



NATIONAL ADULT LITERACY CONGRESS

September 10-11
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

1987

NATIONAL STUDENT PROCLAMATIONS

The following proclamations, voiced by student representatives of adult literacy programs from the fifty states and the District of Columbia, address six important areas concerning the problem of illiteracy in the United States. Each statement was proclaimed to the nation in Congress Hall and unanimously approved by the delegates on September 11, 1987.

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Laubach Literacy Action
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WHO WE ARE: EDUCATING THE PUBLIC ABOUT ILLITERACY

The term "illiterate" is here to stay but it needs to be associated with positive ideas such as growth, dignity, pride, excitement in learning, and ongoing learning. Illiteracy should not be used to suggest dumb, stupid, diseased, or handicapped.

a. Short-term education of the public: information should be more widely available and presented openly. More students need to come forward. Students should make their own statements. Actors should not be used. Information should be more specific; outreach groups could help with this. We need to be persistent in giving information to the public and show successful illiterate people.

b. Long-range education of the public: information should show the educational benefits of literacy and the benefits to the next generation. Society needs to remove the time limit on learning and make a commitment to lifelong learning. Literacy should be seen as a right, not a privilege. People, especially the young, need to know that because of changes in society people need more education today.

LITERACY AND THE WORKPLACE

a. Companies

Companies need to be informed about the problems of illiteracy. When students go to companies and commit themselves to work on their G.E.D.s, their rights must be protected. It should be illegal for an employer to fire someone who does not read. When students make a commitment to overcoming their reading problems, they should ask their employers for their help and commitment. Companies should encourage employees to seek help.

b. Students

Students should tell employers that they have made a sacrifice to learn to read and write. Students should take job-related materials to their tutors and study them with their tutors, so they can know what their job is. Students should recruit other students on the job and encourage them to get help like we did.

c. Legislation

There should be tax credits for companies who help students.

d. Judicial System

We want judges to be aware of the problems of illiteracy. We want them to ask people who come before them: "Do you read and write?" We want the judges to tell people that help is available.

Legislation, Funding and Resources for Literacy

People who cannot read have the right to an education. We are ambitious, creative and talented individuals. However, we need the skills of reading and writing to be more productive. This learning is a shared responsibility between society and its citizens.

As a part of society's responsibility, it is critical that first, funding be increased to reach all illiterate people and secondly, programs include support for tutors, teachers, materials, student participation and outreach.

America needs all of us to solve today's problems and create the future.

Our Involvement in Issues of Literacy

We as students want a say in what is going on in the issues of literacy. We're the experts on issues of literacy because we've lived it. We can enrich an organization by being part of it. We can give programs information that they cannot get themselves. Other students can benefit by seeing new readers like themselves. We have lived it, and we can help students with some of the rough spots because we've been there. We, as students and new readers, want to be given the opportunity to work in our communities solving the illiteracy problem.

Literacy for Non-English Speaking Adults

We, the people of the United States, whose first language is from another country and who are learning English as a second language, wish to affirm and preserve our native languages, cultures, and histories. This is being done primarily in our homes: from grandparents to parents to children. To preserve our rich heritages, we use our native languages with our families, to teach cultural dances, to travel to our native lands, to cook our special foods, to tell stories, sing songs and chant chants. We admire and hold our ancestors in great honor.

We recommend the following actions to the nation:

That teachers and tutors be given the best training possible: training based on proven and effective methods.

That new readers help guide teachers and tutors in what works for students.

That conversation be part of instruction.

That wherever possible teachers and tutors from each ethnic group be recruited and trained to work with their own people because they are especially sensitive to culture and language.

That English-speaking teachers and tutors also be used with ethnic teachers and tutors.

That each person needing to learn English be assessed at the level they need to begin.

That a variety of learning methods be offered, including one-to-one tutoring and small group instruction.

That this nation urge all citizens to learn more than one language, especially those languages of ethnic groups living in their own community.

What's Worked for Us

Every student is different. Everyone works at a different pace and has different needs, interests and time available for lessons. However, there are some things that will help every student to succeed in learning.

Students can learn better if they have teachers and tutors who are dedicated to the student, have unselfish love and positive attitudes, can build self-confidence and are well-trained to meet the needs of their particular students.

We believe that one-to-one works better because everyone can work at his or her own pace, it's more comfortable, you get more attention and much better results. We need the kinds of support we can get from tutors and teachers. They can help us with more than reading. They can help us read the Bible, do mathematics, write letters or checks; whatever we need.

We also need positive support from our families, friends, schools and churches, indeed from everyone in public and private sectors, including the Congress.

We especially need support from other students. We need opportunities such as student support groups and student-teacher get togethers. We can "tell it like it is." We can teach some things that tutors and teachers cannot. We can cheer for each other and learn from each other.

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