant valuable work that has already been done by education and workforce development providers, policy makers, researchers, employers, and labor unions, so that practice and policy can avoid reinventing the wheel.)
- Developed drafts of “Can-Do Guides” for various stakeholders, including employers, unions, prisoner re-entry agencies, and others. These documents (now being developed) are aimed at helping various stakeholder groups understand why and how they can support the development and use of basic education to meet workforce and other development goals.
The “[What Forward-Thinking Employers Can Do to Strengthen the Basic Skills of Our Workforce](#)” Can-Do Guide was published at the end of October.
- Submitted proposal for two one-hour sessions at the 2019 COABE Conference: LWD Issues Group members have submitted proposals for two one-hour workshops on various aspects of the theme of “Connecting Basic Skills Education to Efforts for Family-Sustaining Employment and Stronger Communities.” Members would facilitate these workshops at the COABE Conference in New Orleans on March 31- April 3, 2019. This workshop would be part of a larger ODC strand at the conference.

How ODC members and others can get involved

- Join the LWD Issues Group: Responsibilities include contributing to the preparation and updating of documents to be posted on the LWD Issues Group web page. (Contact Group Chair Paul Jurmo at pjurmo@comcast.net).
- Become familiar with and use the resources developed by the Group (e.g., by encouraging colleagues to read resources contained on the “Archive of Work-Related Basic Skills Resources” or sharing the upcoming “What Employers Can Do to Strengthen the Basic Skills of Our Workforce” and “What Labor Educators Can Do to Strengthen the Basic Skills of Our Workforce” guides with your staff and other relevant contacts in your community).
- Spread the word about ODC and the resources on the ODC web site in meetings and conference sessions, via your newsletters or web site.
- Incorporate the goal of “helping workers attain, succeed in, retain, and advance in employment that provides family-sustaining wages and benefits and a positive quality of work life” into your work, mission statement, and project plans. (This is, we feel, an important theme that is often overlooked in discussions about work-related basic education.)
- Send in ideas and information to our Group (via Paul Jurmo at pjurmo@comcast.net and David Rosen at djrosen123@gmail.com) about how the LWD Issues Group might be helpful.

In sum

We are building on other great examples in our and other fields of organizations and individuals who stepped up – sometimes with limited resources but with a vision, good organization, and energy – and made a difference.

Affordable Housing for Low-income Adults

The Affordable Housing Task Force is in its early stages of formation. Anyone interested in joining or contributing resources should contact Erik Jacobson.

Health and Adult Basic Education

Over the next year, the group will be writing a two-page paper for potential funders about connecting community health with ABE.

Immigrant and Refugee Education and Integration

The IREI issues group been compiling a list of resources that we hope to have available to the broader ODC community soon. Given the current political climate in the US (including the 45th president's statements about migration), destabilizing international events that have led to displacement of millions of people from their homes, what we know about seeking sanctuary and the troubling assertions about birthright citizenship, the group has much work to do. We anticipate that following the midterm elections, there will be more to add to our resource section and quite possibly suggestions for concrete and concerted effort on behalf of immigrant and refugee learners and community members around the country.

Public Libraries and Adult Basic Skills

Our last major activity was in the spring when we presented our Make the Case Paper at the annual public libraries conference in Vermont. Our next meeting will be held soon. We are (always) seeking new members. Join now and help us shape our activities for the coming year!

Digital Inclusion Issues

The Digital Inclusion Issues Group has submitted a proposal for the COABE conference as part of the ODC strand. The title is "At the Digital Crossroads: the Intersection of Adult Literacy ad Digital Inclusion." The concept and content will provide a base for one or more products from the digital inclusion issues group in the near future.