



Take Action for Literacy

The Status of Literacy in Greater Hartford



GREATER
HARTFORD
Literacy
Council



June 5, 2003

Dear Readers,

The Greater Hartford Literacy Council was created to coordinate a comprehensive response to the unsettling and often unacknowledged reality that too many residents of Hartford and the Greater Hartford region have a serious literacy problem. In order to develop a meaningful plan of action, the Literacy Council, with a generous grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, undertook an unprecedented needs assessment. This assessment was the first phase of a regional initiative to improve literacy levels called CLEAR (Community Literacy Enhancement Across the Region). This report is one of many products resulting from this phase of the CLEAR Initiative.

The CLEAR regional needs assessment is the most comprehensive look at literacy attainment for the region ever undertaken, encompassing literacy from birth through adulthood. The comprehensive study and resulting report provide ample and powerful information. Because of its inclusiveness and breadth, the report presents literacy within its proper and complex context. It demonstrates that we have a serious literacy problem with grave consequences for our cities and towns, our region, our state and nation.

The information in the report is comprehensive, thoughtful and compelling and has been prepared with the aim of guiding our communities to action. We hope that the report stirs discussion from dinner tables to the floor of the state legislature. Most important, we hope that it leads to thoughtful, meaningful and systemic action. The economic and social health of our capital city and region depends on it.

Now that recommendations and action steps that will lead the region to literacy improvements have been developed, the Greater Hartford Literacy Council's role is evident. We will offer services that focus the spectrum of efforts on common goals that lead to full literacy for all. We look forward to working in partnership with you to ensure that all Greater Hartford residents achieve the literacy skills they need to be more successful workers, family members and citizens.

Sincerely,


Carl Gueriere
Executive Director/Literacy Advocate



June 5, 2003

Dear Friend of Literacy,

The Leadership Team of the Greater Hartford Literacy Council is pleased to endorse the work and recommendations of "Take Action for Literacy: The Status of Literacy in Greater Hartford." The quality of the report and its level of inclusiveness substantiate its careful review by all stakeholders in Greater Hartford.

The report clearly demonstrates the "invisible crisis" affecting our region. Unlike other social concerns that have visible or tangible symptoms, low literate individuals are not easily identified. Despite its invisibility, low literacy is the common denominator for most at risk groups whether they are children or adults.

The information is compelling. The recommendations and actions steps are sound. This report outlines the role of all stakeholders including the Literacy Council to improve literacy levels by bringing a sense of shared responsibility and coordination to community leaders and organizations. The guide has been provided. All we have to do is choose to use it. We look forward to working with you to improve literacy skills in Greater Hartford.

The Leadership Team, Greater Hartford Literacy Council


Hon. Eddie Peter
Mayor
City of Hartford


Thomas Phillips
President & CEO
Capital Region Workforce Development Board


Robert Henry
Superintendent
Hartford Public Schools


Louise Blalock
Chief Librarian
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Purpose of this Report

In 2002, the Greater Hartford Literacy Council launched a three-year initiative called Community Literacy Enhancement Across the Region (CLEAR). CLEAR is a multi-phased, regional initiative involving many stakeholders. The goals are to produce meaningful change in the provision of, planning for, and funding of literacy services for individuals from birth through adulthood in Greater Hartford. This report is the culmination of the first phase of the CLEAR Initiative.

During this first phase, the Literacy Council brought together more than 200 individuals, representing 140 organizations and departments throughout the region, to participate in task forces, oversight and advisory groups, focus groups, and provider surveys. The large number of participants involved in this inclusive process is evidence of the comprehensive scope of the study and the Literacy Council's ability to engage all segments of the community in this effort.



An executive summary and five task force reports, together with this report, provide an in-depth look at the major literacy-related needs and issues facing Greater Hartford and steps for addressing the many challenges involved in improving literacy levels. They are intended to encourage everyone to take action for literacy.

This report is dedicated to all learners who struggle with literacy.



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The Greater Hartford Literacy Council

The Greater Hartford Literacy Council is a non-profit organization developed in January 2001 as an outgrowth of recommendations made by the City of Hartford Task Force on Adult Literacy in 2000. As sponsors, the City of Hartford, Hartford Public Schools, the Capital Region Workforce Development Board and the Hartford Public Library serve as an advisory team to the Literacy Council, which has an organizational structure that includes:

- 1) A board of directors that oversees, supports and promotes Literacy Council activities
- 2) The founding partners who meet periodically to consider service enhancements and areas of collaboration
- 3) An ever-growing membership of nearly 90 organizations and individuals

Our organizational structure and programming include support from major stakeholders in the region, and are inclusive in the identification of needs, assets, and issues. Indeed, we are the only regional organization addressing literacy issues and programming for Greater Hartford residents from birth through adulthood.

We focus our efforts on the 35 towns in the Greater Hartford area with an initial emphasis on areas with greatest need. By working collaboratively with our members to strengthen their organizations, services, and the systems in which they operate, our efforts will result in enhanced service delivery and ultimately lead to improved literacy levels. With nearly 90 organizations and/or individuals as

members, the Literacy Council represents the interests of most literacy providers and many human service providers in Greater Hartford.

The Literacy Council is a member of the National Alliance of Urban Literacy Coalitions that provides technical assistance and other support we share with our membership.

2003/2004 Services and Products

1. Information & referral for literacy services

- Enhance the GHLC Website
- Service Directories
- Literacy Infoline*
- Volunteer Recruitment/Volunteer intake and referral system*
- Develop Literacy Tool Kits: Screening/Counseling of Potential Learners*

2. Facilitating regional coordination

- Public Awareness
 - Literacy Public Awareness Campaign*
 - Media Workshops
 - Advocacy: Resources and Lobbyist
 - Annual Legislative Report Card
- Collaborations Formed/to be Formed
 - State Interdepartmental Literacy Task Force
 - Information & Referral
 - Technical Assistance
 - Media
 - Hartford Community Health Partnership
 - Capitol Region Council of Governments
 - Connecticut Literacy Coalition
 - Coalition of Human Service and Education Organizations
- Municipal Literacy Liaisons and Literacy Teams

- Outreach to literacy efforts conducted by private/corporate sources*
- Education Center*
 - Comprehensive service center for referral, screening, assessment, and staff training

3. Network building

- Quarterly Luncheon Meetings
- Print and Electronic Newsletters
- Work Groups

4. Coordinating capacity building efforts

- Provide and/or coordinate a menu of technical assistance and professional development services
- Develop Quality Standards and Performance Measures for Literacy Services
- Educational Materials and Resources
 - Annually distributing thousands of books to members
 - Literacy Resources
- Develop pilot projects to jump start service and system enhancements*
- Establish a Clearinghouse for literacy data and research
- Publications
 - Literacy Landscape
 - Take Action for Literacy: The Status of Literacy in Greater Hartford 2003
 - Funding Analysis Report
 - Profiles of Literacy-Related Demographics by Municipality
 - Promising Practices Report
 - Portrait of Literacy Services and Needs in Greater Hartford
 - Annual Report
- Fund Raising
 - Annual Fundraiser for GHLC and membership*
 - Create a Literacy Fund*
 - Develop collaborations to leverage funding

*Product/Services Requiring Additional Funding



Understanding Literacy

Strong literacy skills are essential for success in the 21st century. Although we each define success differently, the underpinnings are the same: one must have the necessary skills to become a successful parent, worker and citizen. These goals are difficult to attain with low literacy skills. The ability to read, write and compute are essential skills that impact all areas of our lives. Low literacy skills occur among people from all walks of life, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or income level. The shame and humiliation that often silences the voices of people with low literacy skills must be overcome. Literacy must be addressed comprehensively, in a coordinated way, as a vital issue with implications for every aspect of life.

Literacy is not something you either have or do not have, rather it is a continuum of skills on which people have different levels of ability. The term *literacy* in this report refers to an individual's ability to read, write and speak English, compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential (National Literacy Act of 1991). The term *literacy services* refers to a wide range of educational services for individuals from birth through adulthood. We refer to people receiving literacy services and people in need of literacy services as *learners*.

The Need for Services

The Nation's Report Card, released by the U.S. Department of Education in June of 2003, shows that overall, Connecticut's schoolchildren rank among the nation's best readers. At the same time, the overall performance of schoolchildren on this measure as well as the Connecticut Mastery Test indicates that the majority scored below proficiency levels. Throughout the Greater Hartford region, well over half of tenth grade students performed below the state goal on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test in reading (State Department of Education 2001/2002). In Hartford 91% were below state goal, in Bloomfield 80%, in New Britain 81%, and in Windsor 68%. Likewise, more than half of the state's fourth graders did not meet proficiency goals in language arts.

The Nation's Report Card also indicates that Connecticut has some of the largest achievement gaps in the nation between:

- White students and students from certain minority groups
 - 9% of the state's black eighth-graders and 10% of Latino eighth-graders met the reading proficiency standard, compared with 48% of white students. Those gaps are significantly larger than for the nation as a whole.
- Girls and boys
 - Boys trailed girls by significant margins across the state. For example, 39% of fourth grade boys met the proficiency standard, compared with 47% of girls.
- Students from low and high income families
 - Overall, just one in five of Connecticut's low-income fourth grade students met the proficiency standard, compared with half of the children from middle-class families.



"There needs to be programs that not only help people learn how to read but also how to write. It's hard for me to express my thoughts clearly in writing – from a letter for my kids to a letter at work. I didn't get enough practice in school."

Vanessa Pacheco
Adult Learner



The National Adult Literacy Survey

The best measure currently available for an area's literacy levels is the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) conducted by the U.S. Department of Education in 1992. Researchers differentiated five levels of literacy, from Level 1 (lowest) to Level 5 (highest).

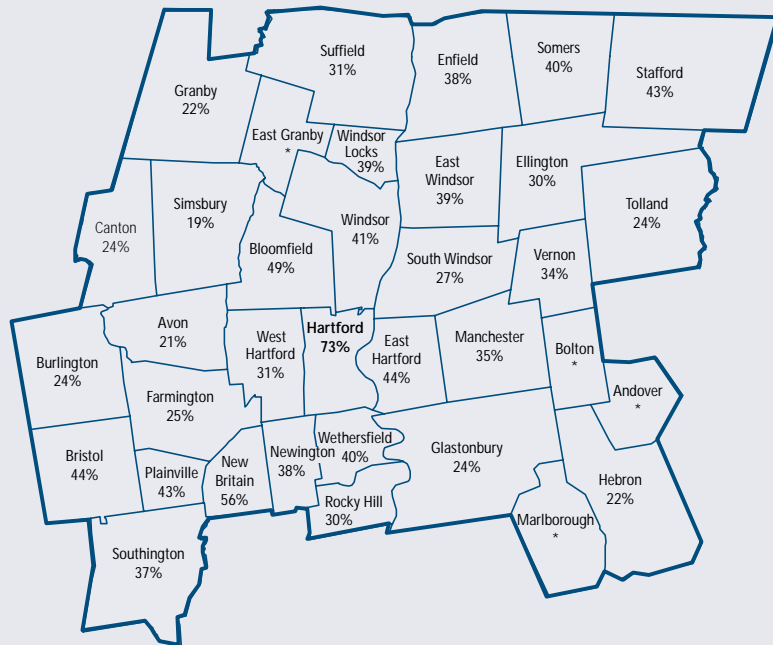
Using a combined measure of prose, document and quantitative literacy, the U.S. Department of Education interviewed and tested a large number of people in randomly selected households as well as 1,100 individuals in prisons. The final sample of 26,000+ individuals was considered to be representative of the adult population in the country as a whole. Based on this sample, the Department of Education prepared estimates of adult literacy for cities, counties, and states.

Although many surveyed adults with Level 1 and Level 2 skills could perform some reading tasks, all displayed difficulty using reading, writing and computational skills necessary for functioning in everyday life. People functioning at these low levels have difficulty reading basic phrases like those used on ATM screens, reading street signs, deciphering a bus schedule, filling out a job application, reading the newspaper or the dosage on a medicine bottle. As a result, these adults do not have some of the most fundamental economic, social and personal options available to those with higher levels of literacy skills.

A wide range of sources, including the National Governors' Association, agree that today's economy and society require skills at Level 3 or higher, measured on a five-point scale. Nationally, more than 90 million adults function at the two lowest levels of literacy – far below the level needed to earn a living wage. Approximately 300,000 Greater Hartford adults, or roughly 41% of the adult population, are functioning below Level 3. This is the same as the state's average, and slightly lower than the national average of 49% (National Adult Literacy Survey). In a state as wealthy as Connecticut, it may be hard to imagine that thousands of adults have literacy skills below level 3.

Literacy services available in the Greater Hartford region have generally not been able to keep pace with the growing demand. The pursuit of services often leads a potential learner to a lengthy waiting list. For example, 34% of literacy providers surveyed early in 2003 by the Literacy Council, report a waiting list for at least one of their literacy services (after school tutoring, adult basic education, English for Speakers of Other Languages, etc.). A lack of space or slots is the most common reason learners are turned away from services. According to surveyed providers, the average waiting time for services was 12 weeks, with some programs experiencing a waiting period of more than 30 weeks. The average number of students on waiting lists was 17 with a range from five to 75.

Percentage of Adult Population Below Level 3 Literacy



The results for the Greater Hartford region indicate that significant portions of the adult population (16 and above) are struggling with low literacy, with the largest concentration in the City of Hartford.

*NALS estimates were not applied to towns with fewer than 5,000 adults.



Human and Economic Costs of Low Literacy

The impact of the population's literacy levels is interwoven throughout every aspect of today's society and economy. In order to stay competitive in a global economy, employers need workers who can read, write, compute, solve problems, and communicate well. Our communities benefit when residents are well educated and prepared for success: families stabilize, homeownership grows, neighborhoods bloom, businesses flourish, the tax base grows, and the region can be revitalized.

The personal impact of low literacy skills is seen at many stages:

- School children fall behind their classmates in learning to read and may lose interest in school.
- Youth drop out of school, or complete high school still unable to read above elementary levels. Their options in life may be limited by the resulting low self-esteem and poor educational performance.
- Adults lack the skills to succeed in today's economy, are often underemployed or unemployed, and are limited in their job choices by their literacy skills. They may not be able to:
 - Fill out a job application
 - Find work that provides a livable wage
 - Accept a job promotion that involves paperwork
 - Read to their grandchildren
 - Read instructions from a doctor or pharmacist
- Parents have trouble helping their children develop pre-literacy skills, reading them a story, or helping them with their homework.

Impact on the workforce:

- Over \$60 billion lost in productivity each year by American businesses due to employees' lack of basic skills (National Institute for Literacy).
- 38% of job applicants tested for basic reading and math skills in 1999 were deficient in those skills, up from 22% in 1997 (American Management Association 2001).
- About 20% of America's workers have low basic skills and 75% of unemployed adults have reading or writing difficulties (National Institute for Literacy).

The economic and human costs are too high. We can no longer afford to minimize or neglect the literacy needs of people with low literacy skills.

Impact on health and health care:

- \$73 billion annually is the burden on the national health care system due to low health literacy (American Medical Association).
- Approximately 90 million Americans experience difficulties in accessing healthcare systems and healthcare information (Pfizer Health Literacy Initiative).
- Most health care materials are written above the 10th grade level, even though one out of five American adults reads at the 5th grade level or below, and the average American reads at the 8th to 9th grade level (Pfizer Health Literacy Initiative).
- Only about 50% of all patients take medications as directed. Problems with patient compliance and medical errors may be based on poor understanding of health care information (Pfizer Health Literacy Initiative).

Impact on crime:

- 70% of prisoners function at the bottom two of five literacy levels (NALS).
- More than one-third of all juvenile offenders confined to correctional facilities read below the fourth-grade level (Open Society Institute: Criminal Justice Initiative).
- Approximately 40% of youth held in detention facilities have some form of learning disability (Open Society Institute: Criminal Justice Initiative).
- A five-year follow-up study conducted by the Arizona Department of Adult Probation concluded that probationers who received literacy training had a significantly lower re-arrest rate (35%) than the control group (46%), and those who received GED education had a re-arrest rate of 24%, compared to the control group's rate of 46% (Education as Crime Prevention: Providing Education to Prisoners. The Center on Crime, Communities and Culture. September 1997).

Impact on voting/community involvement:

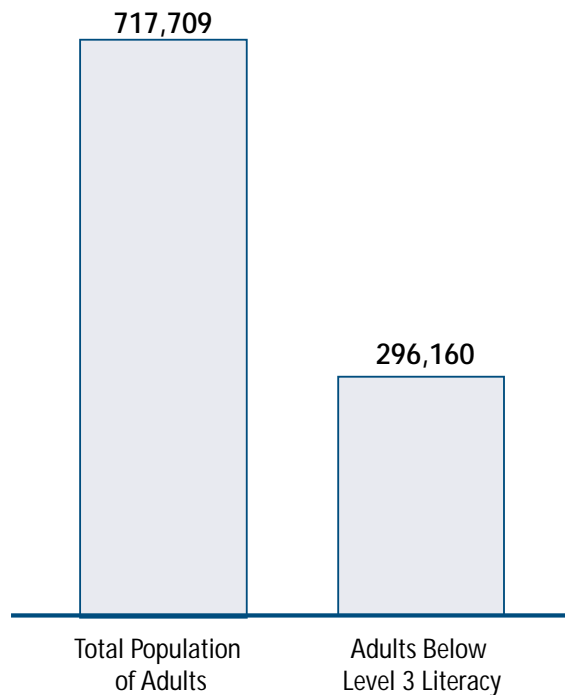
- Only 55% of adults with low literacy levels voted in the past five years, while 89% of the most literate voted (National Adult Literacy Survey).
- In the 1998 congressional elections, college graduates ages 25-44, were 77% more likely than high school graduates of the same age group to vote. High school dropouts in the same age range were 52% less likely than high school graduates to vote (U.S. Department of Education, The Condition of Education, 2000).



Impact on the welfare system (National Institute for Literacy):

- Almost 50% of adults on welfare do not have a high school diploma or GED.
- 43% of people with the lowest literacy skills live in poverty, 17% receive food stamps, and 70% have no job or a part-time job.
- Welfare recipients ages 17-21 read, on average, at the sixth grade level.
- Welfare recipients with low education skills stay on welfare the longest; those with stronger education skills become self-sufficient more quickly.

Adult Literacy Challenge for Greater Hartford



Source: 2003 GHLC estimate based on NALS and Census Data

Why Do So Many Have Low Literacy Skills?

The results of longitudinal studies following 10,000 good and poor readers, as reported by G. Reid Lyon, Ph.D., Chief of the Child Development and Behavior Branch of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), National Institutes of Health (NIH), help us understand the complexities of learning to read. The following description paraphrases G. Reid Lyon's testimony in 2002 to the United States Congress:

Some children learn to read and write with ease. Even before they enter school, they have developed an understanding that the letters on a page can be sounded out to make words. It is suggested in the research literature that about 50% learn to read relatively easily once exposed to formal instruction, and it seems that youngsters in this group learn to read in any classroom, with any instructional emphasis. Unfortunately, it appears that for about half of our nation's children, learning to read is a much more formidable challenge, and for at least 20 to 30% of these youngsters, reading is one of the most difficult tasks that they will have to master throughout their life.

When children do not learn to read, their general knowledge, spelling and writing abilities, and vocabulary development suffer in kind. Within this context, reading skill serves as the major foundational skill for all school-based learning, and without it, the chances for academic and occupational success are limited indeed.

A Combination of Factors Can Place a Child or Adult At-Risk for Low Literacy:

- Less than adequate reading curriculum/teaching methods
- Identified with a learning/reading disability, but not receiving effective instruction
- A learning/reading disability that was never identified
- Schools promoted student without requisite reading skills
- Home environment that does not encourage learning or reading*
- Troubled home environment due to domestic violence, child abuse, alcohol/drug abuse, etc.
- Raised in poverty
- Not adequately prepared for kindergarten with pre-literacy skills
- Dropped out of school
- Limited proficiency in English
- Low intelligence
- Speech and hearing impairments
- Home environment where the parents' reading levels are low*

*It is very important to note that a substantial number of children from highly literate households, and who have been read to by their parents since very early in life, nevertheless have difficulties learning to read (NICHD).

Research-based reading instruction techniques have only recently become widely accepted within the education community. In general, schools of education curricula have not kept pace with the research findings. As a result, there are many children and adults who have not learned how to



read proficiently because their teachers did not know how to instruct them.

According to G. Reid Lyon, *for 85 to 90% of poor readers, prevention and early intervention programs that combine instruction in phoneme awareness, phonics, spelling, reading fluency, and reading comprehension strategies provided by well-trained teachers can increase reading skills to average reading levels. However, studies have shown that if we delay early intervention until nine years of age (the time that most children with reading difficulties first receive services), approximately 75% of these children will continue to have difficulties learning to read throughout high school and their adult years. To be clear, while older children and adults can be taught to read, the time and expense of doing so is enormous compared to what is required to teach them when they are five or six years old.*

What Role Does Language Play?

The need for services for non-native speakers of English who have difficulty speaking or reading English, is among the fastest growing areas of demand in adult education (US Department of Education). Non-native speakers with limited English proficiency are receiving a variety of specialized services in the region's schools. However, these services are hampered by limited funding, insufficient teacher training, and teacher shortages, factors that often contribute to the delayed assessment of students in need of services (GHLC Non-native Speakers of English Task Force).

Adult non-native speakers with limited English proficiency may have difficulty getting the services they need due to:

- Lengthy waiting lists
- Uncertain immigration status
- No transportation and/or childcare
- Lack of awareness of services
- No services to meet their needs
- Work schedules that interfere with attending literacy classes

(GHLC Non-native Speakers of English Task Force)

According to the NALS study, 41% of Hartford's adults function at the lowest of five literacy levels. Difficulty speaking or reading English is responsible for about one fourth of this percentage. **If everyone in Hartford spoke English "very well" (a term used in the US Census) and no other factors changed, the estimated proportion of Hartford residents in Level 1 would have been 30% instead of 41%** (GHLC).

The proportion of the Hartford population that does not speak English "very well" has grown in the last decade.

City of Hartford English Proficiency

	1990		2000	
	%	%	#	
Speaks "Only English" or English "Very Well"	81%	77%	65,090	
Speaks English "Well"	9%	11%	9,001	
Speaks English "Not Well" or "Not At All"	10%	13%	10,974	
	100%	101%*	85,065	individuals

*Due to rounding, does not total 100%

U.S. Census 1990, Table P28; U.S. Census 2000, Table P19

In discussions of literacy and language, the focus must be on "difficulty with English," not "English as a second language" — because fully half of those for whom English is a second language report that they speak English very well.

These findings indicate that 1) English proficiency is one of several factors leading to low literacy rates in the City of Hartford and elsewhere, and 2) services for those who report speaking English less than "very well" are an important area of focus for literacy skills development and programming.

The Literacy Services Landscape

Who provides services and how are they funded?

Before the CLEAR Initiative, much about the assets and needs of the Greater Hartford community of literacy providers was unknown. In order to understand and address literacy issues, one needs to have a comprehensive understanding of the full continuum of services and how they are categorized and utilized by learners, providers and policy makers. Much about literacy efforts that are privately offered or funded is still unknown because of limited reporting to an outside source, and because such efforts may be sporadic. The literacy services landscape is described here in two inter-related parts: I. The Delivery of Literacy Services, and II. Funding Analysis.



Greater Hartford Landscape of Literacy Providers

Early Childhood Programs & Family Literacy or Intergenerational Programs	School-based Instruction K-12	Programs for Youth	Adult Basic Education	Workforce Education
Aetna Center for Families Child Care Programs Even Start Programs Family Resource Centers Public Schools 21st Century Schools Head Start Programs Parent Power Institute Public Libraries Reach Out & Read Read to Grow The Bridge Family Center	CREC Public/Private Schools	Americorps/VISTA ASPIRA of Connecticut Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford, Inc. Center City Churches/Center for Youth ConnectiKids CREC Equal Summer Magnet School Discovering the Powers of Mathematics and Science (CPEP) Family Resource Centers Hartford Jewish Coalition for Literacy Hartford Neighborhood Ctrs Hartford Neighborhood Ctrs Immanuel Congregational Church Leadership, Education & Athletics in Partnership Learning Power, Inc. Math Action Resource Institute Mi Casa Family Service & Educational Center New Welcome Baptist Church OPMAD Public Libraries San Juan Tutorial Program Southend Knightriders	1199 Training and Upgrading Fund AI Prince Technical School Capital Community College Manchester Comm. College Catholic Family Services Community Partners in Action Corrections Department Hartford Public Library House of Bread/ HOME Jubilee House Literacy Volunteers (Enfield) Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford Literacy Volunteers of New Britain/Bristol Literacy Volunteers River East New England Farmworkers Program Public School Adult Education Read To Succeed Trust House Family Learning Center Tunxis Community College Urban League of Greater Hartford	1199 Training and Upgrading Fund Co-opportunity CREC/Transition to Employment CT Puerto Rican Forum

Data collected during the CLEAR Initiative has provided this snapshot of the literacy services offered in the region as of January 2003.

I. The Delivery of Literacy Services

A wide variety of organizations provide literacy services in our region. Some providers offer literacy services only, while others offer literacy as just one aspect of their service offerings. All are important components of the continuum of literacy services that exists in Greater Hartford today.

Publicly funded literacy services for children and adults in the state are provided by schools and other agencies. Non-profit organizations also play an important role in providing literacy services for children and adults. Some businesses provide remedial basic education services, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and specialized services like workforce training programs.

Literacy-related services include:

- Special and remedial education activities provided in school contexts.
- Federally mandated, adult basic education (ABE) courses include basic language arts and mathematics, English as a Second Language (ESL), citizenship classes and high school completion classes including GED preparation.
- Tutoring, homework assistance, and more formalized literacy instruction for children in childcare and after-school programs.
- Literacy instruction for adults in a variety of community settings and programs.
- ABE offered through Connecticut correctional facilities.
- Remedial language arts and mathematics courses are increasingly being offered by colleges, universities, and particularly community colleges.
- An array of sporadic literacy or literacy-related motivational activities such as read aloud events, reading marathons, etc.



II. Funding Analysis

The Literacy Council has been analyzing federal, state, local government and private sources of funding for literacy services in order to enhance funding, encourage collaborations, and determine how Greater Hartford can receive its fair share of funding for literacy services. A separate report based on this funding analysis will be released later in 2003. The following summary provides an overview of how literacy services are funded and the opportunities for new funding streams.

Historically, the literacy needs of pre-school age children, out of school youth, and adults have not received adequate resources. An under-funded system, particularly for adult and remedial services, is a major contributing factor to the low literacy levels we face today. The funding pie cannot be split any further, stakeholders are already receiving too small a share to effectively address service needs. Priorities must be shifted and funding must increase in order to support the development of meaningful, systemic change.

The current funding situation is particularly volatile because of local and state deficits, a weak market affecting private foundations, and pending changes in federal allocations resulting from the No Child Left Behind legislation and reauthorization this year of TANF, WIA and IDEA (See the Legislative Trends section).

Government-related Funding

The largest source of funding for local school districts is from municipal property taxes. This reliance on local property taxes poses several challenges to providing equitable services for all

children, regardless of income. Among the challenges are: 1) the size of the tax base varies from one town to the next, 2) the amount of local support will often determine the quality and quantity of services available in a particular area, and 3) both funding and services are particularly vulnerable to changing political and economic environments.

Funding from state and federal sources supports a varied offering of entitlement and grant programs in addition to general education. The majority of these funds are distributed to and managed by local school districts, with a small portion going to nonprofit agencies.

Local government support can be in the form of direct funding or flow-through dollars from the state or federal government. There is also some local support for Head Start programs, and some small grants to providers through the Community Development Block Grants (federal money with allocation decisions made locally).

While securing and managing government money is daunting to many nonprofit directors and fundraisers, many larger nonprofit and academic organizations have been highly successful at responding to RFPs (requests for proposals) and securing state and federal contracts for services. The problem does not stem from lack of dollars, but from a lack of discretionary dollars available for smaller nonprofits that may not meet the criteria for contractual programs such as Head Start, Even Start, WIA, etc. Greater education and information distribution regarding state and federal funding is necessary in order to increase access to these monies.

Private Funding

Because there is no single listing of private dollars supporting literacy programming in this region, it is difficult to accurately obtain the amount actually spent on literacy services. Funders generally combine literacy grants in their grant summaries, and programs may use staff, facilities and supplies for multiple purposes. Some smaller agencies may receive significant funding from individual donors, however it is difficult to identify and quantify these gifts.

The current level of adult literacy funding is significantly less than is needed. Existing programs are struggling to meet the current need, and only an estimated 10% of those in need of ABE services are currently receiving them (National Institute for Literacy). Program areas such as ESL and GED are often thought to be amply supported through state and federal programs, but in reality, funding levels do not meet the need.

Key Areas of Opportunity

By far the most significant, under-utilized funding sources by providers in the region are regional and national foundations that focus on literacy and education issues. Very few grants from out-of-state foundations were identified, and none of the providers interviewed have researched or applied for these grants.

There are dozens of foundations that fund literacy programs and whose geographic focus includes Greater Hartford. These foundations are easily identified, highly competitive, and generally do not support operating expenses or ongoing programming. Access to these funds will require



a willingness among all providers to think more creatively about services, collaborate to enhance services, and to develop model programming and strategies to improve literacy services in the area. The Greater Hartford region has sought only limited national foundation funding, and has yet to develop the kinds of collaborative efforts that would attract it.

Legislative Trends

These are trying times for organizations that rely on federal and state funding. Both the Workforce Investment Act and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program face reauthorization by Congress in 2003. In the current tight federal economic situation, many are concerned that spending cuts and changes to these programs will result in reduced funding for education and literacy services. Re-authorization discussions are emphasizing a quicker transition to employment with less support and training. This has significant implications for literacy services.

With the vast majority of states, including Connecticut, facing substantial deficits, many are moving to cut millions from public school budgets and other education funding streams. Even where federal funding remains intact, many states will not be able to produce the mandatory matching funds required to maintain federal funding levels. Additionally, federal proposals are expected to focus on consolidation, rather than supporting a variety of individual programs.

The Literacy Council website contains a list of major legislation that will have an impact on literacy services, and offers information about relevant policy issues.

A Look at the Region

Hartford, with the largest population, is the urban center of the Greater Hartford region. However, because of the relationship between communities and the mobility of residents, it is most effective to view the area as a whole when considering common issues. The region, as defined by the Literacy Council's service area, includes the cities of Hartford and New Britain, and 33 of the towns and cities surrounding them. Although they may not always view themselves as a cohesive region, all of these towns and cities experience many of the same issues. Low literacy and its impact on the economy, educational attainment and workforce development are key issues facing the entire region.

Suburban towns are dealing with several challenges posed by social and economic issues and an influx of non-native speakers of English to the region. Census figures demonstrate that the population has shifted somewhat from urban to suburban areas. Many suburban towns do not have the funds or infrastructure to fully address the complex issues and needs of their constituents on their own.

Collaborative efforts that strengthen the connection between municipalities and various regional initiatives and services are needed to effectively address these issues of regional concern.

	Hartford	Bloomfield	East Hartford	New Britain	Wethersfield	Windsor
Population	121,578	19,587	49,575	71,538	22,428	12,043
% of Adult Population Below Level 3 Literacy (NALS)	73%	49%	44%	56%	40%	41%
Avg. Unemployment Rate (CT DOL 3/2003)	10.5%	5.8%	7.2%	8.5%	4.8%	5.7%
% of Population in Poverty (U.S. Census)	29%	7%	10%	16%	4%	4%
% of Population Speaking English Less than Very Well (U.S. Census)	22%	3%	11%	20%	9%	4%
High School Dropout Rate in 2001 (SDE)	23%	7%	16%	27%	8%	11%
Percent of 10th Grade Students Below State Goal on Connecticut Academic Performance Test in Reading (SDE)	91%	80%	76%	81%	43%	68%

This chart provides an overview of social and educational data for some of the towns and cities in the region. It is interesting to note that many issues of concern are truly regional issues as they transcend the boundaries of cities and towns.



Roughly 41% of the adults in the region, or approximately 300,000 Greater Hartford adults are functioning at levels one and two literacy, below the skill level needed to succeed in today's economy and society. This is the same as the state's average, and slightly lower than the national average of 49%.

Particular Challenges for Hartford and New Britain

All cities need a literate, competitive workforce and engaged citizens to be vibrant communities where people want to live, work and raise their families, and where businesses choose to locate. The cities of Hartford and New Britain have richly diverse

histories and populations and many dedicated stakeholders. However, these cities face several particular challenges.

In Hartford, 73% or roughly 70,000 adults have literacy skills below the level needed to function in today's economy and society. The US Census for 2000 indicates that 29% of Hartford residents live in poverty (as defined by the federal government). The rate of child poverty in Hartford is 41%, the second highest in the country among cities with 100,000 or more residents. Poverty in Hartford disproportionately affects young people, who represent a higher percentage of the city's population than in contiguous communities.

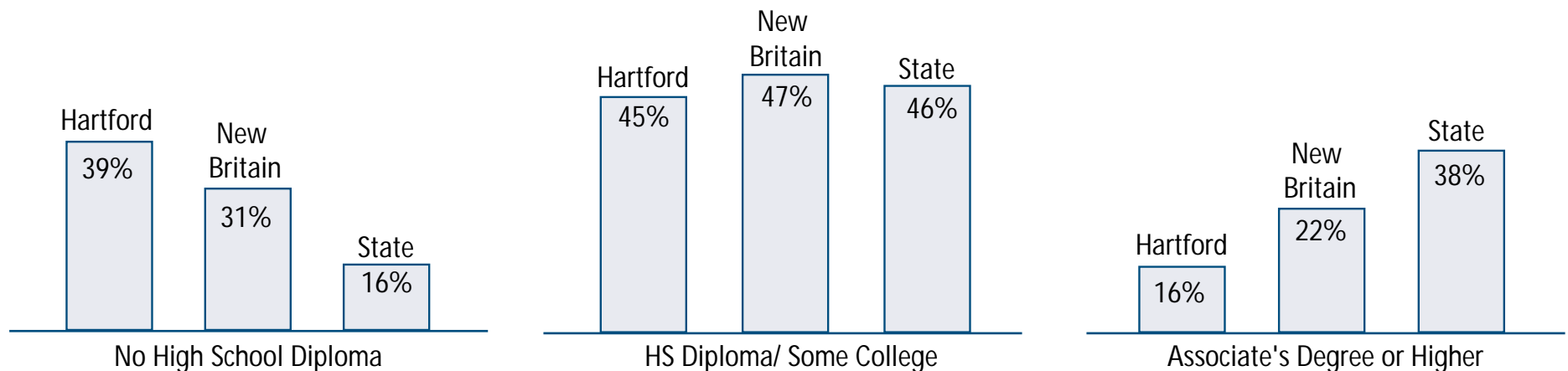
It is estimated that 56% of New Britain's adults function at literacy levels one or two, and would have trouble being competitive in the workforce. About 16% of New Britain's residents meet the federal guidelines for living in poverty.

Unemployment in both Hartford and New Britain is higher than national and regional figures, with Hartford at 10.5%, and New Britain at 8.5%. The unemployment rate for Hartford's 16-24 year olds is higher still, exceeding 14.5% (Mayor's Task Force on Hartford's Future Workforce 2003).

In Hartford, 57% of school students come from a home where English is not the predominant language spoken. In New Britain the figure is 67%. The language most often spoken at home in Hartford, other than English, is Spanish; in New Britain it is Polish (CT SDE 2001).

Educational Attainment: Adults Age 25 and Over

Source: Capital Region Workforce Development Board



These educational attainment figures paint a rather bleak picture of the ability of the current system of literacy services to prepare and engage people for success. The picture takes on an even more ominous tone when you consider that not all of those who receive a high school diploma are reading at a high school level

(GHLC Child, Youth, Adult and Family Task Force and Workforce Literacy Task Force).



Designing an Unprecedented, Inclusive Process

The Greater Hartford Literacy Council has completed the first phase of the CLEAR Initiative to address a critical issue and bring about significant, systemic change. The CLEAR Initiative is the first major regional look at literacy issues from birth through adulthood in the Greater Hartford region. An extensive base of knowledge and data was created with the input of experts involved in the delivery of literacy and related services.

In recognition of the far-reaching impact of literacy issues, the Literacy Council convened task forces to examine five areas where literacy becomes critical. With the assistance of experts from various fields, the task forces considered literacy needs and made recommendations for improved services.

Workforce Literacy: Efforts to improve the skill levels of the region's workforce involving workforce preparation and literacy skills attainment.

Family Literacy: Offering literacy or pre-literacy education for children and literacy training for parents or caregivers of children in a program and promoting the literacy of both parents and children as learning teams.

Health Literacy: Defined as the ability of individuals to obtain, interpret, and understand basic health information and services and to use the information and services to enhance health.

Literacy Needs of Non-native Speakers of English: Language acquisition, literacy levels, cultural differences and the complex issues non-native English speakers face require particular attention.

Literacy Needs of Individuals with Disabilities: Learners with disabilities have a physical, mental, or emotional impairment that may hinder their ability to learn.

Two other important areas of literacy skills were also identified:

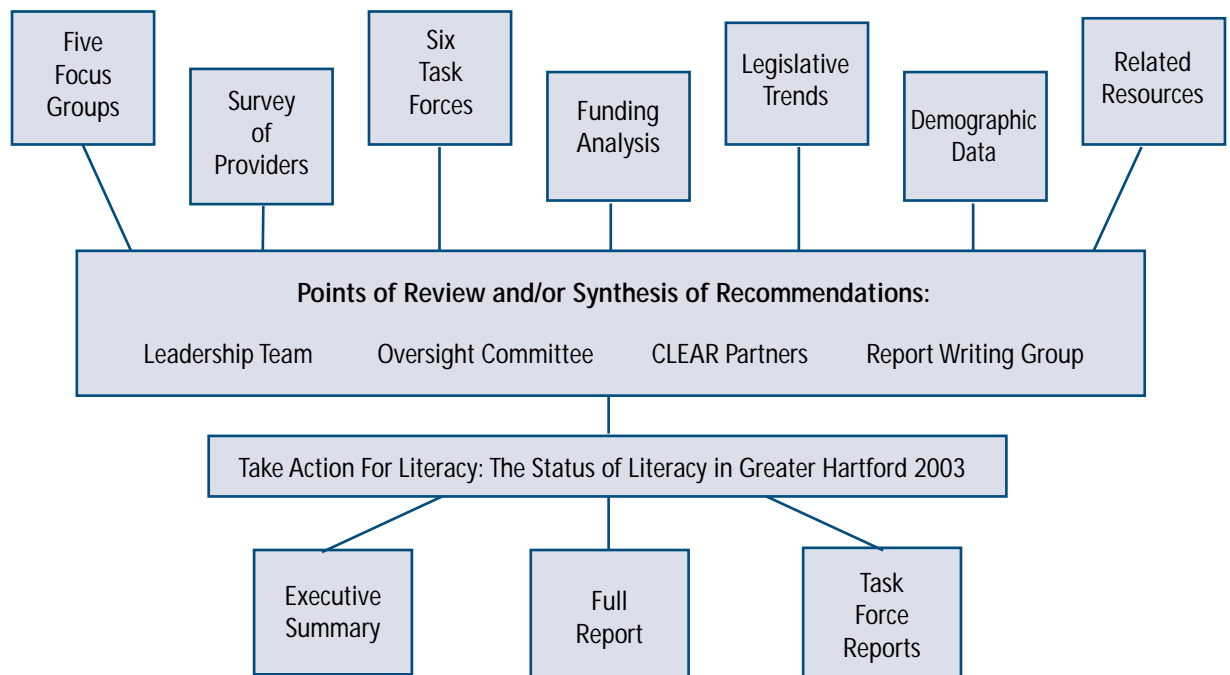
Financial Literacy: The ability of individuals to manage personal resources sufficiently to acquire housing, gain employment, live independently and spend and save wisely. Many banking institutions are supporting this type of program.

Computer/Technical Literacy: Proficiency in the use of computers and technology are skills that will help achieve a higher level of employment, and is a

rapidly growing area. Funding is beginning to flow from public and private sources, primarily from foundations of high-tech companies and their founders.

The results of issue-oriented task forces, focus groups with learners and other literacy stakeholders, a survey of literacy providers, a funding analysis, census, administrative and survey data research, and legislative research all contributed to the findings and recommendations of this initiative. Providers and services from government, non-profit and private literacy programs for children, youth, adults, and families were included. A detailed methodology and the task force reports are available on the Literacy Council website www.greaterhartfordreads.org.

Phase One of the CLEAR Initiative: Methodology





A Comprehensive Look at the Results

The first phase of the Initiative has provided information on the literacy landscape for Greater Hartford and helped to identify the challenges the region faces, including:

- Number of organizations providing literacy services
- Number and characteristics of individuals being served
- Resources used for literacy services
- Existing and potential funding streams for literacy services
- Major issues for literacy providers
- Major issues for key stakeholders
- Roles and activities literacy stakeholders want the Literacy Council to address

The second phase of the CLEAR Initiative has yet to be fully funded, but the intention is to address the recommendations included in this report, and specifically work to:

1. Identify local, state and national promising practices
2. Develop quality service standards and performance measures for literacy services
3. Coordinate and/or provide technical assistance and support for literacy providers as they implement the standards
4. Develop pilot projects
5. Enhance public awareness and advocacy efforts to bring about policy and funding reforms

The divide between the haves and the have-nots in Connecticut continues to grow. We can no longer continue to use the same processes to address increasingly complex social issues. *The time has come for all stakeholders to identify their role and commit to working together to improve literacy levels.* The following recommendations and findings will serve as a guide to such action.

Overview of the Recommendations

Focus Area #1: System Coordination

1. The State of Connecticut should adopt an integrated, cross-discipline approach to planning, delivering, and funding literacy services from birth through adulthood.
2. Public, private, and nonprofit providers of literacy services from birth through adulthood should coordinate their services to improve effectiveness and reduce duplication.
3. Municipalities in the region should be engaged in literacy enhancement and connected to regional initiatives.
4. A "coalition of coalitions" should be formed among anti-poverty, health and human services, education and workforce development organizations/organizing bodies to streamline coordination and identify shared goals.
5. The capacity of the Literacy Council should be enhanced to effectively coordinate the literacy agenda.

Focus Area #2: Service Delivery and Capacity

1. All literacy providers should work to develop quality service standards that are based on the needs of the learner.

2. To maximize effectiveness, literacy services should be offered in the context of employment and other real-life situations.
3. Providers of literacy services for children and/or adults should implement a family approach to literacy services whenever feasible.
4. The screening and referral of potential learners and volunteers should be more comprehensive and effective.
5. The State Department of Education and local education agencies should broaden the scope of their efforts to build the capacity of the birth through adulthood education systems.

Focus Area #3: Public Awareness and Advocacy

1. Public awareness should be raised regarding the scope of the low literacy problem, its many ramifications, the availability of services, and the value of life-long learning.
2. Advocacy efforts should be further developed and coordinated to implement the Take Action for Literacy recommendations and influence literacy-related public policy and services.

Focus Area #4: Funding for Literacy

1. Government funding for literacy should be redirected and/or increased to provide adequate, stable sources of support for literacy services.
2. A Literacy Fund for Greater Hartford should be created to support the innovation and development of effective services.
3. Funders of literacy services should play a key role in supporting capacity building and service enhancements leading to increased accountability.



Focus Area #1: System Coordination

This Focus Area addresses the importance of a coordinated approach to literacy services and acknowledges that most literacy services are provided within the context of one or more larger systems of services. Further, it examines the extent to which joint planning, coordination and collaboration exist among stakeholders. Stakeholders report that literacy programs and systems are fragmented and disjointed, and that closely aligned programs and initiatives would be more effective. The development of new venues for integrated communication and planning is a major challenge.

Key Issues and Findings

Literacy must be addressed comprehensively, as a vital issue with implications for every aspect of life. To achieve this goal, the systems and organizations that deliver literacy services will have to change from stand-alone to fully networked systems.

The current approach to the delivery of literacy services in Greater Hartford is fragmented and too often driven by either the pursuit of funding, or changes necessitated by a lack of funding, rather than a comprehensive plan to meet the needs of learners. There is a lack of coordination between the activities and services of government-funded services, non-profit organizations, and other privately funded organizations and groups (Workforce Literacy Task Force). An organization's ability to collaborate is often impeded by staffing and funding constraints.

These limitations have a negative impact on the ability of service providers to address literacy needs in the region in a comprehensive manner.

Research studies and findings of five literacy task forces concur that low literacy skills are related to crime, poverty, welfare, workforce productivity, access to health care, civic participation, and educational attainment. Much of the planning for interventions to address these issues occurs independently, with minimal information sharing between disciplines (Child, Youth, Adult and Family Literacy Task Force). Yet, multiple providers of services share common goals and are serving some of the same populations.

The government, private foundations and other funders of literacy services are interested in funding programs that can demonstrate: 1) higher levels of accountability for results, and 2) evidence of collaboration with other programs. Providers and other stakeholders often view collaboration and service delivery enhancement as worthy goals, but feel they have neither the time nor the resources to do either. These challenges create a difficult dilemma for many service providers struggling to sustain their programs with limited staff and funding (2003 GHLC Survey). The expectation of enhanced accountability for results must first be met with additional resources to support capacity building.

Although there are important examples of coordination on specific literacy issues, (e.g. financial, family, and health literacy, and preparation of children for school, etc.) nearly 60% of surveyed literacy providers report they would like to have

partnerships that do not currently exist with other organizations (2003 GHLC Survey). On the whole, the systems and organizations that deliver literacy services are lacking the coordination and driving force needed to create and sustain the type of systemic change that will lead to full literacy for all.

Impact on the Region

Planning for and providing services in near isolation is an all too common occurrence among many programs, agencies, policymakers and other stakeholders in the region. This lack of integration and coordination has led the region to the current situation, characterized by:

- A significant number of people with low literacy skills across the state, region and locally.
- People in need of services, service providers, and other policymakers unable to identify significant, basic information such as who is providing services, how many are served, what are the costs, and how effective are the services.
- Financial, physical, and human resources that are not shared or utilized to their fullest potential.
- A growing disparity between the services available in urban, suburban and rural areas.
- Significant variety in the quality and effectiveness of services.
- Not enough funding to sustain basic services.
- Missed opportunities to attract national and regional funding.



By aligning initiatives and integrating planning efforts, the Workforce Literacy, and the Child, Youth, Adult and Family Literacy Task Forces suggest:

1. The service delivery system will become more efficient and effective
2. Access to services for those in need will be streamlined
3. Outcomes for participants in all programs will be improved
4. Resources will be leveraged and maximized

“We need seamless collaboration among all education, social service, corrections, and workforce agencies. (We need) less competition among the agencies with the realization that each agency represents a unique opportunity for people and all of these offerings can help raise literacy.”

Kathy Shaw
Trust House: A Family Learning Center

Recommendations and Action Steps

Recommendation #1: The State of Connecticut should adopt an integrated, cross-discipline approach to planning, delivering, and funding literacy services from birth through adulthood

An integrated and coordinated approach to literacy services is needed across state departments to create the systemic change that will improve service delivery and learner outcomes statewide. Improved coordination of services is also needed to narrow gaps in learner outcomes for minority and low-income children and adults. While steps have been taken in these directions, much work needs to be done to truly align efforts that will yield improved results.

The call to action is for the state [Office of Policy and Management](#) to provide the coordination needed to create an inventory of literacy services and assist with the integration of existing literacy services and initiatives across all state departments.

The call to action is for the [state legislature](#) to support the formation of a state-level task force on literacy to:

- Develop a regional identification of literacy priorities and needs
- Create a joint process to plan for service delivery and funding
- Consider pilot projects involving the coordination and integration of services

Task force members should include state and local government departments and regional community-based organizations involved with developing policy and planning for literacy related services in such areas as health, labor, social services, education and criminal justice.

Role of the Literacy Council:

- Advocate with the legislature for literacy interests and employ a lobbyist as needed to assist with advocacy.
- Assist the Office of Policy and Management in efforts to identify the services and provide the coordination needed.

Recommendation #2: Public, private, and nonprofit providers of literacy services from birth through adulthood should coordinate their services to improve effectiveness and reduce duplication

The call to action is for the [State Department of Education](#) to take the lead in efforts to align publicly funded, non-profit, and other privately funded literacy programs. As the largest provider of literacy services in the region, the State Department of Education is well positioned to accomplish this objective. The alignment of services would move stakeholders toward coordinated planning, service delivery and funding opportunities for enhancing literacy services.

The [State Department of Education](#) could achieve program alignment by offering incentives to help programs overcome some of the obstacles of interagency coordination, such as funding and staffing shortages. Incentives could include:



- 1) Funding for pilot projects that demonstrate collaboration and alignment, use research-based methods, and provide sufficient accountability for results.
- 2) Offering technical assistance services for educators and community literacy programs that focus specifically on capacity building efforts.
- 3) Improve coordination between state-funded adult education departments and other providers of adult basic education services by providing the funding needed for full-time staff within local adult education departments.

The call to action is for the [Office of the State Treasurer](#) to continue to 1) partner with regional and local organizations to implement financial literacy initiatives, and 2) closely align planning for services with the Literacy Council and other regional literacy organizations. The State Treasurer could continue to set the pace for literacy enhancement by taking a leadership role in coordinating literacy initiatives.

The [Leadership Team of the Literacy Council](#) (City of Hartford, Hartford Public Schools, Capital Region Workforce Development Board, Hartford Public Library) has agreed to take measures to coordinate planning, service delivery and funding opportunities between their programs. Pilot projects will be developed to determine the most effective approaches to meet these goals.

The call to action is for the [Capitol Region Education Council](#) to enhance its partnership with the Literacy Council by assisting with the Literacy Council's efforts to coordinate with local school districts and regional literacy services.

The call to action is for [community-based providers of literacy services](#) to actively seek opportunities for collaboration and/or coordination with the Literacy Council, other non-profits, corporations, publicly funded agencies, and providers of human services.

While staffing and funding limitations often make collaboration a challenge, the results will help to:

- Minimize duplication of services
- Improve referrals between programs
- Coordinate planning for common services and/or populations
- Identify opportunities for sharing resources and leveraging funding

The call to action is for [corporations, businesses, civic groups, and other private enterprises](#) to continue to rise to the challenge of supporting and enhancing literacy services in the region by:

- Coordinating their efforts with the Literacy Council and others to reduce duplication and maximize impact.
- Seeking out opportunities to support literacy enhancement and literacy providers through:
 - Funding
 - Technical assistance with organizational capacity building
 - Volunteers to serve on boards of directors and in other capacities

Role of the Literacy Council:

- Coordinating entity and clearinghouse for literacy services and data in the region and expand its role in local and national research and data gathering.
- Coordinate technical support, and track and inform local, regional and state initiatives.

- Continue to play an important role in connecting organizations, coordinating initiatives and reducing the duplication of effort that detracts from meaningful literacy enhancements.

Recommendation #3: Municipalities in the region should be engaged in literacy enhancement and connected to regional initiatives

The [Capitol Region Council of Governments \(CRCOG\)](#) has agreed to continue to work with the Literacy Council to address issues related to the disparity of resources and services between larger cities and smaller towns in the region as they relate to literacy. CRCOG will serve as an access point between the Literacy Council and municipalities.

The call to action is for [municipalities](#) to:

1. Identify a literacy liaison to the Literacy Council who will receive and disseminate information, identify local, literacy-related issues, and connect with regional initiatives.
2. Create literacy teams that will mirror the interdisciplinary approach of the state-level interdepartmental task force. They will raise awareness and facilitate access to and planning for services.
3. For those administering Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, consider increasing the percentage of funds allocated for literacy services.



Role of the Literacy Council:

- Provide technical assistance to the municipalities to support and develop the literacy teams.
- Inform the process of enhancing literacy in each community by offering presentations containing literacy-related statistics and local data.
- Aid in local planning by preparing a Hartford municipal literacy report including information specific to each of Hartford's neighborhoods as well as the city as a whole.

Recommendation #4: A "coalition of coalitions" should be formed among anti-poverty, human services, education and workforce development organizations/organizing bodies to streamline coordination and identify shared goals

The call to action is for regional coalitions and initiatives from various health and human services disciplines to come together to form a "coalition of coalitions". The focus of this group would be to improve coordination and streamline areas of mutual concern, such as funding, advocacy, public awareness, and access to services.

This call to action includes coalitions, councils, organizing bodies, and planners for public, private, regional, and local services of all types. The focus areas of anti-poverty, human services, and workforce development must be included in these coordinating efforts, as must those organizations concerned with substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health, services for people with disabilities,

and crime prevention/corrections. Literacy-related task forces, councils, and initiatives addressing children, youth, adults, and seniors should also participate.

Role of the Literacy Council:

- Seek partnerships with other coordinating agencies to convene this "coalition of coalitions." The focus of the group will be to develop an action plan aimed at improving coordination among organizations.

Recommendation #5: The capacity of the Literacy Council should be enhanced to effectively coordinate the literacy agenda

Success in adequately addressing the literacy needs of Greater Hartford residents demands more effective coordination than exists today. It requires an overarching structure to coordinate all stakeholders, and offer leadership that will keep the spectrum of efforts focused on common goals. Many organizations – each with their own resources, accountabilities, mandates and constituencies – bear different levels of responsibility for addressing low literacy. However, the scope of the present challenge exceeds the capacity of any one of these organizations.

With a staff of only four, the Literacy Council's ability to address the breadth of literacy issues is limited. More resources are needed to strengthen the Literacy Council's position as a strong voice for literacy and a regional center for literacy information, coordination, and advocacy.

The call to action is for key stakeholders, including, state and local governments, foundations, corporations, civic groups, and other organizations, to each take a part in ensuring that these challenges will be met by building the capacity of the Literacy Council. In addition to funding, the Literacy Council needs loaned staff for specific six, nine, or twelve-month projects:

- Development of a public awareness campaign for literacy.
- Development of a literacy fund to support service providers in the region and the Literacy Council.
- Technical assistance for capacity building of literacy providers.
- Development of the municipal literacy teams, the "coalition of coalitions," the clearinghouse of data and information about literacy services, and other related projects.





Focus Area #2: Service Delivery and Capacity

This focus area examines the issues that most directly affect learners, potential learners, and providers of literacy services. These issues are addressed as they relate to the provision of literacy services and the capacity of service providers. To fully understand the challenges involved in the provision of literacy services, this section addresses service delivery from the perspective of both the learner and the service provider.

Key Issues and Findings

The Challenges Learners Face

Greater Hartford residents in need of literacy services for themselves or their children face a number of daunting challenges. All too often, these challenges become major barriers to seeking or successfully completing literacy programs.

Identification and assessment of learning styles and literacy needs combined with placement in appropriate, effective classes or programs are truly key ingredients to success for learners of all ages (Learners with Disabilities Task Force). All too often people are not adequately assessed or appropriately placed in literacy services. Nearly 15% of surveyed providers do not conduct an assessment of learners' literacy levels. Of those who do assessments, only 57% report assessing prior to, during and at the end of services (2003 GHLC Survey). Learners with a wide range of abilities are often placed together in one class. This can slow down the progress of all participants

and does not help those who cannot keep up. When literacy needs are not adequately assessed, learners can spend months or years in services that result in minimal gains in literacy levels. In addition, transitioning from one component of educational services to the next may be difficult as there is little or no continuity of services from youth to adulthood.

According to the Learners with Disabilities Task Force, the quality of services and training of teachers varies greatly from school to school and program to program. Learning difficulties may be diagnosed late or incorrectly – or not at all. Problems accumulate for those learners who do not receive appropriate intervention.

1) Challenges for Children and Their Parents

The Child, Youth, Adult, and Family Literacy Task Force results concur with research indicating that children who are adequately prepared for kindergarten, with sound pre-literacy skills (e.g. recognizing and naming alphabet letters and their sounds) will be more successful in learning to read. Before they can read, write, or calculate, children must acquire the rudimentary skills that serve as steppingstones toward mastery of the more advanced and complex skills.

For this reason, early identification, screening, assessment, and placement are key factors for success in attaining and improving literacy skills for children. Assessment for learning difficulties, and referral for appropriate interventions, for all children must begin at the pre-school and kindergarten levels to yield the most effective results (Learners with Disabilities Task Force).

The success of children in need of services for English for Speakers of Other Languages, is especially reliant upon early identification of needs and appropriate placement in services. These children would benefit most from an assessment of their ESOL needs prior to October 1 of each year. Delays in assessment and placement only compound the challenges these learners face (Literacy Needs of Non-Native Speakers of English Task Force).

Many parents are unaware of their child's need for or rights to special services, or the availability of those services. Three of the literacy task forces noted that the process of accessing special education and other assessment services through the public school system is often complicated and difficult for parents to navigate. Parents who themselves have low literacy skills or speak limited English have particular difficulties advocating for their children with special needs.

2) Challenges for High School-aged Youth

Millions of high school youth across the nation are currently reading at very low levels. The Child, Youth, Adult, and Family Literacy Task Force noted that without the reading skills they need to comprehend and apply the information obtained from text, these students are unable to fully participate and succeed in their classes and, far too often, fail or drop out of school. Even if they graduate, many students find that their difficulties resurface at the post-secondary level and in the workplace.

Nationally, as well as in Connecticut, the focus of recent legislation such as WIA and TANF have involved an emphasis on employment rather than



education for youth and adults. This situation often creates workers able to qualify only for minimum wage jobs with limited opportunities for advancement and self-sufficiency. To strengthen the workforce, reduce poverty levels, and create stronger communities, the focus must shift to education and the literacy skills that lead to employment at a livable wage (Workforce Literacy and the Child, Youth, Adult, and Family Literacy Task Forces).

3) Challenges for Adults

Assessment of literacy needs combined with placement in appropriate classes or programs are among the key ingredients to success for adult learners (Learners with Disabilities and Child, Youth, Adult, and Family Literacy Task Forces). Many adults working to improve their literacy skills are also working one or more jobs to support themselves and their families. According to focus group participants, support services, such as transportation and childcare, are vital to the retention of adult learners and are not generally provided in conjunction with literacy services. Adult literacy classes offered in the evening and on the weekend, and at job-sites, would also improve retention and success rates for learners.

The task forces, focus groups and survey results indicate additional challenges for adults and learners of all ages. These are summarized in the Service Delivery Concerns chart.

Most often, people in the region find out about literacy services through word of mouth referrals from family and friends. They also may be referred to literacy services by a variety of government-funded organizations, non-profit organizations, businesses, and others (GHLC Focus Groups and Provider Survey).

Service Delivery Concerns

The service components listed below are among the key ingredients of effective service delivery. The extent to which each component is available and the manner in which services are provided varies by provider, school, service, etc. The chart below provides an overview of the shortcomings of the current service delivery system when viewed as a whole, and the negative impact these shortcomings have on learners of all ages.

Service Components	Shortcomings of the System	Impact on Learners
<p>Referral to services</p> <p>Screening for literacy needs</p> <p>Assessment for literacy levels, learning disabilities or learning difficulties</p> <p>Placement in appropriate services based on assessment results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No central system for literacy referrals ▪ Specific information regarding literacy services not frequently updated ▪ Parents unaware of services for children ▪ Many learners and providers unaware of services ▪ No standardized or uniform screening process ▪ Different assessment tools with differing levels of effectiveness ▪ Limited or no early identification of learning disabilities ▪ No coordinated entry point or processes ▪ Placement options for effective services are limited, waiting lists are common 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Often receive inaccurate referral information ▪ Difficulty finding appropriate services ▪ May build up the courage to seek help, but don't know how to find services ▪ Difficulty accessing services adds to the frustration and isolation the learner feels ▪ Learners may be placed in services that don't meet their needs ▪ Learning disabilities not always identified – these learners may be destined for failure as a result
<p>Curricula that are research-based and proven effective</p> <p>Instruction – sufficient duration and intensity of services, delivered in the appropriate instructional setting (1:1, small group, etc.) to achieve desired results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not consistently producing measurable improvements in literacy skills for all ▪ Not based on workplace or other real-life learning needs ▪ May not match the needs of the learner ▪ Class sizes may be too large ▪ 1:1 and/or small group settings not primary means of providing services ▪ Mixed abilities of students in classes ▪ Services lack intensity and structure ▪ Services mostly available only during daytime ▪ Progress not consistently evaluated ▪ Student progress data not always available to alter interventions and improve success rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low learner gains ▪ Students drop out ▪ High teacher burnout ▪ Ineffective methods reinforce low self-esteem of learners ▪ Difficult finding services that fit into work schedule ▪ Learners may have other social service or workforce training needs – may be involved in several programs at once ▪ Frustration builds as educational needs are not met and progress is not made
<p>Evaluation of learner progress at frequent intervals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many teachers not trained in effective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Methods of reading instruction ▪ Identification of learning disabilities ▪ Many special education teachers not adequately trained ▪ Many teachers in adult education programs are part-time, with low wages and high turnover rates ▪ Volunteer training and supervision varies by provider and may often be less than adequate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May spend months or years in services that don't result in significantly higher literacy levels ▪ Learners' misconception that they are not capable of learning is reinforced
<p>Qualified teaching staff and volunteer tutors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many teachers not trained in effective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Methods of reading instruction ▪ Identification of learning disabilities ▪ Many special education teachers not adequately trained ▪ Many teachers in adult education programs are part-time, with low wages and high turnover rates ▪ Volunteer training and supervision varies by provider and may often be less than adequate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May spend months or years in services that don't result in significantly higher literacy levels ▪ Learners' misconception that they are not capable of learning is reinforced



The Challenges Service Providers Face

Providers of literacy services in Greater Hartford are working hard to raise literacy rates and deliver quality services. But the system of literacy services, especially literacy services for adults, has been under-funded, under-staffed and unable to keep up with a demand for services that is growing and becoming more complex.

A wide range of literacy providers face the following challenges:

Service Delivery Issues:

- Difficulty making referrals
 - 32% of surveyed providers report not knowing about other programs - services, contact persons, eligibility requirements, waiting list status, etc. (2003 GHLC Survey)
- Lengthy waiting lists for many services
 - 34% of surveyed providers report a waiting list for at least one of their literacy services (2003 GHLC Survey)
- Teaching methods used may not result in significant learner gains
- Limited outreach abilities mean potential learners may not know of their services
- May experience high drop out rates
- Learners in the same class may be at drastically different literacy levels

Staffing Issues:

- Staff and volunteer skill levels may just meet or fall below minimum requirements
 - 27% of providers report that they are not able to provide staff and volunteers with adequate training opportunities. The most common barriers to providing such training were scheduling (82%) and cost (64%) (2003 GHLC Survey)

- Many educators are not specifically trained in effective methods of reading instruction or early identification of learning disabilities
 - 28% of surveyed providers report having some staff that do not meet all of the minimum qualifications for their positions (2003 GHLC Survey)
- Staff turnover is high
- Recruiting staff is difficult
 - Surveyed providers report that the biggest challenges they face in hiring and retaining competent staff are 1) low salaries that are not competitive with school districts, 2) difficulty filling part-time positions, 3) not enough qualified applicants, and 4) difficulty recruiting minorities (2003 GHLC Survey)
- Limited or no staff for public awareness, advocacy or fund development
- Reliance on volunteer tutors may result in issues with consistency and skill levels
 - 41% of surveyed providers use volunteers to provide direct services to learners (2003 GHLC Survey)

Limited Networking and Integration of Services:

- Not fully networked with essential support services or other providers
- Limited resource sharing with other providers or sponsoring organizations
- Lack of coordinated planning for services – system-wide and at the program level

Funding Issues:

- Programs are often significantly under-funded and under-staffed
- Providers often need to seek funding from multiple sources (often 10 or more) each year to meet their expenses
- Private and public funding sources are reducing their support
- Difficulty attracting regional or national funders

The number one reason for turning away potential students: Lack of space/slots in the program (2003 GHLC Survey)

The Solution: All learners in need of literacy services must:

- Be adequately referred, screened, assessed and placed in an appropriate, affordable, comprehensive program based on their literacy skills and needs.
- Receive the support services needed to enable them to complete the program.
- Receive instruction that is research-based, proven effective, structured and intensive, and is delivered within the context of their daily lives.
- Have their progress assessed at appropriate intervals during the course of the program.

All stakeholders working together to address these challenges can achieve significant improvement in literacy levels for children, youth and adults, and produce more effective parents, workers and citizens. The following recommendations provide an outline of the steps needed to build a more comprehensive, effective system of services.



In order to be fully supported, surveyed providers report needing:

- Additional funding for program expansion and administrative costs
- Predictable funding sources
- Qualified staff of all types: teaching, administrative, development
- Additional space for programming and for childcare
- Technology improvements
- Directories of resources and services
- Support from legislators and other public policymakers (2003 GHLC Survey)

“It’s important for teachers to recognize that everyone has a different way of learning, and that they need to use different ways of teaching to address each student’s unique needs. There is hope and a way to learn to read through techniques that work and are successful. There is a great need for volunteers involved in literacy programs to learn these teaching techniques.”

Nancy Ryszkiewicz
Read to Succeed Graduate

Recommendations and Action Steps

Recommendation #1: All literacy providers should work to develop quality service standards that are based on the needs of the learner

The Literacy Council has commissioned a promising practices search to be conducted by the Connecticut Policy and Economic Council. The search will identify local, regional, statewide, and national examples of literacy service delivery methods that are evidence-based and found to be effective.

The Literacy Council will convene a Quality Standards Work Group inviting literacy experts, literacy providers, funders of literacy services, other policymakers, advocates and learners to consider quality standards and performance measures and to develop a plan to implement them.

The standards for service delivery will include several service components, such as:

- Referral
- Screening, assessment, and placement
- Student tracking
- Recruitment and retention of students
- Curriculum, methodology, and program design
- Qualifications of staff and volunteers

The efforts of the Quality Standards Work Group will be aligned with pertinent, simultaneous activities being coordinated by the Literacy Council, including a) the state-level Interdepartmental Task Force on Literacy, and b) Literacy COUNTS, a national program of the National Alliance of Urban

Literacy Coalitions designed to assist communities in the development of performance measures for literacy services.

Public and community-based providers of literacy services currently operate with limited staff and funding. They often report program areas in need of strengthening, but do not have the human or financial resources to address them. The call to such groups is to involve learners and parents of learners as board members and advocates for services and to actively work with the Literacy Council to create networks, share their promising practices, and identify common needs and concerns.

The call to action is for the State Department of Education, the Capitol Region Education Council, area foundations, the United Way, and others to support literacy providers in their efforts to strengthen their organizations and implement the quality service standards. These organizations, in collaboration with the Literacy Council and literacy providers, should develop a coordinated array of technical assistance/capacity building services based on the quality service standards.

The Literacy Council’s Leadership Team (City of Hartford, Hartford Public Schools, Capital Region Workforce Development Board and the Hartford Public Library) will work with the Literacy Council to develop and identify funding for pilot projects that will support the quality standards development and implementation processes.



The call to action is for [human service providers](#), [literacy providers](#), [other community organizations](#), and [employers](#) to develop strategies to ensure that support services critical to learner recruitment and retention are offered to participants in literacy programs. Areas of focus would include:

- Transportation
- Childcare
- Vocational and other counseling
- Case management
- Translation services
- Other needed support services

Role of the Literacy Council:

- Coordinate the best practice search, the quality service standards development process, and convene the work group.
- Invite providers of technical assistance services to develop targeted services.
- Provide and/or coordinate technical assistance and supportive services to literacy providers that result in stronger services and a stronger service delivery network.
- Develop pilot projects, opportunities for collaborative funding proposals, and other means of support for implementation of the quality standards.

Recommendation #2: To maximize effectiveness, literacy services should be offered in the context of employment and other real-life situations

The call to action is for [public and community-based providers of literacy services](#) to maximize effectiveness

by providing literacy services in the context of employment and other real-life situations. Literacy services that are developed according to the needs of the learner will enhance learner retention and outcomes. Learning to read the terminology needed for a particular job or career area and learning to read the labels at the grocery store create the type of context so often missing from existing literacy services. Service providers are challenged to enhance their programs by 1) asking the learners they serve for the context areas that would be beneficial to them, 2) adjusting their curriculum and materials to meet the needs, and 3) ultimately planning and coordinating curricula with other programs/ organizations specializing in job training and daily life skills services.

The call to action is for the [Connecticut Business and Industry Association](#), [Capitol Region Partnership](#), [Capitol Region Council of Governments](#), [Capital Region Workforce Development Board](#), and others to take action to ensure the active participation of literacy providers in the planning and implementation of workforce training services. The combination of literacy services with job-skills training has been shown to yield higher gains for learners. Few literacy providers or employers offer this type of comprehensive grouping of services.

Role of the Literacy Council:

- Advocate for the funding and the provision of combined job training and literacy services.
- Support the efforts of stakeholders interested in collaborating by convening planning session(s).

Recommendation #3: Providers of literacy services for children and/or adults should implement a family approach to literacy services whenever feasible

The call to action is for [local and regional initiatives related to literacy for children and/or adults](#) to actively support a partnership among providers of services for children and for adults. The focus should be to encourage a family approach to literacy by coordinating efforts with the State's Family Literacy Initiative to offer workshops, networking sessions, technical assistance, and other means of encouraging a family approach to literacy.

Role of the Literacy Council:

- The Literacy Council will seek partners to convene this group.
- Work with the State Family Literacy Initiative to support and advocate for a family approach to literacy services.

Recommendation #4: The screening and referral of potential learners and volunteers should be more comprehensive and effective

The [Leadership Team](#) (City of Hartford, Hartford Public Schools, Capital Region Workforce Development Board, and Hartford Public Library) will identify sources of support needed for the development of streamlined, centralized access to literacy information, assessment and referral for children, youth, adults, and families.



The [Capital Region Workforce Development Board](#) will continue to support the Literacy Council's development of "literacy tool kits" and related staff training for their provider organizations. The tool kits include information about literacy, screening tools to identify a person in need of literacy services, a resource list, and other information to aid in the screening and referral process.

The call to action is for [Infoline of the United Way of Connecticut](#), [local libraries](#), the [Making Connections](#) program of the [Casey Foundation](#), and the [Literacy Council](#) to strengthen their information and referral services by exploring the feasibility of:

- More closely coordinating information and referral services.
- Developing a literacy help line (an augmentation of existing information and referral services).

The call to action is for [the United Way of the Capital Area](#), [the Retired Senior Volunteer Program](#), and [similar organizations](#) to come together to consider the development of a streamlined process for the recruitment, training, and effective use of volunteers for literacy programs and to coordinate these efforts with the Literacy Council and area literacy providers.

Role of the Literacy Council:

- Establish a clearinghouse of literacy-related data, best practice methods, available services and educational resources.
- Coordinate the implementation of a Greater Hartford Education Center for streamlined information, assessment and referral for all ages:

- Work to secure funding with the Leadership Team and other stakeholders.
- Plan for phased-in implementation activities.
- Although one central location is proposed, much of the information and many of the services would also be accessed at existing key satellite sites that currently provide other important services in the region.
- In cooperation with Infoline and area libraries, publish a series of easy to use directories for different types of literacy services to assist providers in making informed referrals of potential students.
 - Available in print and online.
 - Training to program staff regarding screening for literacy needs and how to effectively use the directories.
- Enhance the website to provide more research and statistical data, advocacy information, publicize members' events, and include a searchable database of literacy services in the region.

some aspects of the following, a coordinated, focused approach that involves alignment with community providers and initiatives is essential.

[Local education agencies \(LEA\)](#), including their boards of education, are necessary partners in considering the policy changes and strategies that will address quality improvement. There is much that these organizations are already doing to enhance the provision of literacy services in school systems and within communities. Their efforts need to be supported, coordinated and enhanced to better meet the needs in Greater Hartford.

Implementing the action steps below need not hinge on additional funding. While new funding would augment and accelerate the process of bringing about systemic change, a number of the action steps listed below call for policy changes that may require a combination of 1) redirecting or reallocating existing funds, and 2) a refocusing of priorities and direction for SDE and LEA offices and staff.

Recommendation #5: The State Department of Education and local education agencies should broaden the scope of their efforts to build the capacity of the birth through adulthood education systems

The call to action is for the [State Department of Education \(SDE\)](#) to continue its tradition of setting the pace for quality service delivery by taking the lead in enhancing the capacity and effectiveness of education services for learners of all ages. While there are state initiatives and policies addressing

When the full impact of policy shifts and coordination is evident, e.g., issues are prioritized, services are integrated and coordinated, and capacity building is underway, the SDE, local education agencies, the Literacy Council and others will be able to work together to leverage resources and attract new funding streams to Greater Hartford. Indeed, new funding streams could augment any redirected resources and help accomplish the objectives of coordination and integration in addition to funding enhanced services.



The call to action for the State Department of Education and LEAs:

1. Take the following steps to respond to the call for enhanced services in the No Child Left Behind Legislation

■ Streamline and coordinate the enhancement efforts of individual schools and school districts:

- Identify schools and adult education programs where students are making significant progress toward proficiency in competency areas.
- Share information about methods used at these schools and present them as models for other districts and schools.

■ Support the development of quality standards for literacy services:

- Provide staff to participate in and provide technical assistance to the Literacy Council's process of developing quality service standards.
- Provide the funds or other resources needed to implement the quality standards:
 - Offer specific, intensive technical assistance providers need to begin to implement enhancements.
 - Fund pilot projects to develop successful methods of implementation.

■ Prioritize prevention and early identification:

- Adopt a statewide policy focusing on prevention and early identification of reading and learning difficulties that would abolish the current "wait and fail" pattern.
- Establish a policy calling for the identification of all children who are

struggling with reading and those with learning difficulties prior to entry into third grade.

■ Develop and support effective instruction:

- Develop a statewide strategy for enhancing instructional quality in the areas of 1) identifying learning difficulties and struggling readers, and 2) using sound research-based practices for reading instruction and remediation. A multi-year effort should achieve the following outcomes:
 - Data providing community members and policymakers with information on instructional quality at the local level, in the district, and statewide.
 - A strategic action plan to address issues of instructional quality with specific outcome-based annual measures of progress.
 - Communities that are organized to support instructional quality reform efforts and advocate for local and state policy changes.
- Provide additional support to general education teachers at all grade levels through qualified, certified staff to meet the need for specialized reading instruction and intervention for learners struggling with reading.
- Provide additional special education teachers, trained in research-based methods, for all grade levels including adult basic education.
- Provide full and part-time educators with the competitive wages, benefits and the training they need to be effective in their jobs, and:
 - Ensure that professional development opportunities are of sufficient intensity and focus to make a real impact on teaching and learning.

- Provide all practitioners with training appropriate for the levels of students they teach.
 - Provide all staff with orientation in the areas of English for speakers of other languages, learning disabilities, evaluation and assessment methods, and increase the number of practitioners who receive intensive training in these areas.
 - Provide Early Childhood, Kindergarten, First and Second Grade teachers with additional training to identify children in need of further screening and services.
 - Enhance the capacity of vocational and alternative education programs to keep pace with enhancements in more mainstream education services.
 - Work with colleges of education in Connecticut to address how teaching competencies and certification requirements are developed and to ensure that these standards are based on the current research related to reading development and disorders.
- ### ■ Set the standard for data driven instruction and effective intervention:
- Mandate the use of currently available student data from CMT, CAPT and other aptitude and competency measures to develop and then implement an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for every student that is based on the student's abilities, instructional needs and learning style as indicated by the data. All schools should actively and effectively use this data to drive instruction, administer intensive supports to the child, frequently assess student progress, and



involve parents in planning for interventions that will lead to achievement.

- Establish an advisory group/task force to develop strategies to address the growing disparity between the reading proficiency levels of minority and non-minority students and between students in poverty and those living above poverty levels.
- Enhance the effectiveness and community outreach ability of Family Resource Centers and other school-based initiatives by providing additional staffing that will enhance their response to different cultures and languages and related community needs/issues.
- Develop a policy encouraging all schools to be proactive in forming partnerships with parents that will raise their awareness of special services available through the school system. Eliminate the all too common scenario of parents struggling to find services to address their child's learning difficulty in a seemingly adversarial, rather than supportive and forthcoming environment.
- Create a brief, easy to read parent guide to aid in the understanding of learning styles, learning disabilities, and special education and Title I services. Include an explanation of the Individual Education Plan development process and Planning and Placement Team (PPT) purpose and process and distribute to every parent.
- Provide translation services within the school system to help parents with limited English skills negotiate the system and advocate for their children.

2. Create pathways to advancement

■ **Support partnerships between literacy programs, job readiness programs, employment/training programs, and higher education.** Partnerships among adult basic education programs and educational and skills training institutions are crucial to meeting the needs of the current job market, yet state policies and funding provide limited resources or incentives to build these critical partnerships.

■ **Develop programming to address gaps in the continuum of services, such as:**

- Providing more continuity from one component to the next, (e.g. between high school and higher education, between pre-K programs and elementary schools).
- Remedial literacy services for youth ages 16-21 who have difficulty finding services and fitting in to programs geared toward older adults.

3. **Actively coordinate planning and policymaking efforts with those of the Greater Hartford Literacy Council, other regional literacy coalitions in the state, and community-based literacy providers.**

■ **Involve these organizations in the process of reducing duplication and maximizing coordination and effectiveness of services.**

For example:

- The Commissioner of Education and Superintendents in the region, or their designees, should be liaisons to the Literacy Council for resource and information sharing and to participate in coordinated planning for service enhancements.

- Create statewide and local opportunities for community discussions about improving referrals and sharing of best practice information between the schools, community-based providers, and regional initiatives.

4. Maximize the effectiveness of adult basic education services

- **Augment the currently used Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) instrument with assessment tools that more accurately measure reading levels, determine program placement, and evaluate learner progress.**
- **Establish a work group/task force to consider revisions to the provision of adult education services in the state. This group should align with the Literacy Council's quality standards development process and suggest curricula and staffing enhancements to improve student recruitment, retention, and the successful completion of services, addressing areas, such as:**
 - The intensity and duration of classes
 - Effective assessment and placement of learners
 - Identification and specific instruction of adults with learning disabilities
 - The scheduling (evening/weekend) of services
 - Support services such as childcare, transportation and case management
 - Curricula relevant to day-to-day activities and/or employment



- Provide more full-time educators and full-time adult education directors to augment the use of part-time staff and provide more comprehensive services.

Role of the Literacy Council:

- Encourage community input, involvement and support for State Department of Education and local education agencies' initiatives designed to address these recommendations.
- Share the results of the Literacy Council's promising practices research with the SDE and LEAs.
- Welcome the opportunity to work closely with the SDE, LEAs, and others to address changes in the delivery of adult basic education services.
- Advocate with state and federal government and legislators for additional funding for the SDE and LEAs to implement these objectives.

"Improving literacy is a complex challenge, but, as a community, we know what the problems are and we know how to address them. We need to support human resources and commit financial resources to make meaningful gains."

Judith Goldfarb
Hartford Area Child Care Collaborative

Focus Area #3: Public Awareness and Advocacy

This focus area addresses the general public's awareness of literacy issues and services, and the need to advocate for enhancements to the provision of and funding for literacy services in Greater Hartford.

Key Issues and Findings

Public Awareness

To successfully advance the community call to action outlined in this report, a new, coordinated approach to increasing the general public's awareness of literacy needs and issues must be developed. It is imperative that the communities that comprise the Greater Hartford region embrace these efforts to improve literacy for their residents.

It is often the case that literacy providers have neither the staff nor the time to develop a marketing campaign regarding their services. About 43% of surveyed providers report conducting no public relations or literacy awareness activities (2003 GHLC Survey). Many providers have created brochures or handouts describing their services, but funding limits their ability to do much more. They may produce a press release regarding an event, but receive little or no coverage by the media. Literacy providers indicated that coordinating a regional public awareness campaign was one of the top five services they would like the Literacy Council to

provide (2003 GHLC Survey). (See the Facing the Challenges section for the complete list.)

A coordinated public awareness campaign aimed at the general public, policymakers, and potential learners should focus on three areas:

1. Literacy related issues

- Current status of literacy (need, demand, quality, etc.)
- Who is affected
- What is low literacy
- Reasons for low literacy
- Legislation needed

2. Literacy services

- How to get services
- How to advocate for increased services
- How to get involved (volunteers and donations)

3. The value of life long learning

- Decreasing the shame factor for those with low literacy skills
- Creating a region of parents, workers and citizens that values learning

Advocacy Efforts

Literacy programs have undertaken varying degrees of advocacy efforts at the local, state and national levels. These efforts are often characterized by the following challenges:

- Limited staff time and budgets for advocacy activities
- Lack of a coordinated advocacy plan
- Limited results
- Difficulty involving learners in advocacy efforts



Specific advocacy is needed to have an impact on federal legislation. As noted earlier, several key acts that have the potential to significantly impact literacy services are scheduled for reauthorization this year. Coordination among literacy groups throughout Greater Hartford, other areas of the state, and at a national level is needed to positively influence these bills.

According to surveyed literacy providers, another service needed from the Literacy Council is coordinated advocacy with local, state, and federal policymakers (2003 GHLC Survey). By pooling resources, creating partnerships, and coordinating advocacy materials, resources and agendas, a strong voice for literacy can be created.

Both awareness and advocacy efforts are needed at all levels to encourage policymakers to see the long term fiscal and human benefits of comprehensive, coordinated planning and funding for literacy services. Implementation of the following recommendations and action steps will lead the region toward that awareness.

Recommendations and Action Steps

Recommendation #1: Public awareness should be raised regarding the scope of the low literacy problem, its many ramifications, the availability of services, and the value of life-long learning

The call to action is for representatives of newspapers, radio, TV, and other media in the region to provide a technical assistance workshop to assist literacy providers and other stakeholders in utilizing the media to raise awareness and securing media coverage for literacy issues and events.

The call to action is for marketing and public relations firms, representatives from the media, and others to provide the in-kind or cash resources needed to develop a comprehensive public awareness campaign for literacy. This campaign would be coordinated with related initiatives and other public awareness efforts.

Role of the Literacy Council:

- Work with literacy providers and other stakeholders including workforce, health, human service, and faith-based organizations, to develop a public awareness campaign and develop media fact sheets regarding literacy.
- Coordinate a workshop for members of the media to educate them about key literacy issues.

Recommendation #2: To implement the Take Action for Literacy recommendations and influence literacy-related public policy and services, advocacy efforts should be further developed and coordinated

The call to action is for statewide, regional, and local advocacy groups, literacy providers, and literacy coalitions to work together to:

- Produce advocacy packets to assist literacy providers in advocating for their programs and for literacy issues.
- Provide advocacy training for literacy providers, learners, and other advocates.
- Produce an annual legislative update/report card outlining literacy-related issues and progress on legislation.
- Pool resources to retain a lobbyist and coordinate lobbying efforts.

Role of the Literacy Council:

The Literacy Council will produce the following tools for advocacy:

- A parent's guide listing advocacy groups, organizations and services to assist parents as they advocate for their children's literacy needs.
- Resource documents to be released in 2003 and 2004:
 - Funding Analysis: Funding opportunities for literacy services
 - Municipal Profiles: A statistical portrait of literacy needs and services
 - Issues for Literacy Providers: Results of the Survey of Literacy Providers



The Literacy Council will continue to advocate for literacy enhancement at the local, regional, state, and federal levels by:

- Working with town and city councils, mayors, and first selectmen/women to address literacy enhancement locally.
- Working with other partners across the state to support the development of the Connecticut Coalition for Literacy.
- Offering technical assistance to other Connecticut regions or cities attempting to form literacy councils or coalitions.
- Funding a lobbyist with other partners to advocate with the state legislature for literacy-related legislation.
- Participating in the advocacy efforts of the National Alliance of Urban Literacy Coalitions and other national literacy groups.



Focus Area #4: Funding for Literacy

This focus area outlines the funding issues that have an impact on the coordination and delivery of literacy services in Greater Hartford. An analysis of current funding from government and private sources can be found in the Understanding Literacy section of this report.

Key Issues and Findings

Everyone has a role to play in raising literacy levels in the region. We must strengthen the capacity of all stakeholders and all aspects of the service delivery system if literacy levels are to improve. This enhancement of literacy services will require changes in the allocation and amount of funding available for literacy.

In the 2003 GHLC Survey, 42% of providers cited funding as the biggest challenge they face in operating their programs. Sustained funding is needed to fund operational costs, improved services, and pilot projects. With adequate funding, programs will be able to devote more staff time to service enhancement and less time fund raising. Three of the literacy task forces urged that additional funding be designated for:

- 1) Improving effectiveness of methods and services
- 2) Enhancing the capacity and retention of teachers
- 3) Demonstrating measurable, increased learner gains

Connecticut has been a leader in funding programs that help children become ready for school. However, public policy must reflect the connection between adult and childhood education. According to research and the findings of the Child, Youth, Adult, and Family Task Force, improving the literacy of adults results in improved literacy of their children. In effect, money invested in quality adult education programs performs "double duty" as both parents and children benefit.

The Funding and Policy Task Force agreed that at the federal and state levels budget constraints are threatening the stability of funding for literacy services. Transforming literacy services into sustainable systems will require funding that is predictable and structured in ways that will support innovation, improve instruction and outcomes, and build pathways to advancement.

"In terms of emergent literacy and family literacy, early and comprehensive interventions are less costly and more effective."

Debra Perry
Hartford Public Library



Recommendations and Action Steps

Recommendation #1: Government funding for literacy should be redirected and/or increased to provide adequate, stable sources of support for literacy services

Because literacy is a common thread among today's social and economic ills, funders and policymakers at all levels of government need to be challenged to make literacy services a priority. On-going, stable sources of funding are needed to strengthen vital services and enhance the capacity of literacy service providers.

The call to action is for the Governor's Office, the State Legislature, and the SDE to allocate more funds, and/or redirect funds as needed to:

1. Fully fund the adult basic education system and enhance the quality of its services.
2. Change the means by which community-based organizations gain access to adult basic education funds to a process that is simpler and more equitable.
3. Assist all Greater Hartford schools in their efforts to meet the intention of the No Child Left Behind Act that every child will be able to read at or above grade level by the end of third grade.
4. Coordinate the planning for and integration of literacy services across disciplines and departments (labor, social services, education, corrections, etc.).
5. Support the development of pilot projects aimed at enhancing services.

Role of the Literacy Council:

- Advocate with federal, state, and local governments and the Leadership Team for resources needed to adequately address improvements in literacy levels.
- Form collaborations of providers to draw more government and private resources, funnel major shared grants through the Literacy Council, attract national foundations with regional proposals and encourage resource sharing.
- Provide and/or coordinate technical assistance with proposal writing and offer information about government and foundation funding opportunities.

Recommendation #2: A Literacy Fund for Greater Hartford should be created to support the innovation and development of effective services

The call to action is for area foundations and corporations to work with the Literacy Council in the creation of a Fund for Literacy. Until federal and state government funding allocations are increased to needed levels, other funds are needed to support existing programs and for pilot projects that will demonstrate higher learner gains. The Literacy Fund would support literacy programs in Greater Hartford and help providers focus more on increasing capacity and less on financial survival. The Fund would also help investors see how their money has been spent and how their investment fits into the larger picture of services in the community.

Role of the Literacy Council:

- Support the development of this fund by working for its creation and coordinating its implementation.
- Work with others to identify new funding streams and seek partners to develop a system for funding the capacity building efforts of providers in 2004 and beyond.

Recommendation #3: Funders of literacy services should play a key role in supporting capacity building and service enhancements leading to increased accountability

The call to action is for foundations, local and state governments, boards of education, and corporations to work with the Literacy Council and area providers to create a funding plan for literacy enhancement in the region. Key aspects of the plan should include strategies to fund the following:

1. Stabilize literacy programs and eliminate waiting lists.
2. Service enhancements, such as:
 - a. Technical assistance
 - b. Staff training
 - c. Hiring new staff, increasing salaries of existing staff
 - d. New curricula and methodology
3. Pathways to advancement for youth and adults.
4. The Greater Hartford Education Center and pilot projects.
5. Incentives for those with demonstrable success in their programs.



Role of the Literacy Council:

- Reach out to funders and policymakers at all levels to involve them in quality enhancement and capacity building efforts.
- Convene funding forums and discussion groups for providers and funders to share information, develop concepts for collaborative efforts, and identify funds that can be used to leverage additional support.
- Advocate for more funding for literacy providers by educating funders regarding the impact of low literacy and the relationship between low literacy and other priority issues, such as homelessness, workforce development, health care, child welfare, etc.

“The Greater Hartford Literacy Council has not only set the standard nationally for an organizational structure for systemic change, it is also setting the standard for bringing about that change.”

Margaret Doughty
Consultant, International Literacy Advocate

Facing the Challenges

With the needs assessment phase of the CLEAR Initiative complete, the community of literacy providers, advocates, learners, and other stakeholders is poised for action.

Securing the funding, coordinating service efforts, and obtaining community support at all decision-making levels are among the major challenges to improving literacy levels. With progress in these areas, quality standards for literacy will be identified and put into practice, and integrated approaches to community literacy planning will be developed. We expect these practices to lead to improved literacy levels in Greater Hartford.

Measuring the literacy improvements will be a challenge because, currently, there is no single, uniform method in place. Many of the existing benchmarks for educational attainment do not actually measure the attainment of literacy skills. For example, a student can graduate from high school reading only at an elementary level. Likewise, adults may complete a literacy program without making measurable improvements in literacy levels. Stakeholders at the local, regional, and state levels will need to identify and agree upon accurate, uniform methods of measurement that will gauge improvement in learner's skills as well as the overall success of system-wide interventions.

Marching Orders for the Literacy Council

In our 2003 Survey of Literacy Providers, we asked the question, "What are the top five services you would like the Literacy Council to provide?" The responses below have shaped the Literacy Council's strategy for enhancing literacy services in Greater Hartford and echoed comments made throughout the CLEAR data gathering process by focus group participants and task force members alike.

1. Coordinate a regional public awareness campaign for literacy services
2. Advocate with local, state and federal policymakers
3. Provide staff training and/or professional development
4. Produce a directory of literacy services
5. Coordinate literacy information and referral

The long-term social and economic health of our municipalities, region and state depend on our willingness to invest wisely in a literacy initiative that is significant, comprehensive and integrated. While the Literacy Council will play a significant role in advancing the literacy enhancement agenda, all of us bear some responsibility for addressing this challenge. Additional support will be needed to build the capacity of the Literacy Council and fulfill the objectives contained in this report. The call to take action for literacy goes out to all stakeholders to be engaged in actively coordinating services and interventions. Together we must ensure that every individual, of every age and background, attains the literacy skills they need to become more effective parents, workers, and citizens.



LITERACY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP 2002

1199 Training and Upgrading Fund
Andrea Pereira
Annie Fisher Family Resource Center
Asian Family Services
Aventis Pharmaceuticals, Inc.
Beverly LeConche
Capital Community College
Capital Region Workforce Development Board
Capitol Region Conference of Churches
Capitol Region Education Council (CREC)
Carlos Figueroa
Cathedral Day Care
Center City Churches/Center for Youth
Centro de Desarrollo y Reafirmación Familiar
Christine Moses
Christine Peterson
City of Hartford
Coalition of Black Trade Unionists
Community Partners in Action
Community Renewal Team (CRT)
Computers 4 Kids, Inc.
Connecticut Commission on Children
Connecticut Commission on National and
Community Service
Connecticut Department of Education
Connecticut Department of Labor
Connecticut Department of Public Health
Connecticut Puerto Rican Forum
ConnectiKids, Inc.
CT Parents Plus
Dr. William A. Petit
Edna Berastain
Educational Main Street – University of Hartford
Family Life Education, Inc.
Greater Hartford Arts Council
Greater Hartford Labor Council
Harriet R. Clark
Hartford Association For Education of Young
Children, Inc.
Hartford Federation of Teachers
Hartford Jewish Coalition for Literacy
Hartford Neighborhood Centers
Hartford Public Library
Hartford Public Schools
Hartford Tenants Rights Federation, Inc.
Housing Authority of the City of Hartford
Infinity Broadcasting
Infonline/United Way of Connecticut

Jubilee House
Kathy Andrews
Kurt P. Simonds
Leadership Greater Hartford
Learning Power, LLC
Lexia Learning Systems, Inc.
Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford
Literacy Volunteers of New Britain/Bristol
Loretta K. Stark
Lucia Christie
MAD (Making A Difference) Organization of Hartford
Mandlyn L. Williams
MetroHartford Regional Economic Alliance
Mi Casa Family Service and Educational Center, Inc.
Nancy Caddigan
Nancy Dower
Noreen L. Channels
Office of Treasurer State of Connecticut
Organized Parents Make A Difference
Paula Rosenberg
Plainville Community Schools
Reach Out and Read
Read to Grow
Real Art Ways
San Juan Tutorial Program
SAND Resource Center
SBC SNET
Southside Family House
Starbucks Coffee Company
Stephanie Lightfoot
Sue R. Morrill
The Hartford Courant
Third Age Initiative/Opening Doors for Children
Trinity College
Trust House, Inc.: A Family Learning Center
United Food & Commercial Workers Union, Local 919
United Way of the Capital Area
Upper Albany Neighborhood Collaborative
Urban League of Greater Hartford
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Major Financial Support Provided by:

Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

Travelers Foundation

United Technologies Corporation

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Report Design by Pita Communications LLC

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