

# Teaching Tennessee Adults



**John G. Morgan**  
**Comptroller of the Treasury**  
**Office of Education Accountability**

**March 2004**



STATE OF TENNESSEE

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March 15, 2004

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The Honorable Jimmy Naifeh  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
and  
Members of the General Assembly  
State Capitol  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Transmitted herewith is a report by the Office of Education Accountability about adult education in Tennessee. The study considers the groups of adults who access education in Tennessee, how service is provided to them, and the role that various state agencies play in providing adult education.

Sincerely,

John G. Morgan  
Comptroller of the Treasury

# Teaching Tennessee Adults



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**March 2004**

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Comptroller of the Treasury, Office of Education Accountability.  
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## Executive Summary

Recently, advisors from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) identified low adult literacy as one of the greatest challenges facing Tennessee's educational system. Studies have found that low adult literacy levels can lower a workforce's effectiveness, decrease a family's earnings potential, and perpetuate the intergenerational cycle of poverty. In response to these findings, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) made adult education one of its 12 goals in June 2002.

Individuals functioning at low literacy levels are more likely to face poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and incarceration. Children of low literacy parents are less likely to complete high school or earn a GED. The negative effects of low adult literacy may be particularly detrimental in Tennessee where 53 percent of the population performs at the second lowest literacy level or below.<sup>1</sup> The state's low literacy rate may jeopardize its ability to compete in a global marketplace.

Today, an educated workforce can be more valuable than any other resource. With the focus of the U.S. economy quickly shifting from industry and production to information and technology, literacy skills have become an increasingly important commodity.<sup>2</sup> According to a 2001 study by the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, Tennessee does not have a labor force prepared to meet the challenges of the country's new "knowledge economy." The new economy values highly skilled and well educated employees who can keep pace with scientific and technological changes.<sup>3</sup>

Nationally, individuals with high school and college degrees have higher earnings and more job opportunities than their less educated counterparts. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the average income for an individual without a high school degree is barely above the poverty level for a family of four.<sup>4</sup> Improving the economic stability of Tennessee families requires increasing education levels and creating more high-skilled jobs. Without qualified workers to fill these jobs, Tennessee will continue to lag behind other states in its bid to bring lucrative high-tech jobs home.

Federal and state laws provide for a variety of programs to address adult literacy in Tennessee. The primary federal legislation affecting adult education is the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), which focused federal attention on the need to retool America's labor force. Title II of the WIA provides funds for state-administered adult education and family literacy programs. Under the WIA, Tennessee received \$12.6 million for adult education in FY2002, up from \$5.9 million in 1996. The state contributed an

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<sup>1</sup> As measured by the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), a level one achiever can perform only basic tasks, such as adding a deposit slip, locating one piece of information in an article, and locating the time of a meeting on a form. Someone performing at level two should be able to locate an intersection on a street map, interpret instructions from an appliance manual, and calculate the total costs of purchase from an order form. See Appendix A for general descriptions of the five literacy levels used in the 1992 NALS.

<sup>2</sup> Deborah Brandt, "Changing Literacy," *Teachers College Record*, March 2003, pp. 245-260.

<sup>3</sup> Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, "Tennessee and the Knowledge Economy," May 2001.

<sup>4</sup> According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the poverty threshold for 2002 is \$18,100 for a family of four.

additional \$3.2 million and the Department of Human Services provided OAE with \$4.1 million, a mixture of federal and state money, to provide adult education services to Families First participants. OAE distributes most of its \$20 million budget in the form of annual grants to local adult education programs. In addition, the Department of Education oversees two family literacy programs and the Department of Correction administers adult education in the state's prison system.

The purpose of this report is to

- provide an overview of the state's literacy level,
- describe the way adult education services are delivered and who accesses them, and
- identify ways that Tennessee can improve its adult education system.

The report concludes:

**Tennessee allocates fewer state funds to adult education than many other states in the region.** The Office of Adult Education (OAE) received \$3.2 million in state appropriations for adult education in FY2002 and an additional \$4.1 million from the Department of Human Services (which includes both federal and state funds) for providing adult education services to Families First participants. Other states contribute funds ranging from \$2 million in Mississippi to \$241.9 million in Florida. During the last federal increase for adult education, the state relied on local support to match the funds. However, if the federal government increases the adult education allotment to Tennessee in the future, the local governments may not be able to make the state match. In this case, the state would have to increase funding to adult education or lose some federal money. (See page 13.)

**Tennessee's service delivery system for adult education is fragmented. Four state agencies and several other entities, including public libraries, community colleges, and businesses, provide a variety of adult education services.** With no forum for formal communication, the entities involved in adult education may not always cooperate to provide seamless service to clients. Fragmentation could result in confusion both among service providers and potential adult education learners; additionally, it could complicate accountability efforts. Also, existing resources that might be shared for greater efficiency may be overlooked. Department of Correction instructors, for example, work primarily with adult learners, but rarely access the professional development programs routinely provided for other adult educators. (See page 14.)

**Despite a limited budget and small staff, the Office of Adult Education (OAE) has made notable improvements in Tennessee's adult education system in the last few years.** OAE has a small staff composed of a director and 10 staff members, but has earned the admiration of local programs and gained the attention of national audiences. Over the past few years, OAE has worked to professionalize adult education with the creation of the Tennessee Quality Award (TQA), which encourages programs to use a quality assessment tool, and the Academy for Instructional Excellence, which offers an intensive training program for adult educators and supervisors each summer. OAE has also contracted with the Center for Literacy Studies (CLS) at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, to assist with reports, program implementation, and training. On a national level, OAE and CLS have been selected to oversee the field development of the national Equipped for the

Future (EFF) curriculum. The EFF project is working to create a curriculum based on the skills and knowledge that adult learners need to be effective workers, family members, and citizens. OAE and CLS have also collaborated to create a model curriculum for diversity education called *Lessons from the Holocaust* and a professional development activities and tracking system for teacher training.<sup>5</sup> Both of these projects have also become models for other states. (See page 14.)

**Adult education teachers in Tennessee are required to have valid teacher certification for teaching k-12, but little training in teaching techniques or methods for adults.**

Research has demonstrated that adults tend to learn differently and may require teaching strategies that reflect life experiences. Although the Office of Adult Education and the Center for Literacy Studies have created a well-organized and substantive professional development system with a variety of training opportunities, many adult education teachers have neither the time nor the incentive to participate. (See pages 14-15.)

**Some local school boards do not allow adult education training hours to be used toward k-12 teacher recertification.** One of the greatest incentives for adult education teachers to participate in training is the credit they may receive toward recertification of the k-12 teaching license. Anecdotal evidence suggests that counties that do not accept the credit often have significantly less participation. (See pages 15-16.)

**The prevalence of part-time adult education positions and a low hourly wage creates a strain on local programs and jeopardizes the quality of teaching.** In 2002, only 11 percent of adult education instructors worked full-time, and by state standards, all hourly instructors can be paid only \$15 per hour with state funds. Some counties supplement that wage with local money and are able to retain teachers more easily. In some programs, the turnover rate can run as high as 25 percent. High teacher turnover can result in instability in the classroom and an increased operating cost for local programs. (See page 16.)

**Anyone in Tennessee wishing to take the General Equivalency Diploma (GED) test must first take the Official Practice Test.** Prior to January 1, 2003, test takers were not required to take a practice test. The practice tests can predict within a few points how a student will perform on the actual test. Evidence suggests that requiring the practice test improves pass rates. The Tennessee Department of Correction, which has required inmates to pass a practice test for several years, has an 84 percent pass rate, compared to 64 percent in Tennessee's general population. In addition, unlike some other states, Tennessee does not require students to achieve a passing score on the practice test before becoming eligible for the official GED. (See pages 16-17.)

**Family literacy programs are able to serve relatively few families in Tennessee.** Based on research demonstrating that family poverty and maternal education are powerful predictors of a child's success, family literacy programs provide educational services to both parents and children. The two state-administered family literacy programs in Tennessee are One-Room-Drop-In Schools (ORDIS) and Even Start. ORDIS has been

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Jean Stephens, Director and Connie White, Associate Director of the Center for Literacy Studies, December 6, 2002.

funded by the state as a pilot project since 1988. Its budget has remained at \$315,000 since its inception. In 2002-03, ORDIS served 1,648 people at six sites located in at-risk or public housing communities. During the 2004 legislative session, the Department of Education proposed a budget cut for ORDIS of \$105,000, which would reduce the program to four sites, still funded at \$52,500 each.

Even Start, a federally funded program, serves primary care givers who qualify for adult education and have a child between the ages of birth and seven years. The Office of Family Literacy in the Department of Education distributes federal grant money to local programs, and each program must then match a percentage of federal funds with local resources. Programs are expected to become self-sustaining over a four- to eight-year period. In FY2002, Even Start programs served 609 Tennessee families. (See pages 17-18.)

**Adult education is a significant component of Tennessee's Families First welfare program, but impending federal legislation may change the state's focus.** The state's Families First Act emphasizes adult education and training more than the federal welfare law and is allowed to do so because of a waiver granted under the previous federal welfare law. At 20 percent, Tennessee far surpasses the 7.3 percent national average for welfare participants involved in job training or education programs as their primary work activity. However, with the impending federal reauthorization of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), it is uncertain whether Tennessee will be able to continue operating under the waiver. If the new federal welfare legislation does not allow waivers, about 50 percent of Tennessee participants currently enrolled in adult education courses may no longer be eligible for education programs. (See page 18.)

**Families First successfully instituted an incentive program to raise completion rates among participants, but the 2003 budget eliminated the program.** The program offered cash incentives to Families First participants who achieved their education and employment goals. Families First participants who met certain criteria earned \$150 each for completing 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade equivalency, \$350 for completing 9<sup>th</sup> grade equivalency, and \$500 for earning a high school diploma or GED. After the bonus was instituted, the success rate improved 115 percent for those achieving a 6<sup>th</sup> grade level, 356 percent for those achieving a 9<sup>th</sup> grade level, and 133 percent for those passing the GED. Adult education students who were not eligible for a bonus made significantly fewer gains in the same time period. Since the program's early 2000 implementation, 5,664 Families First participants received bonuses for completing their GED or high school diploma. (See pages 18-19.)

**The Office of Adult Education offers assistance to Tennessee employers who want to update their workers' skills, but the state provides no incentives for these employers to take advantage of OAE programs.** OAE has developed many programs to help businesses encourage their workers to update their skills, but other states, such as Mississippi and Rhode Island, have further appealed to businesses through tax incentives. These types of incentives encourage businesses to invest in the skills of their workers and improve the overall education level within the state. (See page 19.)



**Some of the populations targeted by the WIA and the state's five-year plan may not receive the necessary attention in Tennessee's programs.** For example, learning disabled adults are often undiagnosed and do not receive instruction customized to meet their needs. The diagnostic process is usually too expensive for adult students, and teachers are often left to identify and serve learning disabled students. In addition, adult education classes are not always equipped to provide access for adults with physical impairments. Not all adult education facilities are ADA compliant.

Tennessee supports few programs aimed directly at educating homeless adults—in 2001, the few programs that existed to serve this population worked with only 22 individuals.

After budget cuts in the Department of Correction, the number of GED and vocational course completions, as well as overall education enrollments among inmates, decreased. Studies have shown that investing in correctional education yields a positive financial return. A Florida study found that for every \$1.00 invested in correctional education there was a \$3.53 return. The majority of the money saved came from the reduced number of participants who were reincarcerated after two years. (See pages 20-21.)

**Despite attempts by the Department of Correction to obtain more computers for educational programs, the Department of General Services and the Department of Education send all refurbished units to other school districts.** According to state law, Tennessee's prisons constitute a special school district. Three correctional institutions have programs to teach prisoners computer repair while refurbishing surplus technology for use in public schools. In 2002, these programs worked with over 5,000 pieces of computer equipment and TDOC sent between 900 and 1,000 computers back to General Services for distribution. According to Department of Correction staff, the state's correctional education programs lack sufficient technology, which they define as one computer per class. In addition, none of the institutions have computer labs.

One purpose of providing educational opportunities in prisons is to improve the chances that offenders will become productive citizens, thus reducing the likelihood that they will return to prison. Not providing the Department of Correction resources that could aid in such educational opportunities at minimal cost to the state does not advance that aim. (See page 22.)

The report presents both legislative and administrative recommendations, listed below and in full on pages 23-25. See also the Office of Adult Education's response to the reports recommendations in Appendix E.

#### **Legislative recommendations**

The General Assembly may wish to consider increasing the appropriations for adult education programs, for the family literacy One-Room-Drop-In Schools (ORDIS) program, and for correctional education.

The General Assembly may want to create an Adult Education Interagency Task Force to ensure cooperation and communication among the many departments involved in adult education.

The General Assembly may wish to consider creating a tax incentive program for Tennessee businesses that offer adult education courses to their employees.

**Administrative recommendations**

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the State Board of Education should consider creating an adult education instructor certification or developing greater incentives to encourage adult education teachers to stay current on the latest techniques and requirements.

The Office of Adult Education should carefully monitor the new GED Practice Test program to ensure that the choice to require no minimum score is reasonable. Staff should also ensure that counties have enough resources to meet the demand for Practice Tests and GED course enrollment.

The Office of Adult Education should review its target populations to ensure that the local programs are adequately serving these individuals.

The Department of General Services and the Department of Education should allow some computers that have been refurbished by inmates to be retained for correctional education programs.

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## Introduction

Recently, advisors from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) identified low adult literacy as one of the greatest challenges facing Tennessee's educational system.<sup>1</sup> Studies have found that low adult literacy levels can lower a workforce's effectiveness, decrease a family's earnings potential, and perpetuate the intergenerational cycle of poverty.<sup>2</sup> In response to these findings, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) made adult education one of its 12 goals in June 2002.<sup>3</sup>

The negative effects of low literacy may be particularly detrimental in Tennessee where 53 percent of the population performs at the second lowest literacy level or below.<sup>4</sup> Tennessee's low literacy rate may jeopardize its ability to compete in a global marketplace. Individuals functioning at low literacy levels are more likely to face poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and incarceration. Children of low literacy parents have similar challenges and are less likely to complete high school or earn a GED.

Federal and state laws provide for a variety of programs to address adult literacy in Tennessee. The primary federal legislation affecting adult education is the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), which focused federal attention on the need to retool America's labor force. Title II of the WIA provides funds for state-administered adult education and family literacy programs.<sup>5</sup> Under the WIA, Tennessee received over \$12.6 million for adult education in 2002, up from \$5.9 million in 1996.<sup>6</sup> The WIA is scheduled for reauthorization in 2003.

Other adult literacy initiatives both at the state and federal level also affect Tennessee's adult education system. These initiatives often provide smaller grants to meet specific educational goals.

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<sup>1</sup> National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, "Developing a Strategic Agenda for Higher Education in Tennessee," Power Point presentation, Oct. 17, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Vincent J. Roscigno and James W. Ainsworth-Darnell. "Race, Cultural Capital and Educational Resources: Persistent Inequalities and Achievement Returns." *Sociology of Education*, July 1999, pp. 158-178. Also Sheila Smith and Martha Zaslow, "Rationale and Policy Context for Two-Generation Interventions," *Two Generation Programs for Families in Poverty: A New Intervention Strategy*, Sheila Smith, ed. (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corp.), pp.1-35.

<sup>3</sup> Southern Regional Education Board, "Goals for Education: Challenge to Lead," June 2002.

<sup>4</sup> As measured by the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey, a level one achiever can perform basic tasks, such as adding up a deposit slip, locating one piece of information in an article, and locating the time of a meeting on a form. Someone performing at level two may be able to locate an intersection on a street map, identify a piece of information in a newspaper article, and calculate postage for certified mail. For a more detailed explanation of the 1992 NALS literacy levels, see Appendix A.

<sup>5</sup> Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Public Law 105-220, Title II, Aug. 7, 1998, accessed Dec. 11, 2003, at [www.doleta.gov/regs/statutes/wialaw.txt](http://www.doleta.gov/regs/statutes/wialaw.txt).

<sup>6</sup> "FY 1996-1999 Federal Allotments for the Adult Education State-Administered Basic Grants Program" U.S. Department of Education, Dec. 1999, accessed Dec. 11, 2003, at <http://mirror.eschina.bnu.edu.cn/Mirror/ed.gov/www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/9699bgallot.html>.

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The purpose of this report is to

- provide an overview of the state’s literacy level,
- describe how adult education services are delivered and who accesses them, and
- identify ways that Tennessee can improve its adult education system.

## **Methodology**

The information and recommendations provided in this report are based on:

1. interviews with management personnel in all state departments involved in adult education
2. an interview with and supplemental information provided by staff of the Center for Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville
3. interviews with staff of adult education programs in Cheatham, Davidson, Knox, and Rutherford counties
4. an interview with the Executive Director of the Tennessee Association for Adult and Community Educators
5. a review of federal and state laws pertaining to adult education
6. a review of Tennessee’s Five Year Adult Education and Family Literacy Plan as required by WIA
7. a literature review of relevant research articles and studies
8. an analysis of other states’ adult education programs
9. performance data and other material gathered from the Office of Adult Education

See Appendix B for a list of those interviewed for the report.

## **Background**

### **Why is adult education important for Tennessee’s economy?**

Today, an educated workforce can be more valuable than any other resource. With the focus of the U.S. economy quickly shifting from industry and production to information and technology, literacy skills have become an increasingly important commodity.<sup>7</sup>

According to a recent study by the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, Tennessee does not have a labor force prepared to meet the challenges of the country’s new “knowledge economy.” The new economy values highly skilled and well educated employees who can keep pace with scientific and technological changes.<sup>8</sup> Without these workers, Tennessee will continue to lag behind other states in its bid to bring lucrative high-tech jobs home.

Increasing educational levels and creating more high-skilled jobs may also improve the economic stability of Tennessee families. Nationally, individuals with high school and college degrees have higher earnings and more job opportunities than their less educated counterparts. Exhibit 1 depicts the average annual earnings for workers at various educational levels. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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<sup>7</sup> Deborah Brandt, “Changing Literacy,” *Teachers College Record*, March 2003, pp. 245-260.

<sup>8</sup> Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, “Tennessee and the Knowledge Economy,” May 2001.

thresholds, the average income for an individual without a high school degree is barely above the poverty level for a family of four.<sup>9</sup>

**Exhibit 1: Average Annual Earnings of U.S. Workers  
25 to 64 Years Old by Educational Attainment, 1997-99  
(earnings in 1999 dollars)**

Not High School Graduate	\$18,900
High School Graduate	\$25,900
Some College	\$31,200
Associate's Degree	\$33,000
Bachelor's Degree	\$45,400
Master's Degree	\$54,500
Professional Degree	\$99,300
Doctoral Degree	\$81,400

Source: Jennifer Cheeseman Day and Eric Newburger, "The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings," U.S. Census Bureau, July 2002.

**How many Tennesseans need adult education?**

Based on at least two measures, a large segment of Tennessee's adult population is in need of some type of literacy or remedial education. In 1992, the Education Testing Service conducted the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) across the country. The survey consisted of a variety of literacy tasks representing five levels of competency, ranging from signing one's name to locating information in a dense text. The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) used the survey to create reasonably accurate estimates of literacy rates at the state, county, and municipal levels.<sup>10</sup> Based on the 1992 survey, NIFL estimates that 53 percent of Tennessee adults perform at or below NALS levels 1 and 2, the two lowest levels of literacy competence.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, 24 percent of Tennessee adults over age 25 have not received a high school degree.<sup>12</sup>

The percent of Tennesseans without a high school diploma or GED varies dramatically from county to county, with Williamson County the lowest at 9.94 percent and Grundy County the highest at 44.85 percent. Exhibits 2 and 3 show the percent of Tennessee's population at NALS levels 1 and 2, as well as the percent of adults over 25 without a high school diploma or GED. Of the almost 60,000 families participating in Families First, Tennessee's welfare program, 44.8 percent lack a high school diploma or GED.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the poverty threshold for 2002 is \$18,100 for a family of four.

<sup>10</sup> In 1992, Tennessee was not among the 12 states that paid for a more extensive measure of local literacy levels. In 2002, the National Center for Education Statistics conducted another survey, but again Tennessee elected not to participate in the enhanced survey which would have cost the state \$725,000.

<sup>11</sup> For a brief explanation of Levels 1 through 5 as used in the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), see Appendix A.

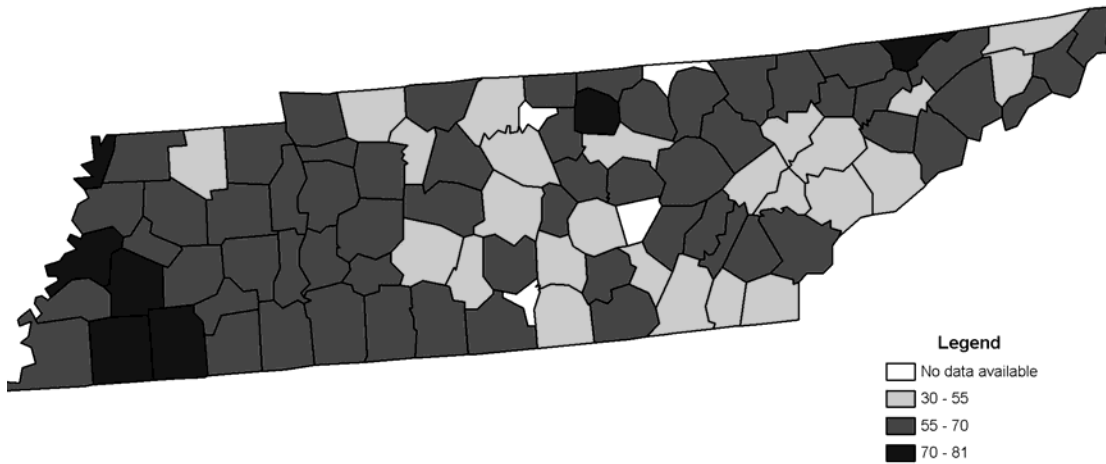
<sup>12</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990 and 2000, Census 1990 and 2000: Quickfacts.

<sup>13</sup> Kerry Mullins, Director of Planning and Evaluation, ETSU Families First, "Adult Ed and Families First," E-mail to the author, Dec. 9, 2002.



Tennessee also has a growing number of foreign born residents requiring English education. In 2000, almost five percent of all Tennessee households spoke a language other than English at home, up from 2.7 percent in 1990.<sup>14</sup>

**Exhibit 2: Percent of Tennessee’s adult population at two lowest literacy levels as measured by the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (Levels 1 and 2)**



**Exhibit 3: Percent of Tennessee adults over 25 without a high school diploma or GED**



**Source:** *The State of Literacy in America: Estimates at the Local, State, and National Levels*, National Institute for Literacy, 1998. Also available at the National Institute For Literacy (NIFL) web site: [www.casas.org/lit/litcode/Search.cfm](http://www.casas.org/lit/litcode/Search.cfm).

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 and 2000.

## **Who qualifies for adult education services in Tennessee?**

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 requires states to target low income students, individuals with disabilities, single parents and displaced homemakers, and other individuals with multiple barriers to educational advancement. The WIA also requires agencies to offer correctional education to institutionalized individuals. Tennessee has chosen to add homeless adults and immigrants to its list of targeted populations.

**Low Income Students** The 2000 United States Census estimates that 13.5 percent of Tennessee's population, or 746,789 individuals, live below the poverty line.<sup>15</sup> Of these, 499,392 are over age 18.<sup>16</sup> In March 2001, 59,623 families participated in Families First, Tennessee's welfare program. In 2000, 55.2 percent of active Families First participants had a high school diploma or GED.<sup>17</sup> However, 76.2 percent tested below grade nine on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE).<sup>18</sup> Educational attainment may be particularly difficult for this population as the Tennessee Department of Human Services estimates that 16 percent of its participants have a learning disability.<sup>19</sup> However, a national report estimates that the prevalence of learning disabilities among welfare recipients may be closer to 33 percent.<sup>20</sup>

**Individuals with Disabilities** On average, people with disabilities attain less formal education than those without disabilities. In a national survey, only nine percent of the general population was without a diploma, but that rate jumps to 22 percent for people with disabilities.<sup>21</sup> Tennessee had 141,502 individuals receiving social security benefits because of blindness or a disability in 2001.<sup>22</sup> The number of disabled people who do not receive social security is more difficult to calculate. The U.S. Census, however, estimates that 719,573 Tennessee residents aged 21-64 have a disability.<sup>23</sup> Learning disabilities may also be prevalent among those in need of adult education. Adults with learning disabilities who attended school prior to the passage of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1975 are rarely diagnosed, but studies have shown that 15 to 80 percent of individuals in the lowest literacy levels may have learning disabilities.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the poverty threshold for 2002 is \$18,100 for a family of four.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000.

<sup>17</sup> Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Office of Adult Education, *Tennessee State Plan: Adult Education and Family Literacy*, July 2000, p. 19.

<sup>18</sup> Kerry Mullins, Director of Planning and Evaluation, ETSU Families First, "Adult Ed and Families First," E-mail to the author, Dec. 9, 2002.

<sup>19</sup> Natasha Metcalf, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Human Services, Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Social Security and Family Policy of the Senate Finance Committee, April 25, 2002.

<sup>20</sup> Glenn Young, "Learning Disabilities and Welfare-to-Work," National Institute for Literacy, Aug. 10, 1998, Accessed Nov. 21, 2002, <http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/policy/updates/98-08-11.html>.

<sup>21</sup> National Organization on Disability, *Education Levels of People with Disabilities*. July 25, 2001.

<sup>22</sup> Social Security Administration, Office of Policy, *Supplemental Security Income Annual Statistical Report, 2001*, Dec. 2001.

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000.

<sup>24</sup> Susan A. Vogel, "Adults with Learning Disabilities: What Learning Disabilities Specialists, Adult Literacy Educators, and Other Service Providers Want and Need to Know," *Learning Disabilities, Literacy and Adult Education*, Susan A. Vogel and Stephen Reder, eds., Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing, 1998, p. 11.

**Single Parents and Displaced Homemakers** In 2000, there were 165,842 single women with children under the age of 18 living in Tennessee. The teen pregnancy rate continues to be about 13 percent with 3,984 children born to adolescent girls between the ages of 10 and 17 in 2000.<sup>25</sup> The divorce rate also remains high at 11.9 divorces per 1,000 people.<sup>26</sup> These indicators suggest that the number of single parents in Tennessee will continue to grow.

**Homeless Adults** The Department of Human Services reports that over 31,000 homeless people received emergency shelter across the state in FY 2000-2001.<sup>27</sup> Estimating the total number of the homeless in Tennessee is challenging due to the population's transient nature. A national study of homelessness reports that 53 percent of parents and 37 percent of single individuals lack a high school diploma or GED.<sup>28</sup>

**Adult Immigrants & ESL Populations** According to the 2000 Census, 256,516 Tennesseans speak a language other than English at home. Of those, 108,265 stated that they spoke English less than "very well." These census figures are the most current and accurate estimates available, but they most likely underestimate the actual immigrant and limited English proficiency population in Tennessee. The population of non-English speakers in Tennessee nearly doubled in the past 10 years and continues to grow.<sup>29</sup>

**Incarcerated Adults** According to the National Adult Literacy Survey, about 70 percent of inmates in the U.S. correctional system fall into the two lowest literacy levels.<sup>30</sup> Several studies suggest a relationship between low literacy and criminal behavior.<sup>31</sup> In fiscal year 2002, Tennessee had an average daily inmate population of 17,757. Tennessee Department of Correction estimates that 43 percent of inmates have less than a 12<sup>th</sup> grade education.<sup>32</sup>

### **Who provides and funds adult education services?**

Because it is affected by many different agencies and organizations, Tennessee's adult education delivery system is both organized and fragmented. The Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Department of Education, the Department of Correction, and the Department of Human Services each have a specific role in the state's adult education system. The funding streams for these departments vary both in value and origin. Exhibit 4 illustrates the adult education funding as reported by each department.

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<sup>25</sup> Tennessee Department of Health, *Tennessee Adolescent Pregnancy Summary Data 2000*, Dec. 2001.

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000.

<sup>27</sup> Tennessee Department of Human Services, *The DHS Connection*, Fall 2001-Winter 2002, Volume 4, Number 3.

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Interagency Council on the Homeless, "Homelessness Programs and the People They Serve: Findings of the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients," Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1999, Figure 2.6.

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 and 2000.

<sup>30</sup> Karl O. Haigler, Caroline Harlow, Patricia O'Connor, and Anne Campbell, "Literacy Behind Prison Walls," Washington, DC: Education Testing Service, Oct. 1994.

<sup>31</sup> Stephen Steurer, Linda Smith, and Alice Tracy, *Three State Recidivism Study*, Lanham, MD: Correctional Education Association, Sept. 2001.

<sup>32</sup> "Inmate Education Level," information faxed from Department of Correction to author, Dec. 2, 2002.

Private nonprofit organizations that receive no state funding also provide adult education services, but do not report their activities or outcomes to the state. Therefore, little information is known about private organizations' contributions to adult education.

**Exhibit 4: Adult Education Funding by State Department**

<b>Department of Labor and Workforce Development</b>	<b>\$16,203,358</b>
WIA Title II	\$12,700,000
State	\$3,200,000
EL/Civics Grant	\$303,358
<b>Department of Education</b>	<b>\$3,315,000</b>
Even Start	\$3,000,000
ORDIS	\$315,000
<b>Department of Correction</b>	<b>\$10,145,400</b>
Title 1	\$145,400
State	\$10,000,000
<b>Department of Human Services</b>	<b>\$4,100,000</b>

For source information, see explanations of funding in text on pp. 7-9.

***Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Office of Adult Education***

Previously housed in the Department of Education, the Office of Adult Education (OAE) transferred to the Department of Labor and Workforce Development in 1999. Under the authorization of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, the Office of Adult Education provides programs that aim to

1. assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency;
2. assist adults who are parents to obtain the educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children; and
3. assist adults in the completion of a secondary school education.<sup>33</sup>

The WIA provides OAE with \$12.7 million and the state contributes an additional \$3.2 million for adult education. OAE also receives \$303,358 from the U.S. Department of Education for English Literacy and Civics training. The Families First program within the Department of Human Services provides OAE with an additional \$4.1 million to provide adult education services to Families First participants. OAE distributes most of its \$20 million budget in the form of grants to local adult education programs. (See Appendix C for a list of the state's adult education programs.) The office plans to move to a performance-based funding schedule rather than the traditional needs-based formula.<sup>34</sup> OAE will create the performance-based formula only after it has collected at least one full year of reliable performance data from each program.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *Tennessee State Plan: Adult Education and Family Literacy*, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Phil White, Director, Marva Sones, Hope Lancaster, and Bill Toombs, Program Managers, and Phyllis Pardue, GED Administrator, Office of Adult Education, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Nov. 26, 2002.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Phil White, Director, Office of Adult Education, Jan. 13, 2003.

OAE contracts with the Center for Literacy Studies (CLS) at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville to provide a variety of services, including professional development, research, and technical assistance. The University of Tennessee founded CLS in 1988 to fuse literacy research with practice. With contracts from the Department of Human Services, the Department of Education, and OAE, the Center for Literacy Studies now plays an important role in developing and improving adult education in the state.

The Office of Adult Education also created the state's Five Year Plan for adult education and family literacy. The plan complies with WIA requirements and outlines Tennessee's goals, objectives, and strategies to improve adult literacy in the state. According to the WIA, OAE is required to analyze its progress and submit a performance review to the federal government each year.

### ***Tennessee Department of Education, Office of Family Literacy Programs***

Family literacy refers to programs that address literacy in a multi-generational context. These programs have four basic components: adult basic education; parenting and life-skills development; age appropriate education for children; and planned interactions between parents and children that focus on literacy development.<sup>36</sup> By focusing on at least two generations, family literacy programs attempt to train parents as the primary educators of their children.

The Office of Family Literacy runs two programs that offer adult education services. Even Start programs serve primary care givers who qualify for adult education and have a child between the ages of birth and seven years old. With the aid of a \$3 million grant from Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Tennessee operates 26 Even Start programs across the state.<sup>37</sup> Even Start programs received grants ranging from \$75,000 to \$199,123 in 2001-02.<sup>38</sup>

Tennessee also supports an innovative demonstration project called One-Room-Drop-In Schools (ORDIS) with a \$315,000 state grant for six schools.<sup>39</sup> The ORDIS programs, which began in 1988, bring a full-time, certified teacher and various educational programs to at-risk or public housing communities. During the 2004 legislative session, the Department of Education proposed a budget cut for ORDIS of \$105,000, which would reduce the program to four sites, still funded at \$52,500 each.

### ***Tennessee Department of Correction, Office of Education***

The Department of Correction (TDOC) provides adult basic education and GED preparation along with vocational programs in every state prison. As a State Special School District, TDOC must follow all Department of Education rules and regulations

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<sup>36</sup> Susan M. Benner, Ed.D., *Family Literacy in Tennessee: A Design for the Future*, Tennessee State Department of Education, Tennessee Family Literacy Consortium, and the Center for Literacy Studies, Nov. 2002.

<sup>37</sup> Susan Doughty, Director, Office of Family Literacy, "ORDIS and ES," E-mail to author, Dec. 18, 2002.

<sup>38</sup> *Family Literacy in Tennessee: A Design for the Future*.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Susan Doughty, Director, and Becky Goldstein, Program Consultant of the Office of Family Literacy, Dec. 6, 2002.

with the Commissioner of TDOC serving as the superintendent and board of education.<sup>40</sup> The correctional education program has been accredited by the American Correctional Association along with the entire state prison system. In FY2003, TDOC will spend two percent of its total budget or almost \$10 million on academic and vocational education. TDOC receives \$145,400 in federal Title 1 funds, but the majority of its education funding comes through state appropriation.<sup>41</sup>

### ***Tennessee Department of Human Services, Families First Program***

The Department of Human Services administers Tennessee's Families First program, which actively encourages adult education. In 1996, the department received an 11-year Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) waiver from the federal Department of Human Services. This waiver has allowed Tennessee to emphasize adult education as a component of Families First for participants with less than a 9<sup>th</sup> grade reading proficiency. DHS does not provide education services, but instead contracts with the Office of Adult Education within the Department of Labor and Workforce Development. DHS provided OAE with \$4.1 million, a mixture of federal and state funds, in FY2002 to provide adult education services. Families First participants have the opportunity to temporarily defer their welfare time limit by spending 20 hours per week in adult basic education classes. Participants with more than a 9<sup>th</sup> grade proficiency, but without a high school diploma, may spend part of their 40 hour work/school commitment in adult education classes with the goal of obtaining a high school diploma or GED. Families First participants receive child care, transportation, and other support services to assist them in attaining their education goals. The availability of adult education as an alternative to work requirements is an important component of Tennessee's program.

### **Who participates in adult education programs?**

Like other states, Tennessee is able to serve only a small portion of the population who could benefit from adult education services. The Office of Adult Education aims to serve 10 percent of the eligible population by 2008.<sup>42</sup> To reach the 10 percent target, according to the growth plan, OAE would need to serve 55,070 in FY 2003 and 110,141 by FY 2008. In FY 2002, 46,971 individuals enrolled in adult education in Tennessee, a three percent decrease since 1995.<sup>43</sup> Of those, 86 percent were enrolled in adult basic education and 14 percent in English as a second language (ESL).<sup>44</sup> Most adult education students return to school to improve their status in the workforce, to qualify for further education or training, or to learn how to help their children with homework. Exhibit 5 provides the demographic characteristics of individuals who participate in adult education.

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<sup>40</sup> T.C.A. 4-6-143.

<sup>41</sup> Lisa Wade, Tennessee Department of Correction "Re: Followup," E-mail to the author, Jan. 14, 2003.

<sup>42</sup> Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Office of Adult Education, Growth Plan, 2002-2008.

<sup>43</sup> Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Office of Adult Education, *Excellence in Adult Education: A Comparison of Program Performance and State Goals for 2001-2002*.

<sup>44</sup> "FY 2000 State-Administered Adult Education Program Adult Education Enrollment," U.S. Department of Education, Oct. 29, 2002, accessed Nov. 18, 2002, [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/2000enroll.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/2000enroll.html).

### Exhibit 5: Percent of Adult Education Participants by Gender, Age, and Ethnicity

	Male	Female	Total
<b>Age Group</b>			
16-18	6.9	6.7	13.6
19-24	13.5	16.7	30.2
25-44	17.7	26.4	44.1
45-59	3.6	6.3	9.9
60+	0.8	1.3	2.1
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
White	24.2	35	59.2
African American	11.8	16	27.8
Hispanic or Latino	5.4	4.2	9.6
Asian	1.0	2.0	3.0
Other	0.3	0.3	0.6

Source: Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Office of Adult Education, *Annual Performance Report*, December 2001.

#### How does Tennessee track adult education students?

With the help of an outside contractor, Tennessee has developed the Case Management Activity Tracking System (CMATS).<sup>45</sup> The system incorporates information from the Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the Department of Human Services. With CMATS, local programs can enter adult education information, allowing OAE to compile federal and state reports. The Center for Literacy Studies began CMATS training in January 2003.<sup>46</sup> According to OAE staff, CMATS is now being used by adult education programs statewide. The office plans to add reports, as needed, based on requests from the field, or as required by the federal government.<sup>47</sup>

#### Who teaches adult education classes?

All paid adult educators in Tennessee are required to have a k-12 teaching certification. However, individuals without certification may be eligible to teach if they receive a teacher waiver from the Office of Adult Education. The number of teachers on waiver varies dramatically from program to program. Many adult educators work full-time in k-12 or in another occupation and teach adult education classes in the evenings. In 2000, only 18 percent of adult educators in Tennessee taught adults full-time.<sup>48</sup> Most adult education teachers who are paid hourly make \$15 per hour and receive no benefits.<sup>49</sup> Some programs have supplemented the hourly rate and added benefits.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> The outside contractor is Gulf Computers.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Jean Stephens, Director and Connie White, Associate Director, Center for Literacy Studies, Dec. 6, 2002.

<sup>47</sup> Phil White, Director, Office of Adult Education, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Email to the author, Feb. 18, 2004.

<sup>48</sup> "State-Administered Adult Education Program 2000 Adult Education Personnel," U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, Aug. 2000.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Dorothy Dickens, Coordinator, Metro Literacy Council, Dec. 2, 2002.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Janet Fricks, Coordinator of Adult Education, Rutherford County, Dec. 17, 2002.

Guidelines differ for adult education instructors of Families First and the Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC). Families First teachers work 24 hours a week and are often able to create full-time positions by teaching additional adult education classes. They receive some state benefits and are paid according to a different pay scale. Adult education teachers in the correctional system are full-time employees of TDOC and receive all state employee benefits except longevity pay. Their salaries, established in statute, vary according to the county of employment, education level, and experience.<sup>51</sup> TDOC teachers tend to have a much lower turnover rate than other adult education teachers.<sup>52</sup>

### **What types of training do adult educators receive?**

Despite the high turnover rate, Tennessee supports adult educators with a comprehensive professional development program. The training is generally offered by the Center for Literacy Studies (CLS) through either classroom or distance-learning programs. Training is organized into six topics: Basic Adult Education/GED Instruction, English for Speakers of Other Languages, Families First, Family Literacy, Workplace Education, and Program Leadership. Participants select the training track most appropriate to their work. CLS maintains the Professional Development Framework and Tracking System to document the professional development activities of adult education teachers across the state. As part of this system, the state offers educators and supervisors points to participate in training and development activities. The Office of Adult Education may reward advancement through the three levels of accomplishment with monetary compensation. CLS staff estimate that about 50 teachers fulfilled the requirements to enter the second level by the end of 2002.<sup>53</sup>

The Office of Adult Education's minimum qualifications for adult educators includes six hours of pre-service and/or orientation about the adult learner and six hours of professional staff development within the first 12 months with a minimum of six hours each year thereafter. However, participation in the program remains largely voluntary, and county boards of education decide whether to accept these professional development hours toward teacher recertification.

### **How can adult students earn a secondary school degree?**

Adult learners have two primary ways to earn a secondary school credential – attending an adult high school or passing the GED.

Adult high schools, authorized under T.C.A. 49-1-302, 49-2-203(b)(3), and 49-6-501, are administered by local school boards and funded through the state's Basic Education Program (BEP). These schools are available to any resident over the age of 17 who has dropped out of a traditional high school. Students may take classes according to a more flexible schedule, but they must still take the Tennessee Proficiency Test to graduate. The

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<sup>51</sup> T.C.A. 4-6-143.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Deborah Copeland, Director of Education, and Gary Gray, Correctional Program Manager 1, Department of Correction, Dec. 10, 2002.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Jean Stephens, Director, and Connie White, Associate Director, Center for Literacy Studies, Dec. 6, 2002.



adult high schools must follow most of the rules and regulations of a regular high school. The Department of Education is currently unsure of the number of adult high schools in the state.<sup>54</sup>

The GED is a series of five tests created to test students for skills and knowledge usually attained during high school. Anyone over the age of 17 who has dropped out of a traditional school is eligible for the GED test. In most cases, the test must be taken at one of the 40 official testing sites. GED tests are also administered at each of the state prisons. In Tennessee, 47 percent of those taking the GED test are between 17 and 19 years old.<sup>55</sup>

### **What types of workplace initiatives does Tennessee have?**

Employment opportunities for low-skilled, low-literacy adults have diminished. Emerging employment opportunities tend to be in more demanding technology-driven industries.<sup>56</sup> Recent news articles indicate that Tennessee may not have a labor force prepared to meet the challenges of the state's changing economy.<sup>57</sup> The Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville has also suggested that Tennessee must improve workers' skills to compete in the global economy.<sup>58</sup> The Office of Adult Education operates to improve the skill level of Tennessee's labor force by working both with employers and with unemployed or displaced workers.

At an employer's request, local programs will coordinate GED and ESL instruction in a workplace. In November, OAE completed a three-year training process to prepare local programs to perform Job Task Analysis (JTA). Employers can use JTA to identify the skills needed to perform a particular job and then prepare employee trainings to develop those skills.

OAE also has a rapid response system that works with employers when layoffs or job cuts are expected. This quick assistance program provides recently displaced workers with information about education and training opportunities.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Telephone Interview with Claudette Williams, Executive Director, Office of Curriculum and Instruction, Tennessee Department of Education, Dec. 20, 2002.

<sup>55</sup> Heather Andrews, "Focus on the GED: Who Takes It and Why?," Southern Regional Education Board, Sept. 2002.

<sup>56</sup> Center for Business and Economic Research, "An Economic Report to the Governor of the State of Tennessee: On the State's Economic Outlook," Jan. 2002, p. 26.

<sup>57</sup> Kathy Carlson, "Counties challenged to provide labor pool for LES," *Tennessean*, Nov. 24, 2002. and Larisa Brass, "East Tennessee Symposium to Focus on lack of High-Tech Labor Force," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, Oct. 29, 2002.

<sup>58</sup> "An Economic Report to the Governor of the State of Tennessee: On the State's Economic Outlook," p. 28.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Phil White, Director, Marva Sones, Hope Lancaster, and Bill Toombs, Program Managers, and Phyllis Pardue, GED Administrator, Office of Adult Education, Nov. 26, 2002.

## Analysis and Conclusions

### Spending

**Tennessee allocates fewer state funds to adult education than most other states in the region.** OAE received \$3.2 million in state appropriations for adult education in FY 2002.<sup>60</sup> Other states contribute funds ranging from \$2 million in Mississippi to \$241.9 million in Florida. During the last federal increase for adult education, the state relied on local support to match the funds. However, if the federal government increases the adult education allotment to Tennessee in the future, the local governments may not be able to make the state match.<sup>61</sup> In this case, the state would have to increase funding to adult education or lose some federal money. Exhibit 6 illustrates the funding levels and sources for adult education in southeastern states.<sup>62</sup>

**Exhibit 6: Federal and State Funds Allocated to Adult Education by Southeastern State, FY2002**

State	Federal Funds* (in millions)	State Funds** (in millions)	Total (in millions)	State Funds Per Capita	Total Per Capita
Alabama	\$10.3	\$6.0	\$16.3	\$1.35	\$3.67
Arkansas	\$6.2	\$17.6	\$23.8	\$6.58	\$8.90
Florida	\$33.5	\$241.9	\$275.4	\$15.14	\$17.23
Kentucky	\$10.0	\$23.0	\$33.0	\$5.69	\$8.16
Louisiana	\$10.0	\$4.9	\$14.9	\$1.10	\$3.33
Mississippi	\$6.7	\$2.0	\$8.7	\$0.70	\$3.06
North Carolina	\$15.9	\$33.6	\$49.5	\$4.17	\$6.15
Oklahoma	\$6.5	\$2.3	\$8.8	\$0.67	\$2.55
South Carolina	\$8.5	\$10.6	\$19.1	\$4.76	\$4.76
Tennessee	\$12.7	\$3.2	\$15.9	\$0.56	\$2.79
Texas	\$40.8	\$9.0	\$49.8	\$0.43	\$2.39
West Virginia	\$4.9	\$3.1	\$8.0	\$1.71	\$4.42

\*Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, "FY2002 Allocations of Adult Education State-Administered Basic Grants Program," April 2002.

\*\*Source: Office of Adult Education, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, E-mails to the author, Dec. 2002.

<sup>60</sup> The Department of Human Services also contracts with the Office of Adult Education to provide educational services to the state's Families First participants, accessing both state and federal funds. See pages 9 and 18. DHS staff indicate that the monies expended for that purpose are comprised of both federal and state funds, which vary each quarter. For example, of the money DHS expended for the adult education services provided by OAE in one quarter of 2002, about 35 percent was from federal funds and the remaining 65 percent was from the state.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Phil White, Director, Marva Sones, Hope Lancaster, and Bill Toombs, Program Managers, and Phyllis Pardue, GED Administrator, Office of Adult Education, Nov. 26, 2002.

<sup>62</sup> See also Mary T. Moore, John DiCarlo, Barbara Elliott, and Jennifer King Rice, *How Adult Education Funds are Allocated: Looking at Differences Across States*, Oct. 1996.

### ***Service Delivery***

**Tennessee’s service delivery system for adult education is fragmented. Four state agencies and several other entities, including public libraries, community colleges, and businesses, provide a variety of adult education services.** With no forum for formal communication, the parties involved in adult education may not always cooperate to provide seamless service to clients. Fragmentation could result in confusion both among service providers and potential adult education learners; additionally, it could complicate accountability efforts. Also, existing resources that might be shared for greater efficiency may be overlooked. Department of Correction instructors, for example, work primarily with adult learners, but rarely access the professional development programs routinely provided for other adult educators.

Tennessee is not the only state with an unwieldy structure for its adult education services. Studies of programs in both Massachusetts and Florida describe their systems as “a hodge-podge of efforts” and “a complex array of other systems,” respectively.<sup>63</sup>

### ***Office of Adult Education***

**Despite a limited budget and a small staff, OAE has made notable improvements in Tennessee’s adult education system in the last few years.** OAE has a small staff composed of a director and 10 staff members, but has earned the admiration of local programs and gained the attention of national audiences. Each of the program directors interviewed for this report praised OAE for its support and efficiency. Over the past few years, OAE has worked to professionalize adult education with the creation of the Tennessee Quality Award (TQA), which encourages programs to use a quality assessment tool, and the Academy for Instructional Excellence, which offers an intensive training program for adult educators and supervisors each summer. OAE has also contracted with the Center for Literacy Studies (CLS) to assist with reports, program implementation, and training. On a national level, OAE and CLS have been selected to oversee the field development of the national Equipped for the Future (EFF) curriculum. The EFF project is working to create a curriculum based on the skills and knowledge that adult learners need to be effective workers, family members, and citizens. OAE and CLS have also collaborated to create a model curriculum for diversity education called *Lessons from the Holocaust* and a professional development activities and tracking system for teacher training.<sup>64</sup> Both of these projects have become models for other states.

### ***Teachers***

**Adult education teachers in Tennessee are required to have valid teacher certification for teaching k-12, but little training in teaching techniques or methods for adults.** Research has demonstrated that adults tend to learn differently and may

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<sup>63</sup> John D. Donahue, Lisa M. Lynch, and Ralph Whitehead, Jr., *Opportunity Knocks: Training the Commonwealth’s Workers for the New Economy*, March 2000, Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, *Review of the Workforce Development System*, Report No. 99-34, Feb. 2000.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Jean Stephens, Director and Connie White, Associate Director, Center for Literacy Studies, Dec. 6, 2002.

require teaching strategies that reflect life experiences.<sup>65</sup> Although OAE and CLS have created a well-organized and substantive professional development system with a variety of training opportunities, many adult education teachers have neither the time nor the incentive to participate.

The Office of Adult Education's *Tennessee Adult Education Administrator's Handbook* describes the minimum qualifications for adult educators as:

- Tennessee teacher certification
- Demonstration of English proficiency in oral and written English
- Six hours of pre-service and/or orientation about the adult learner
- Six hours of professional staff development within the first 12 months and a minimum of six hours each year thereafter

However, several adult education coordinators and supervisors throughout the state indicate that adult education teachers have little incentive or time to access training. One supervisor stated that adult education teachers have no opportunity for advancement, bonuses, or raises. Also, these teachers cannot pay into the pension system, even at a reduced rate. The primary incentive for these teachers appears to be their personal dedication.

To further ensure that adult education instructors receive adequate training, 12 states have created a teacher credential program for adult educators.<sup>66</sup> Credential requirements in the states range from attending an annual workshop in Missouri to completing a 33 semester hour master's level adult basic education program in Alabama.<sup>67</sup> Texas, a leader in the credential debate, has created a Credential Model in response to Texas state law.<sup>68</sup> The Texas Credential Model outlines five core areas of training and creates points for completion of professional development activities in each area. Because of their limited availability, part-time teachers are allowed more time to complete their certification than full-time teachers.<sup>69</sup> Certification proponents believe that a credentialing process will professionalize the adult education industry, decrease teacher turnover, and create more successful programs.<sup>70</sup>

**Some local school boards do not allow adult education training hours to be used toward k-12 teacher recertification.** Because the professional development activities are not mandatory, local programs and counties must create incentives to encourage their adult educators to participate. One of the greatest incentives for teachers is the credit they may receive for attendance. However, not all counties treat adult education training credits in the same way. In some counties the training hours can be used toward teacher recertification, but in others, such as Davidson County, the local board will not accept

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<sup>65</sup> Texas Education Agency, Division of Adult Education, *Texas Adult Education Credential Model, Draft*, May 4, 2001.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6-1.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6-2.

<sup>68</sup> Texas Education Code Section 29.252.

<sup>69</sup> *Texas Adult Education Credential Model, Draft*.

<sup>70</sup> National Institute for Literacy, *Professional Development for Adult Education Instructors: State Policy Update*, Dec. 2001.

adult education instructor training.<sup>71</sup> Anecdotal evidence suggests that counties that do not accept the credit often have significantly less participation.

**The prevalence of part-time adult education positions and the low hourly wage creates a strain on local programs and jeopardizes the quality of teaching.** In 2002, only 14 percent of adult education instructors worked full-time and all hourly instructors were paid \$15 per hour with state funds.<sup>72</sup> Some counties supplement that wage with local money and are able to retain teachers more easily.<sup>73</sup> Nationally, the median income for adult education teachers was \$16.12 in 2000.<sup>74</sup>

Without a policy to create more full-time positions or to increase the basic wage, the turnover rate for adult education teachers will remain high. In some programs, the turnover rate can run as high as 25 percent.<sup>75</sup> High teacher turnover can result in instability in the classroom and an increased operating cost for local programs. With part-time teachers, students may receive less follow-up service and experience a lower overall quality of teaching. Many part-time adult educators also do not have the time to attend professional development activities. Having a high percentage of part-time teachers across the state may be detrimental to the adult education system, creating a lower overall quality of service.

### ***Program Quality***

**Anyone in Tennessee wishing to take the General Equivalency Diploma (GED) test must first take the Official Practice Test.** Prior to January 1, 2003, test takers were not required to take a practice test. These practice tests can predict within a few points how the student will perform on the actual test. Evidence suggests that requiring the practice test improves pass rates. (See Exhibit 7.) However, unlike some other states, Tennessee does not require students to pass the practice test before becoming eligible for the official GED.

The Tennessee Department of Correction, which has required inmates to pass a practice test for several years, has an 84 percent pass rate, compared to 64 percent in Tennessee's general population.<sup>76</sup> The Office of Adult Education hopes that these practice tests will raise students' confidence levels, decrease failure, and alleviate frustration.<sup>77</sup> The practice test may also encourage more students to enroll in adult education courses. Exhibit 7

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<sup>71</sup> Interview with Dorothy Dickens, Coordinator of Metro Literacy Council, Dec. 2, 2002.

<sup>72</sup> Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, *Annual Performance Report*, Dec. 2, 2002.

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Janet Fricks, Coordinator of Adult Education in Rutherford County, Dec. 17, 2002.

<sup>74</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2002-2003 Edition*.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Jane Knight, Coordinator, and Neil Battle, Supervisor, Knox County Adult Education, Dec. 5, 2002.

<sup>76</sup> Tennessee Department of Correction, GED Test Pass Rate by Institution, Dec. 9, 2002 (document supplied by Department of Correction staff).

<sup>77</sup> Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, "New GED Testing Requirements: Practice Makes Perfect," Oct. 1, 2002.

shows the percentage of individuals who successfully completed the GED in each southern state.

**Exhibit 7: GED Passing Rates by State**

State	Number Tested	Number Passed	Pass Rate
United States	811,200	486,997	60%
Arkansas*	8,578	7,105	83%
Iowa*	10,061	8,259	82%
Delaware*	853	661	80%
Louisiana*	11,136	8,373	75%
Kentucky*	17,838	13,211	74%
Oklahoma	11,599	8,096	70%
South Carolina	8,472	5,654	67%
Florida	45,147	29,312	65%
Virginia	17,586	11,386	65%
Tennessee	21,330	13,742	64%
North Carolina	23,270	14,858	64%
West Virginia	5,684	3,554	62%
Alabama	11,646	7,092	61%
Texas	82,132	46,148	56%
Georgia	33,761	18,703	55%
Maryland	11,704	6,200	53%
Mississippi	13,590	6,660	49%

\*Require GED Practice Test prior to Official GED Testing

Source: Heather Andrews, "Focus on the GED: Who Takes It and Why?," Southern Regional Education Board, Sept. 2002. Also: Bureau of Community Colleges, "Iowa GED Statistical Report for Calendar Year 2001," Feb. 7, 2002.

### ***Family Literacy***

**Family literacy programs are able to serve relatively few families in Tennessee.**

Based on research demonstrating that family poverty and maternal education are powerful predictors of a child's success, family literacy programs provide educational services to both parents and children.<sup>78</sup> The two state-administered family literacy programs in Tennessee are ORDIS and Even Start.

ORDIS has been funded by the state as a pilot project since 1988. The ORDIS budget has remained at \$315,000 since its inception. In 2000-01, ORDIS served 1,626 people,

<sup>78</sup> Sheila Smith and Martha Zaslow, "Rationale and Policy Context for Two-Generation Intervention," *Two Generation Programs for Families in Poverty: A New Intervention Strategy*, pp. 1-35.

including 815 adults.<sup>79</sup> In 2002-03, the program served 1,648 people.<sup>80</sup> Despite the program's overall success, its future funding remains uncertain. The Department of Education has proposed a cut in ORDIS of \$105,000, eliminating two of the six sites. (See Appendix D for a list of the six ORDIS projects in the state, as well as other family literacy programs.)

As a federally funded program, Even Start's success has been more thoroughly documented.<sup>81</sup> The Office of Family Literacy distributes federal grant money to local programs, but each program must match a percentage of federal funds with local resources. In FY 2002, 26 Even Start programs served 609 families.<sup>82</sup> The General Assembly has provided no state money to match the federal Even Start grant.

### **Families First**

**Adult education is a significant component of Tennessee's Families First welfare program, but federal legislation may change the state's focus.** Tennessee operates its welfare program according to a federal waiver, originally granted under Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) section 1115. In August 1996, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act replaced AFDC with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), but the new legislation honored waivers created under AFDC.<sup>83</sup> Using the waiver to create more flexibility, Tennessee passed the Families First Act, which emphasizes adult education and training more than does the federal law.<sup>84</sup> With the impending reauthorization of TANF, it is uncertain whether Tennessee will be able to continue operating under the waiver. Tennessee is one of 35 states that do not limit the duration of adult education or ESL participation for TANF recipients.<sup>85</sup> At 20 percent, Tennessee far surpasses the 7.3 percent national average for welfare participants involved in job training or education programs as their primary work activity.<sup>86</sup> If the new federal welfare legislation does not allow waivers, about 50 percent of Tennessee participants currently enrolled in adult education courses may no longer be eligible for education programs.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *Family Literacy in Tennessee: A Design for the Future*, p.22.

<sup>80</sup> Telephone interview with Susan Doughty, Director, Family Literacy Programs, Tennessee Department of Education, March 4, 2004.

<sup>81</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service, "Even Start: Evidence from the Past and a Look to the Future," 1998.

<sup>82</sup> Rebecca Goldstein, "Re: Question," E-mail to the author, Dec. 13, 2002.

<sup>83</sup> Public Law 104-193, 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.

<sup>84</sup> *T.C.A.* 71-3-151, *et seq.*

<sup>85</sup> Mark Greenberg and Elise Richer, *Analysis of Fiscal Year 2000 TANF and MOE Spending by States*, Center for Law and Social Policy, Jan. 2002, and State Policy Documentation Project (a joint project of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and Center for Law and Social Policy that tracks state policy choices on TANF programs and Medicaid), Work Requirements: Adult Basic Education (ABE)/English as a Second Language (ESL) as of Oct. 1999, [http://www.spdp.org/tanf/abe\\_esl.pdf](http://www.spdp.org/tanf/abe_esl.pdf), July 2000, accessed Nov. 20, 2002.

<sup>86</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, "Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of TANF Recipients FY2000," Tables I-26 and V-14.

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Susan Cowden, Director, Contract Services, and Fagan Thompson, Program Manager, Contract Services, Families First, Dec. 18, 2002.

**Families First successfully instituted an incentive program to raise completion rates among participants, but the 2003 budget eliminated the program.** This program offered cash incentives to Families First participants who achieved their education and employment goals. Families First participants who met certain criteria earned \$150 each for completing 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade equivalency, \$350 for completing 9<sup>th</sup> grade equivalency, and \$500 for earning a high school diploma or GED.<sup>88</sup> These financial awards appeared to increase the percentage of participants who advanced in academic levels or who passed the GED. After the bonus was instituted, success rates improved 115 percent for those achieving a 6<sup>th</sup> grade level, 356 percent for those achieving a 9<sup>th</sup> grade level, and 133 percent for those passing the GED. Adult education students who were not eligible for the bonus made significantly fewer gains in the same time period.<sup>89</sup> Since the program's early 2000 implementation, 5,664 Families First participants received bonuses.<sup>90</sup> Exhibit 8 displays the distribution of awards.

**Exhibit 8: Distribution of Families First Incentive Awards**

	Number of Awards	Total Award Funds Distributed
2nd Grade	104	\$15,450
6th Grade	1,265	\$183,250
9th Grade	1,799	\$595,250
GED	2,496	\$1,188,600
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,664</b>	<b>\$1,982,550</b>

Source: Ed Lake, Tennessee Department of Human Services, "Fwd: Corrected Comptroller Questions," E-mail to Office of Education Accountability, March 19, 2003.

### ***Program Locations***

**Adult education programs often have difficulty finding adequate space.** Adult education classes are held in many different locales across the state. Several counties have donated buildings to adult education offices, but many programs must locate space in a local school or civic building. These satellite classrooms rarely have access to technology and are sometimes not well equipped to serve adult students. Space will become an important issue to consider as adult education programs aim to serve 10 percent of the eligible population in the next four years.

### ***Workplace Education***

**The Office of Adult Education offers assistance to Tennessee employers who want to update their workers' skills, but the state provides no incentives for these employers to take advantage of OAE programs.** OAE has developed a number of programs to help businesses encourage workers to update their skills. Other states have further appealed to businesses through tax incentives. In Mississippi, employers who provide basic skills training for their workers may be eligible for a tax credit. Rhode Island and

<sup>88</sup> Ed Lake, TN Department of Human Services, "Fwd: Corrected Comptroller Questions," E-mail to Office of Educational Accountability, March 19, 2003.

<sup>89</sup> Mary Ziegler, Olga Ebert, and Gail Cope, *Effectiveness of Completion Bonuses for Achievement in Adult Education*, Knoxville, TN: Center for Literacy Studies, 2001, pp. 30-31.

<sup>90</sup> Kerry Mullins, Director of Planning and Evaluation, ETSU Families First, "Re: Adult Ed and Families First," E-mail to the author, Dec. 9, 2002.



Kentucky have similar statutes to encourage GED completion in the workforce. These types of incentives encourage businesses to invest in their workers' skills and improve the overall education level within the state.

### ***Target Populations***

**Despite the Workforce Investment Act's mandate and the state's five year plan, the degree to which Tennessee has addressed its target populations varies.** For some populations, Tennessee has created many educational opportunities, but for others, local programs have had to develop their own techniques and activities. As a result, programs may vary in both effectiveness and coverage.

#### *Low Income Students*

**OAE serves many low income individuals through its affiliation with the Families First program.** In FY 2000, Tennessee spent \$3,790,912 (or about one percent of federal and state TANF funds) on education and training, compared to neighboring states which spent between zero and four percent of their TANF budgets on education and training.<sup>91</sup> In FY 2001, 7,607 Families First participants took part in adult education programs and 1,022 passed the GED.<sup>92</sup>

#### *Individuals with Disabilities*

**Often, learning disabled adults are undiagnosed and do not receive instruction customized to meet their needs.** In 2002, 1,708 adult education students in Tennessee indicated that they had a learning disability.<sup>93</sup> Many more adult education students are probably learning disabled, but have never been diagnosed. The diagnostic process for learning disabilities is usually too expensive for adult education students. Teachers are often left to identify and serve learning disabled students.

**Adult education classes are not always equipped to provide access to disabled adults.** In 2002, there were 1,535 adult education students in Tennessee who identified themselves as disabled.<sup>94</sup> Unlike k-12 schools, not all adult education classrooms are ADA compliant, and in some cases, classes must be relocated to accommodate students with disabilities.<sup>95</sup>

#### *Single Parents and Displaced Homemakers*

**Because adult education classes rarely provide child care, many parents become involved in adult education through family literacy programs.** Adult education programs often serve single parents through family literacy or Families First activities. Cooperation between local Department of Human Services offices and adult education programs helps to ensure that low income single parents receive the education services they need.

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<sup>91</sup> Greenburg and Richer.

<sup>92</sup> "State Wide Totals," Fax from Department of Human Services, Dec. 20, 2002.

<sup>93</sup> Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, *Annual Performance Report*, Dec. 2002.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Jane Knight, Coordinator, and Neil Battle, Supervisor, Knox County Adult Education, Dec. 5, 2002.

### *Homeless Adults*

**Tennessee supports few programs aimed directly at educating homeless adults.** In 2002, the few programs that existed to serve homeless adults worked with only 20 individuals.<sup>96</sup> Some private nonprofit organizations run homeless education programs without state funding, but their effectiveness is unknown.

### *Adult Immigrants & ESL Populations*

**In some counties, ESL students make up over 40 percent of all adult education enrollments.**<sup>97</sup> In FY 2000, ESL classes made up 10 percent of all enrollments in state administered adult education programs.<sup>98</sup> In FY 2002, that number jumped to 14 percent of all enrollments,<sup>99</sup> a much higher rate than many other southern states. For example, ESL enrollments in Mississippi and Louisiana are four percent—Kentucky and Alabama’s enrollments are six percent.<sup>100</sup> To help prepare immigrants for productive lives as Tennessee residents, the state also received a \$279,475 federal grant for English language and civics education in FY 2001.<sup>101</sup>

### *Correctional Education*

**Recent Tennessee Department of Correction budget cuts have resulted in a decrease in education and vocational course participation.** In 1997, TDOC made significant budget cuts, consolidations, and closures to reduce spending and improve efficiency.<sup>102</sup> At the time, TDOC reclassified or eliminated 81 education positions and increased the maximum inmate class size from 25 to 35 inmates per teacher for educational courses and 15 to 23 inmates per teacher for vocational courses.<sup>103</sup> A decrease in the number of GED and vocational course completions and in overall education enrollments among inmates occurred after the cuts.<sup>104</sup> This reduction in enrollment may eventually cost the state more money as studies have shown that investing in correctional education yields a positive financial return. One such study out of Florida found that every \$1.00 invested in correctional education yielded a \$3.53 return. The majority of the money saved came from a reduced number of participants who were reincarcerated after two years.<sup>105</sup>

**In Tennessee, all correctional education programs are optional.** The percentage of inmates participating in academic and vocational programs dropped from 26.4 percent in

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<sup>96</sup> Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, *Annual Performance Report*, 2002.

<sup>97</sup> *Excellence in Adult Education: A Comparison of Program Performance and State Goals for 2001-2002*.

<sup>98</sup> “FY 2000 State-Administered Adult Education Program Adult Education Enrollment,” U.S. Department of Education, Oct. 29, 2002, accessed Nov. 18, 2002, <http://mirror.eschina.bnu.edu.cn/Mirror/ed.gov/www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/AdultEd/2000enroll.html>.

<sup>99</sup> Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, *Annual Performance Report*, 2002.

<sup>100</sup> “FY 2000 State-Administered Adult Education Program Adult Education Enrollment,” U.S. Department of Education.

<sup>101</sup> Michael Tolbert, “English Literacy and Civics Education for Adult Learners: Special Policy Update,” National Institute for Literacy, Aug. 2001.

<sup>102</sup> Comptroller of the Treasury, “The Effects of Cuts, Consolidations, Prison Closures, and Other Changes in the Department of Correction Since July 1997,” Jan. 2000.

<sup>103</sup> Interview with Deborah Copeland, Director of Education and Gary Gray, Correctional Program Manager 1, Department of Correction, Dec. 10, 2002.

<sup>104</sup> Comptroller, “Effects of Cuts,” p. 9.

<sup>105</sup> TaxWatch and the Center for Needs Assessment and Planning “Costs-Consequences Analysis for Florida’s Workforce Development Programs, 1997.”

1996 to 21 percent in 2002.<sup>106</sup> In some states, inmates scoring below a predetermined literacy level are required to participate in adult education programs. Arizona state law mandates that any inmate who tests below a 6<sup>th</sup> grade level must spend at least 120 days in a functional literacy program.<sup>107</sup> In 2001, Arizona found that 30 percent of its 25,648 new inmates required functional literacy training, and over 60 percent of those enrolled in classes completed the program.<sup>108</sup> Mandatory education legislation may ensure that all low literacy inmates receive the necessary education.

**Despite attempts by the Department of Correction to obtain more computers for educational programs, the Department of General Services and the Department of Education send all refurbished units to other school districts.** Three correctional institutions have programs to teach prisoners computer repair while refurbishing surplus technology for use in public schools. In 2002 these programs worked with over 5,000 pieces of computer equipment.<sup>109</sup> TDOC sent between 900 and 1,000 computers back to General Services for distribution.<sup>110</sup> According to Department of Correction staff, the state's correctional education programs lack sufficient technology, which they define as one computer per class. In addition, none of the institutions have computer labs.

As a special school district, the Department of Correction should have the same access to the surplus computers as other districts. However, when TDOC requested computers for educational programs in the prisons, the Department of General Services' Property Utilization Division denied their request. One purpose of providing educational opportunities in prisons is to improve the chances that offenders will become productive citizens, thus reducing the likelihood that they will return to prison. Not providing the Department of Correction resources that could aid in such educational opportunities at minimal cost does nothing to advance that goal.

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<sup>106</sup> Department of Correction, *Annual Reports 1996 and 2002*.

<sup>107</sup> Arizona Revised Statutes, 31-229.

<sup>108</sup> Arizona Department of Corrections, *Annual Report 2001*.

<sup>109</sup> Brenda Grant, Assistant Director, Property Utilization Division, "Computers" E-mail to the author, Jan. 10, 2003.

<sup>110</sup> Deborah Copeland, Director of Education, Tennessee Department of Correction, "Re: TDOC Budget for Education" E-mail to the author, Jan. 10, 2003.

## Recommendations

### Legislative Recommendations

**The General Assembly may wish to consider increasing the appropriations for adult education programs.** Tennessee provides fewer state funds for adult education than most other states in the region. If the federal government increases adult education funding, the state may have to match the increase with state appropriations or risk losing federal dollars. Increased funding would create more resources for local programs to hire full-time teachers, improve access to technology, and increase the opportunities for Tennesseans to become involved. Overall, a greater investment in adult education will help to improve the knowledge and skills of Tennessee's workforce and prepare Tennesseans for more highly skilled positions.

**The General Assembly may want to make One-Room-Drop-In Schools a permanent program and increase the program's budget.** Because maternal education level is an important predictor of a child's educational success, family literacy programs like ORDIS address the educational needs of both the parent and the child. ORDIS has been a pilot project since 1988, during which time six sites have provided family literacy services on a minimal budget. Because ORDIS remains a pilot project, programs cannot rely on state funding from year to year. The Director of Family Literacy Programs in the Tennessee Department of Education indicates that the program has been unable to completely fund a teacher's salary in larger systems. Without adequate funding, the risk of turnover increases, requiring another teacher to develop rapport and trust with public housing residents. Providing ORDIS with several years of funding would ensure its continuation and allow local programs to budget in advance.

**The General Assembly and/or the Governor may want to create an Adult Education Taskforce to ensure cooperation and communication among the many entities involved in adult education.** To address the fragmented adult education delivery system, other states including California and Rhode Island have created Adult Education Commissions that include adult education professionals, local business owners, and state officials representing the legislature, the Department of Labor, the Department of Health, the Department of Human Services, community colleges, and the library system. A taskforce in Tennessee could have various responsibilities that might include offering advice to the legislature, promoting adult education across the state, and ensuring equal access to adult education for all Tennesseans.

**The General Assembly may wish to make correctional education mandatory and increase funding for correctional education.** Research from the U.S. Department of Education and other scholars suggests that education is a key component to correctional rehabilitation. Inmates who receive education are less likely to return to prison after release. In 2002, only 21 percent of Tennessee inmates participated in academic or vocational programs, but 43 percent have less than a 12<sup>th</sup> grade education. Although making correctional education mandatory would require a financial investment, the state may save money by reducing its recidivism rate.

**The General Assembly may wish to consider creating a tax incentive program for Tennessee businesses that offer adult education courses to their employees.** A tax incentive package like those developed by Mississippi, Rhode Island, and Kentucky, would encourage businesses to act as partners with the state in improving the overall education level of Tennesseans.

#### **Administrative Recommendations**

**The Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the State Board of Education should consider creating an adult education instructor certification or developing greater incentives to encourage adult education teachers to stay current on the latest techniques and requirements.** To recognize that adults and children have different needs in the classroom, the Office of Adult Education should investigate the creation of a separate certification process for adult educators. Tennessee already has the professional development infrastructure to conduct a credential program. Using other states as a model, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the State Board of Education could develop a system to take advantage of the programs already offered by the Office of Adult Education. A credential program would ensure that instructors are qualified and prepared to teach adults and would increase the sense of professionalism in the field of adult education.

In the meantime, the State Board of Education may wish to create a uniform standard across the state that allows teachers to count their adult education training hours toward recertification. The board may wish to determine the amount of adult education training to accept to ensure that k-12 teachers also receive training in their primary teaching areas. Allowing instructors to count their training credits would likely increase their participation in professional development activities.

**The Office of Adult Education should carefully monitor the new GED Practice Test program to ensure that no minimum score requirement is necessary and that counties have enough resources to meet the demand for Practice Tests and GED course enrollment.** Unlike other states, the Office of Adult Education has not created a minimum score requirement for the GED Practice Test. Instituting a minimum score may further improve the pass rate by ensuring that individuals are prepared prior to taking the GED test. In addition, adult education programs across Tennessee have practical concerns about administering the new GED practice test to more individuals. The Office of Adult Education may wish to maintain close contact with county programs to analyze whether the programs need more resources to administer the tests.

**The Office of Adult Education should review its target populations to ensure that the local programs are serving these individuals.** The State Plan identifies six hard-to-serve populations that OAE would like to include in adult education programs. However, OAE does not provide strategies or enforce regulations requiring programs to recruit these populations. Local efforts to reach out to these populations vary greatly from county to county with some counties relying on word-of-mouth advertising and others creating diverse recruitment strategies. Program goals or requirements for these

populations could help ensure that individuals most in need of education services are able to find and access them.

**The Department of General Services and the Department of Education should allow some computers that have been refurbished by inmates to be retained for correctional education programs.** Many states, including Tennessee, have developed programs for computer repair in prisons. The Department of General Services distributes refurbished units to public school districts at their request. Despite the fact that many prison educational facilities lack adequate technology, the Department of Correction's Director of Education has not been able to access the refurbished computers. To improve correctional education at a low cost, TDOC's inmate education program should have access to the refurbished computers.

## Appendix A

### Descriptions of literacy levels used in the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey

The 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey measured the literacy levels of adult Americans in three areas “designed to capture an ordered set of information-processing skills and strategies that adults use to accomplish a diverse range of literacy tasks”:

- *Prose literacy* involves the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts that include editorials, news stories, poems, and fiction; for example, finding a piece of information in a newspaper article, interpreting instructions from a warranty, inferring a theme from a poem, or contrasting views expressed in editorials.
- *Document literacy* concerns the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in materials that include job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables, and graphs; for example, locating a particular intersection on a street map, using a schedule to choose the appropriate bus, or entering information on an application form.
- *Quantitative literacy* involves the knowledge and skills required to apply arithmetic operations, either alone or sequentially, using numbers embedded in printed materials; for example, balancing a checkbook, figuring out a tip, completing an order form, or determining the amount of interest from a loan advertisement.

Each area is further divided into five levels that reflect increasingly more difficult information-processing skills and strategies.

Levels	Prose Literacy	Document Literacy	Quantitative Literacy
1	Prose tasks at this level are the least demanding in terms of what the reader must do to produce a correct response. Typically, tasks at this level require the reader to locate one piece of information in which there is a literal match between the question and the stimulus material. If a distractor or plausible answer is present, it tends to be located away from where the correct information is found.	Tasks at this level are the least demanding. In general, they require the reader to either locate a piece of information based on a literal match or to enter information from personal knowledge.	Although no quantitative tasks used in this assessment fall within this level, experience suggests that such tasks would require a single, relatively simple operation for which the numbers are given and the operation specified.
2	Some of the prose tasks of this level still require the reader to locate on a single literal feature of information; however, these tasks tend to occur in materials where there are several distractors or where the match is based on low-level	Tasks at this level begin to become more varied. Some still require the reader to match a single piece of information; however, tasks occur where there are several distractors or where the match is based on low-level inferences. Tasks at	Tasks at this level typically require the use of a single operation based on numbers that are either stated in the question or easily located in the material. In addition, the operation needed is either stated in the question or easily

	inferences. Tasks at this level also begin to require the readers to integrate information by pulling together two or more pieces of information or by comparing and contrasting information.	this level also begin to require the reader to cycle through information or to integrate information.	determined based on the format of the problem—for example, entries on a bank deposit slip or order form.
<b>3</b>	Tasks at this level tend to require the reader to search fairly dense text for literal or synonymous matches on the basis of more than one feature of information or to integrate information from relatively long text that does not contain organizational aids such as headings.	Tasks at this level tend to require the reader to either integrate three pieces of information or to cycle through materials in rather complex tables or graphs in which distractor information is present.	What appears to distinguish tasks at this level is that two more more numbers needed to solve the problem must be found in the stimulus material. Also the operation(s) needed can be determined from arithmetic relation terms.
<b>4</b>	Tasks at this level continue to demand more from the reader. Not only are multiple-feature matching and integration of information from complex displays materials maintained, the degree of inferencing required by the reader is also increased. Conditional information is frequently present in tasks at this level that must be taken into account.	Tasks at this level tend to demand more from the reader. Not only are multiple-feature matching, cycling, and integration of information maintained, the degree of inferencing is increased. Cycling tasks often require the reader to make five or more responses with no designation of the correct number of responses. Conditional information is also present and must be taken into account.	Quantitative tasks at level 4 tend to require two or more sequential operations or the application of a single operation where either the quantities must be located in complex displays and/or the operation must be inferred from semantic information given or prior knowledge.
<b>5</b>	These tasks require the reader to search for information in dense text or complex documents containing multiple plausible distractors, to make high text-based inferences or use specialized background knowledge, as well as to compare and contrast sometimes complex information to determine differences.	Tasks at this level require the most from the reader. The reader must search through complex displays containing multiple distractors, make high text-based inferences or use special inferences, or use specialized knowledge.	Quantitative tasks at this level are the most demanding. They tend to require the reader to perform multiple operations and to disembed features of a problem from stimulus material or to rely on background knowledge to determine the quantities or operations needed.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Technical Report and Data File User's Manual for the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey*, NCES 2001-457, by Irwin Kirsch, Kentaro Yamamoto, Norma Norris, Donald Rock, Ann Jungeblut, Patricia O'Reilly, Martha Berlin, Leyla Mohadjer, Joseph Waksberg, Husyin Goksel, John Burke, Susan Rieger, James Green, Merle Klein, Anne Campbell, Lynn Jenkins, Andrew Kolstad, Peter Mosenthal, and Stephane Baldi, Washington, D.C. 2001, p. 335.



## **Appendix B Individuals Interviewed**

Deborah Copeland, Director of Education  
Tennessee Department of Correction  
Nashville, TN

Susan Cowden, Director of Contract Services  
Families First  
Nashville, TN

Dorothy Dickens, Coordinator  
Metro Literacy Council  
Nashville, TN

Susan Doughty, Director  
Office of Family Literacy Programs  
Nashville, TN

Janet Fricks, Coordinator  
Adult Education Office  
Murfreesboro, TN

Susan Greer, Executive Director  
Tennessee Association of Adult and Community Educators  
Nashville, TN

Jane Knight, Coordinator and Neil Battle, Supervisor  
Knox County Adult Education  
Knoxville, TN

Hope Lancaster, Program Manager  
Office of Adult Education  
Department of Labor and Workforce Development  
Nashville, TN

Rick Moore, Executive Director  
Tennessee Literacy Coalition  
Nashville, TN

Meg Nugent, Director  
Nashville Adult Literacy Council  
Nashville, TN

Phyllis Pardue, GED Administrator  
Office of Adult Education  
Department of Labor and Workforce Development  
Nashville, TN

Lynn Siefert, Coordinator  
Adult Education Office  
Ashland City, TN

Marva Sones, Program Manager  
Office of Adult Education  
Department of Labor and Workforce Development  
Nashville, TN

Jean Stephens, Director and Connie White, Associate Director  
Center for Literacy Studies  
Knoxville, TN

Bill Toombs, Program Manager  
Office of Adult Education  
Department of Labor and Workforce Development  
Nashville, TN

Phil White, Director,  
Office of Adult Education  
Nashville, TN

## Appendix C Adult Education Programs

<b>Anderson County Adult Education</b>
<b>Bedford County Adult Education</b>
<b>Benton County Adult Education</b>
<b>Bledsoe County Adult Education</b>
<b>Blount County Adult Education</b>
<b>Bradley County Adult Education</b>
<b>Campbell County Adult Education</b>
<b>Cannon County Adult Education</b>
<b>Carroll County Adult Education</b>
<b>Carter County Adult Education</b>
<b>Chattanooga State Adult Education</b>
<b>Cheatham County Adult Education</b>
<b>Chester County Adult Education</b>
<b>Claiborne County Adult Education</b>
<b>Clay County Adult Education</b>
<b>Clinch-Powell Educational Cooperative (Hancock Co. Families First)</b>
<b>Cocke County Adult Education</b>
<b>Crockett County Adult Education</b>
<b>Crossville Housing Authority - Cumberland Co.</b>
<b>Cumberland County Adult Education</b>
<b>Davidson County Adult Education</b>

<b>Decatur County Adult Education</b>
<b>DeKalb County Adult Education</b>
<b>Dickson County Adult Education</b>
<b>Dyer Co. Literacy</b>
<b>Fayette County Adult Education</b>
<b>Fentress County Adult Education</b>
<b>Franklin County Adult Education</b>
<b>Gibson Co. / Trenton Adult Education</b>
<b>Giles County Adult Education</b>
<b>Grainger County Adult Education</b>
<b>Greenville City Adult Education</b>
<b>Grundy County Adult Education</b>
<b>Hamblen County Adult Education</b>
<b>Hancock County Adult Education</b>
<b>Hardeman County Adult Education</b>
<b>Hardin County Adult Education</b>
<b>Hawkins County Adult Education</b>
<b>Haywood County Adult Education</b>
<b>Henderson County Adult Education</b>
<b>Henry County Adult Education</b>
<b>Hickman County Adult Education</b>
<b>Humphreys County Adult Education</b>

<b>Jackson County Adult Education</b>
<b>Jefferson County Adult Education</b>
<b>Johnson City Adult Education</b>
<b>Johnson County Adult Education</b>
<b>Kingsport City Adult Education</b>
<b>Knox County CAC</b>
<b>Knox County Adult Education</b>
<b>Lauderdale County Adult Education</b>
<b>Lawrence County Adult Education</b>
<b>Lenoir City/Loudon County Adult Education</b>
<b>Lewis County Adult Education</b>
<b>Lincoln County Adult Education</b>
<b>Macon County Adult Education</b>
<b>Madison County / Jackson C.A.R.E.</b>
<b>Marion County Adult Education</b>
<b>Marshall County Adult Education</b>
<b>Maury County Adult Education</b>
<b>McMinn Co. / Athens City Adult Education</b>
<b>McNairy County Adult Education</b>
<b>Meigs County Adult Education</b>
<b>Memphis City Adult Education</b>
<b>Monroe County Adult Education</b>

<b>Montgomery Co. / Clarksville Adult Education</b>
<b>Morgan County Adult Education</b>
<b>Murfreesboro City Schools</b>
<b>Obion County Adult Education</b>
<b>Overton County Adult Education</b>
<b>Pellissippi State Adult Education</b>
<b>Perry County Adult Education</b>
<b>Pickett County Adult Education</b>
<b>Polk County Adult Education</b>
<b>Putnam County Adult Education</b>
<b>Read Chattanooga, Inc.</b>
<b>Rhea County Adult Education</b>
<b>Roane County Adult Education</b>

<b>Robertson County Adult Education</b>
<b>Rutherford County Adult Education</b>
<b>Scott County Adult Education</b>
<b>Sequatchie County Adult Education</b>
<b>Sevier County Adult Education</b>
<b>Smith County Adult Education</b>
<b>Stewart County Adult Education</b>
<b>Sullivan County Adult Education</b>
<b>Sumner County Adult Education</b>
<b>Tennessee Dept. of Correction</b>
<b>Tipton County Adult Education</b>
<b>Trousdale County Adult Education</b>

<b>Tullahoma City / Coffee County Adult Education</b>
<b>Unicoi County Adult Education</b>
<b>Union County Adult Education</b>
<b>Upper Cumberland Human Resource Center</b>
<b>Van Buren County Adult Education</b>
<b>Warren County Adult Education</b>
<b>Wayne County Adult Education</b>
<b>Weakley County Adult Education</b>
<b>White County Adult Education</b>
<b>Williamson County Adult Education</b>
<b>Wilson County Adult Education</b>
<b>Workforce Essentials, Inc. (Robertson Co. Families First)</b>

## **Appendix D Family Literacy Programs**

### **Even Start Programs**

**McFamilies, Blount County**

**Claiborne Families, Claiborne County**

**Crockett County Family Literacy  
Even Start Project**

**Grainger County Even Start**

**Hancock County Even Start**

**Humphreys County Even Start**

**Athens Even Start, McMinn County**

**Rhea County Even Start**

**Mercury Court Even Start Family  
Literacy Program, Rutherford  
County  
Smart Start, Shelby County**

**Unicoi County Even Start**

**Wayne County Even Start**

**Williamson County Even Start Family  
Literacy**

**Even Start, Cheatham County**

**Newport City Even Start Family Literacy  
Program, Cocke County**

**Dyer County Even Start Family Literacy  
Program**

**Grundy County Even Start Family Literacy  
Program**

**Hawkins County Even Start**

**Lewis County Even Start Family Literacy  
Program**

**McNairy Co. Even Start Family  
Empowerment**

**Roane County Even Start**

**Huntsville Elementary School, Scott County**

**ESL/FLIP**

**Johnson City Even Start**

**White County Even Start**

## One-Room-Drop-In Schools

**Goodwill Homes, Shelby County**

**Kingsport City Schools**

**Nashville READ, Davidson County**

**Hamilton County Schools**

**Memphis City Schools, Shelby County**

**Metro Nashville-Davidson County  
Schools**

# Appendix E

## Response from the Office of Adult Education, Department of Labor and Workforce Development



STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
OFFICE OF ADULT EDUCATION  
11th Floor Davy Crockett Tower  
500 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37245  
615-741-7054

PHIL BREDESEN  
GOVERNOR

JAMES G. NEELEY  
COMMISSIONER

PHIL WHITE  
STATE DIRECTOR

February 10, 2004

Dear Ms. Detch:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the report your office has compiled about Adult Education. We found it to be insightful, fair and balanced. The recommendations made from your team will be taken quite seriously, and we will continue to strive to improve the quality of our services.

The Office of Adult Education certainly concurs with the recommendations made for increased funding. We have struggled for several years to continue to increase the number we serve as well as improve the quality of our services to undereducated adults. We believe that our efforts in quality management principles through our involvement in using the Baldrige Criteria for Continuous Improvement has been a key instrument in making us the national benchmark for Adult Education quality performance, but at some point our growth will be prohibited if additional funds are not made available.

It may be important to note, that while on the surface, adult education service delivery seems fragmented, there are actually only two channels of service provided: one through the DOI.WFD Office of Adult Education (including service delivery to Families First and adults in Family Literacy) and another through the Department of Corrections. Every effort will be made to include staff development opportunities for those DOC instructors who wish to attend our trainings in order to make Adult Education instruction more consistent state wide.

Adult Education, we believe, is an integral part of the total education picture in Tennessee. Educated adults are more inclined to read to their pre-schoolers, make education a priority in the home, assist their older children with homework, be involved in their children's schools, better equipped to take advantage of post-secondary opportunities, advance in their current jobs and allow Tennessee the opportunity to attract more business and industry.

We will use your findings to continue our high level of commitment of quality service to individuals and businesses alike in order to raise the education level of the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phil White".

Phil White

PW:VB