or composition and rhetoric scholars, 1966 is a familiar year, one often touted as the birth of the field in modern academia. As the narrative goes, the National Council of Teachers of English and the Modern Language Association sponsored a conference on the teaching of English. The approximately fifty American and British teachers and scholars attending the conference at Dartmouth College responded to the emergent needs to define English and establish pedagogical approaches to the subject. According to Harris, some scholars mounted discontent with the Harvard model of writing instruction that privileged direct training in the formal rules of Standard English and promoted instead a growth model of composition that favored expressive writing. Others expressed interest in defining English as an “academic discipline,” a subject of study with a distinct body of knowledge (634).

The resulting discussions, while reflecting intense conflicts over how to define and teach English, led not just to revisions of the study and teaching of writing but also to the formation of a new academic discipline. Since the Dartmouth Conference, composition scholars in the United States have focused on efforts to investigate the composing process, foster students’ authentic voices through personal, expressive writing, and ultimately understand writing as an activity worthy of study in its various forms and contexts.

The year holds less, if any, significance in the field for what should be considered a remarkable move by the federal government to launch a publicly funded system of adult education with the Adult Education Act of 1966. The same year that English and composition studies experienced what “has symbolized a kind of Copernican shift

Jessica L. Bannon is assistant professor of English and Director of Composition at the University of Indianapolis. She teaches courses in composition, professional writing, literacy and language, and the theory and practice of teaching writing. Her research interests include adult literacy education, educational policy, political discourse, and first-year composition, and her work has been presented at the Annual Convention of the National Council of Teachers of English, the Conference on College Composition and Communication, and the Thomas R. Watson Conference. She has been an NCTE member since 2003.
from a view of English as something one learns about to a sense of it as something one does” (Harris 631), the federal government engaged in a much different effort to change literacy education—one that positioned literacy as something one obtains. In 1966, Congress passed the Adult Education Act as Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Spurred on by Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty, adult basic education became part of the Economic Opportunity Act in 1964 and aimed to increase individuals’ employability by improving their English reading, writing, and speaking skills. The Adult Education Act solidified the government’s investment in education as a vehicle for economic advancement. As I will demonstrate, this legislation and the Congressional discourses accompanying it also solidified a popular skills-based notion of literacy that has shaped not just publicly funded adult literacy education but literacy education at all levels.

I begin with this comparison because I think it was no accident that these developments occurred during the same period. Their concurrence demonstrates that literacy ability—variously defined and at all levels of education—had become a national priority. However, federal and academic efforts to shape literacy education took off in separate directions, and a sharp distinction formed between literacy in the academic context and literacy in the federally funded educational context. Composition scholars were interested in interrogating the very meaning of English, literacy, and composition in order to understand how these subjects or activities should figure into educational contexts. The government, by contrast, was interested in negotiating the rationale for investment in literacy education, assuming literacy to be a stable, neutral, and transferrable set of skills. That rationale centered on an idea that most members of Congress, the executive branch, and political groups could agree on—literacy education leads to higher economic productivity.

This article complements existing histories of the development of composition studies1 and literacy research by examining the historical development of federal adult education policy, which has been given limited attention in composition studies. The evolution of federal adult education policy reveals early developments of a human capital perspective that currently dominates all educational policy and that positions literacy as a necessary and sufficient precursor to education and training leading to economic advancement. Throughout this history, policymakers’ reliance on human capital theory has reinforced definitions of literacy as limited to basic skills, including reading, writing, and computation. By extension, literacy learners have been figured as atomized individuals, only connected to specific contexts in ways that match up with policy demands—for example, individuals acquire basic skills in order to gain employment, retain employment, or pursue additional job training.

I take Brandt’s perspective that “the growing entanglement of literacy with economic productivity not only affects how reading and writing are learned and practiced. It also shapes the rationales for acquiring literacy, how it is understood, valued, and
evaluated” (xxi). In doing so, I suggest that the prevalence of such perspectives at the federal level has consequences for how we, our students, and administrative bodies potentially reinforce the link between education and economic productivity and, to echo Graff, the myth that literacy education will maintain or improve upon the existing economic order. The assumption that literacy education primarily (or even solely) serves economic interests extends beyond federally funded adult education and influences the contexts for a great deal of literacy work in higher education, from writing instruction to writing center practice to writing across the curriculum initiatives. The primary goal of this article is to provide a historical basis for composition studies scholars to further engage with policy development at all levels of literacy education. This engagement can help us to rethink claims about literacy both within and beyond the university setting. It is particularly relevant at a time when forces external to our disciplines—and, indeed, the university—impose functional definitions of literacy that run contrary to the best interests of all adults, whether or not they pursue postsecondary education. Moreover, as we see an increase in calls for the development of standards and assessments based on such functional definitions as well as a shift away from the purposes and practices of literacy, we in composition studies have a vested interest in joining policy discussions and focusing debates on how and why literacy matters to individuals at all levels of education.

**Literacy Education and Human Capital**

In the mid-twentieth-century federal policy context, literacy became positioned as one key element of the human capital essential to advancing an economic system in which the production of goods was quickly being overtaken by the provision of services. Investment in adult literacy education presented a potential means for increasing basic skills training among what was perceived to be a high number of American adults lacking the literacy skills necessary for employment. Ultimately, this led to a federal program based on an unquestioned view of adult literacy education as primarily remedial in nature, improving adults’ economic mobility as it corrected their educational deficiencies and, in turn, producing national economic progress.

I focus on the early history of federal adult education policy in order to shed light on a context that has not been addressed in the wealth of historical work in composition studies. I want to recognize, though, that the divergence between the two contexts does not suggest an oversight on the part of composition scholars. Rather, federal and academic concerns with literacy education were shaped by different interests, and the federal focus on human capital development is perhaps one of the reasons composition scholars shifted their focus away from federal policy. Prior to the Dartmouth Conference, for example, the National Council of Teachers of English sought greater involvement in federal initiatives but soon met opposition from
scholars who disagreed with increasing federal economic priorities. After the passage of the 1958 National Defense Education Act, which funded educational reforms, university research, and curricular restructuring primarily in the hard sciences, NCTE attempted to integrate English in such efforts. As Parks puts it, “[NCTE] realized they needed to imagine a new relationship to national politics and the economy if their initiatives were to be funded” (70). The 1961 report The National Interest and the Teaching of English (NITE) was an attempt to do so by linking “instruction in English and composition to the United States’ growing economic and political power” and identifying composition “as a soldier in the Cold War effort to rebuild the United States” (Parks 24–5). The resulting Project English in 1964 drew on the expertise of university English faculty to develop K–12 curricula. As Harris notes, Kitzhaber’s comments at the Dartmouth Conference reflect NCTE’s early positions on making English a nationally recognized discipline deserving of federal funding. According to Harris, “NITE argued for more ‘focused’ and ‘articulated’ teaching in the place of the current ‘hodgepodge’ of activities that made up many English lessons” (636). For a brief moment, the work of English scholars and the newly professionalizing field of composition seemed to be aligning with federal efforts.

However, English and composition faculty resisted the growing federal emphasis on education in service of economic advancement. By 1966, composition scholars and teachers distanced themselves from the sentiments expressed by NITE. According to Parks, “The Dartmouth Conference would not endorse a vision of English studies that overtly supported Cold War political and economic goals. Nor would it justify English in terms of its effects on the national economy, as had NITE” (72–3). Parks cites Herbert J. Muller’s take on federal interests in funding education:

The billions that the government is spending on education and research are going chiefly to science and technology, primarily for the sake of the cold war; Congress would never appropriate such sums to support research for its educational value or for the disinterested pursuit of truth. Similarly the main argument for the little support English is beginning to get is the practical importance of “communication skills.

(qtd. in Parks 73)

Aside from the work of Project English, composition had limited connection to federal policy, which directed money toward efforts that would offer some service to economic advancement and, in turn, global political power. While members of the newly professionalizing field of composition distanced themselves from the economic demands of Cold War politics, adult literacy education gained federal attention because of its perceived potential to promote economic mobility.

Harris and Parks provide important insight into the development of composition studies, and my intention is not to repeat their work here. I reference it in order to demonstrate that while both composition scholars and federal policymakers shared an interest in literacy education, they had very different interests and engaged in very
different conversations about it. The debates about English and composition happening at the Dartmouth Conference were absent from the federal adult education context. Those issues causing contention among legislators centered not on defining literacy but on clarifying why funding should be devoted to literacy education, who would be served by it, and who would have jurisdiction over it.

Federal law and congressional discourse address literacy in limited terms and conflate literacy with adult basic education. Literacy, as noted, is characterized by policy as a tangible, stable set of skills—an individual’s ability to read and write in English. The goals of literacy education promoted by the earliest adult education policy are to make individuals “less likely to become dependent on others, improving their ability to benefit from occupational training and otherwise increasing their opportunities for more productive and profitable employment, and making them better able to meet their adult responsibilities” (Economic Opportunity Act of 1964). This policy has reinforced problematic assumptions about the power of literacy education to address social and economic ills, reflecting the “literacy myth” described by Graff. Such assumptions and the policy itself not only impacted adult education programs but were also an important part of a broader national conversation that increasingly focused K–12 education and higher education on national and individual economic advancement over the course of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Over time, adult basic education centered more on preparing adults for workforce training, reflecting and reinforcing a human capital perspective that shapes definitions of literacy and rationales for funding literacy education.

Though the idea of human capital extends back to the eighteenth century with Adam Smith’s notion of humans as capital, it was not until the mid-twentieth century that Chicago School economists like Theodore Schultz (1961) and Gary Becker (1962, 1964) explicitly connected the idea to formal education, claiming that differences in earnings correspond to differences in education. Seeing a causal relationship, they suggested that human capital investments in education would generate economic returns in the form of better employment and higher wages. The argument that investments in education would lead to employment opportunities for the nation’s impoverished citizens was particularly appealing at a time when Congress and the Johnson administration were pushing forward antipoverty programs that would require a considerable increase in federal expenditures. As adult education policy transformed over the latter half of the twentieth century, it prioritized expanding individuals’ productive capacities through basic skills training. Hal Beder’s summary of the rationale for federal investment in adult education as a form of human capital is quite telling:

To a large extent the justification for the federal adult literacy program rests in a human capital argument which goes something like this: National productivity, and indeed security, depends on an educated workforce which is able to perform the sophisticated
tasks required by technological complexity. Hence, investments in adult literacy represent social benefits. That is to say that, although individual learners benefit, a large part of the investment in adult literacy accrues to society as a whole in terms of the increased national wealth which productivity affords. (14–15)

Beder’s analysis suggests the “constant tension between the use of literacy for achieving individual versus collective goals” that Graff and Arnove found in national literacy campaigns (275). While federal policy consistently attends to individuals’ skill development, it does so in service of the broader goal of national economic advancement.

Characterized as a neutral, transferrable set of skills in early policy discussions, literacy became a resource of governmental interest, a highly valuable resource in an economy increasingly dependent on information and services (Brandt, “Losing Literacy”). It is important to recognize that, in Rose’s words, “This human capital thrust was built into adult education legislation from the earliest time” (11) because it highlights just how deeply rooted the connection is between literacy education and economic productivity. Deborah Brandt argues that literacy has become a “raw material” to fuel the nation’s productivity:

That this raw material is drawn from human beings rather than from the earth—and that it’s the same raw material upon which our civil liberties practically rely—marks a turning point in the history of literacy well worth our attention and study. (306)

As literacy was transformed from a “moral imperative” to a “production imperative,” from “an attribute of a ‘good’ individual into an individual ‘good,’” Brandt asserts, it became “something extractable, something measurable, something rentable, and thereby something worthy of rational investment” (“Drafting” 485). I would further argue that literacy has actually retained its status as a symbol of a “good” individual, but what has been lost in the transition to a resource-based definition was the explicit connection between literacy and morality. Notions of individuals’ skills and of literacy as a resource reinforce one another in a version of morality that is based on ownership of certain resources. An individual’s character is defined by that person’s possession of the abilities to read and write. Literacy is capital, a marker of status, as are cars, clothes, and other material goods that signify one’s economic standing. Illiteracy, by contrast, signifies little education, poverty, low-paid work, all of which in turn signify immorality, bad citizenship, and dependence. It then serves as grounds for exclusion from social and political participation; lacking literacy skills makes one unfit and unable to engage in all of the activities American citizenship should allow. As I will demonstrate, such perspectives were clearly present in congressional debate about adult education policy.

Although attractive to policymakers for its economic justification of investments in education, human capital theory contains problematic assumptions about education, learners, and the contexts in which both exist. Brandt, for example,
notes that “literacy learning . . . takes place within systems of unequal subsidy and unequal reward systems that range beyond the influence of any individual family’s assets” (“Changing Literacy” 252). Speaking of the autonomous model of literacy, Street argues that such a model mistakenly assumes literacy education will “have the effect of enhancing their cognitive skills, improving their economic prospects, making them better citizens, regardless of the social and economic conditions that accounted for their ‘illiteracy’ in the first place” (77). In much the same way, the human capital theory perspective ignores structural constraints that shape key predictors of educational success (for example, family socioeconomic status, per capita expenditures for schools, teacher quality) figuring into the basic terms of human capital. As educational policies developed according to such a perspective, these structural constraints remained overlooked.

Composition and literacy studies scholarship supports a more complex view of literacy that emphasizes context, social practice, and activity. Graff and Arnove, for example, posit that “literacy may also be viewed along a continuum: a set of skills that may become more complex over time in response to changing social contexts, shifting demands on individuals’ communication skills, or individuals’ own efforts at advancement” (288). Individuals are not either literate or illiterate but engage in different forms of literacy with varying degrees of success according to their social, cultural, and historical context and the experiences that accompany this context. Taking this perspective, literacy education should validate existing literacy abilities and empower individuals by allowing them opportunities to engage in literacy activities that will impact their local communities and shape global movements. The federal tendency to continually and unquestioningly refer to literacy as the ability to read and write or as a neutral and stable set of skills and to focus on employment and economic advancement severely limits the potential of literacy education.

**Launching a War on Poverty: Adult Basic Education and Economic Advancement**

Although subject to critique, federal characterizations of literacy hold significant power, especially when integrated into policy guiding educational programs. During the mid-1960s, literacy education became part of the development of a Great Society, a society that would be brought about by eliminating both poverty and racial injustice through educational programs, job creation, and prohibition of discrimination. In congressional and policy discourse, we see attention to illiteracy as a cause of poverty and to literacy as a solution: gaining literacy would make adults more employable and thus allow them to overcome poverty. Such a rationale was necessary to mobilize support for Great Society policies that would provide direct federal funding for educational programs and job creation in local communities, which still
met significant opposition from conservatives, many of whom conflated poverty and race and thus opposed educational efforts that potentially chipped away at segregation practices. Positioning literacy education as a means to increase human capital served to rationalize federal efforts to invest in adult basic education.

Perceptions of literacy in the adult education policy context evolved in the midst of political, social, and economic pressures. At the same time that government leaders attended to economic and educational developments, continuing racial inequality in each of these areas strengthened a growing civil rights movement. Arguments that wealth was distributed unequally along racial lines gave civil rights activists grounds to seek government intervention. As Levitan claims, “[T]he issue of civil rights inevitably led to the problem of poverty, for economic deprivation was an integral part of the over-all discrimination and injustice suffered by [African Americans]” (15). Citing an analysis of 1960 census data conducted by Herman P. Miller, Levitan noted that the income gap between whites and African Americans had not narrowed during the post–World War II period. President Kennedy had begun to address the relationship between economic and political discrimination in 1963 and pursued antipoverty legislation, planning to include it in his 1964 legislative proposals.

Legislative efforts to pass adult education policy met resistance from groups still beholden to racial segregation and opposed to the Civil Rights Movement. Policymakers’ unsuccessful attempts to pass adult education policy in 1962 and 1963 reveal how embedded literacy was, not just in political disagreements about poverty alleviation, but also racial equality. Carl Perkins (D-KY) introduced an adult education act to the House in 1962, after President Kennedy pointed to illiteracy as a national problem in his State of the Union address. However, as Samuel Halperin notes, “[I]n a Congress long dominated by southern conservatives, ‘adult basic education’ became conflated with efforts by liberals and the growing civil rights movement to teach ‘Negroes’ how to pass the literacy tests that southern states had erected as effective barriers to the exercise of voting rights” (2). Literacy education was seen at least by some as granting power to groups that were traditionally (and systematically) disenfranchised; supporting such education and by extension a shift in power structures would be highly contentious. This perspective initially hindered the passage of any adult education legislation.

Part of the reason adult education policy eventually succeeded rested on the link between education and economic advancement. In the midst of conflicts over civil rights, adult literacy education proponents needed a rationale that would garner little resistance; this was accomplished through emphasis on the national benefits of alleviating poverty and increasing employment numbers through basic skills development and occupational training. On March 16, 1964, both the House and Senate received a “Special Message to Congress Proposing a Nationwide War on the Sources of Poverty” from President Johnson in which he proposed the Eco-
nomic Opportunity Act, specifying the creation of work-study programs, community action programs, loan programs for farmers and small businesses, and Job Corps—all to be directed by a new Office of Economic Opportunity. He framed his proposed legislation within a narrative of incomplete national economic progress, a narrative that he had solidified in his Great Society Program and War on Poverty campaign during the preceding months (Zarefsky). The president’s message prompted the introduction of antipoverty legislation in both the Senate and House. Its placement in the Economic Opportunity Act and War on Poverty gave adult education, and by extension literacy, an explicitly economic basis. The “Adult Basic Education Programs” included as Title II, part B of the Act served as part of the solution to the national problem of unemployment. Although it was a fairly small portion of a wide-ranging antipoverty law, adult basic education had officially entered federal territory. While private funding and academic study of this field continued throughout the twentieth century, federal intervention and funding significantly shaped public perception of adult education, the forms of literacy education it encompasses, and the individual and national benefits it promises.

Adult education and literacy policy further indicate the beliefs that illiteracy represents a form of deprivation, which partly rested on the early-twentieth-century progressive claim that individuals lacking mastery of reading and writing in English were deprived of the full benefits of citizenship. Policymakers in the mid-twentieth century expanded this view of individual deprivation by calling attention to the national consequences of illiteracy. During this period concern shifted away from the advantages of literacy to the disadvantages of illiteracy, which included poverty and social maladjustment. As a result, the policies addressing “adult illiteracy,” have considered it through, in Rose’s words, a “lens of pathology, disability, and alienation.” In order to justify federal involvement in traditionally local- and state-controlled education, the “view of literacy as an individual disability was reinforced by the view of loss of valuable resources and production” (5). The “disease” of illiteracy, in other words, was not just an individual problem, it would affect (perhaps even infect) the entire nation and its economic development.

Human capital theory highlighted education as a means for addressing this problem of illiteracy and avoiding the economic consequences of widespread unemployment. Policymakers supported the claim that because education leads to an increase in skill, which in turn leads to an increase in productivity, investments in education are investments in human capital (Beder, DeSanctis). Human capital theory arose several times in congressional debates during the early 1960s, including those on the Higher Education Act in 1965 (Cong. Rec. 26 Aug. 1965) and on Vocational Educational Opportunities in 1963 (Cong. Rec. 8 Oct. 1963). By the time Congress began considering the inclusion of adult basic education in the Economic Opportunity Act, the connection between education and economic mobility had been clearly articulated in the policy context.
Adult basic education was perhaps one of the least controversial components of the Economic Opportunity Act, as Congress demonstrated widespread agreement that education and training were necessary precursors to successful employment. Those few senators and representatives who addressed adult basic education in their statements of opposition did not disagree with the principles behind such a program; rather they claimed that it would duplicate existing programs, as would much of the Economic Opportunity Act programs. The debate was almost completely captive to the notion of literacy as serving human capital development. The purpose of the Adult Basic Education Program (Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, Title II B) further establishes this connection:

to initiate programs of instruction for individuals who have attained age eighteen and whose inability to read and write the English language constitutes a substantial impairment of their ability to get or retain employment commensurate with their real ability, so as to help eliminate such inability and raise the level of education of such individuals with a view to making them less likely to become dependent on others, improving their ability to benefit from occupational training and otherwise increasing their opportunities for more productive and profitable employment, and making them better able to meet their adult responsibilities. (Sec. 212)

Despite its relatively small role, adult education’s presence in this bill reinforced a definition of literacy as reading and writing and as bound to economic advancement. In a congressional floor debate, Senator Bartlett (D-AK), for example, praised the adult basic education component, which he said would “develop the basic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic . . . needed for modern life and work” (Cong. Rec. 23 Jul. 1964 16711, statement of Sen. Bartlett).

The adult basic education provision also reinforced assumptions that undereducated adults are trapped in poverty and thus represent a significant drain on the nation. In a House of Representatives debate on the Economic Opportunity Act, Representative Perkins (D-KY) said so explicitly: “[L]arge numbers of undereducated adults are dependent on public assistance, unemployment compensation, public and private charities, and their relatives” (18214). Perkins elaborated on the consequences of such undereducation and, in doing so, offered a functional, skills-based characterization of literacy. Lacking the ability to “read, write, and do simple arithmetic,” said Perkins,

many [adults] are committed to a future of minimum earnings, recurrent or persistent joblessness, social dependency, and personal deprivation. Many are unable to cope with written instructions in connection with the use of medicine, the direction of traffic, the operation of appliances and equipment, and the completion of employment and tax forms. (Cong. Rec. 5 Aug. 1964)

In his statements before Congress during debate on the Economic Opportunity Act in July of 1964, Senator Yarbourough (D-TX) clearly demonstrated the growing
belief in education as a resource of economic advancement. Speaking of “the frontier of economic development and growth,” he stated, “the nature of this frontier . . . has changed from what it was in the early days when the will to work and a strong back, or a fertile imagination and a great deal of energy were all that one needed to get ahead” (Cong. Rec. 22 Jul. 1964 16632). According to Yarbourough, the modern American economy requires “education and training.” In addition to simply stating these requirements, he also clearly articulated the causal relationship between education, employment, and escape from poverty: “Escape from poverty today means following the road of education and training and jobs” (16632). His earlier statement that the bill’s emphasis is on “education, training, and jobs which will enable people to help themselves” (16630) extends the idea that poverty is a form of dependence and that independence requires economic success. The goal of “helping people help themselves,” as well as the notion that providing literacy education will accomplish such a goal, carried through all of the federal adult education policies that followed in the twentieth century, demonstrating a specific view of education as a means to poverty alleviation. This view suggests that providing direct assistance to poor individuals would merely further their dependence and instead promotes creating the means by which the poor can gain greater financial stability.

The opposition to the Economic Opportunity Act further reflects such assumptions, as this opposition was directed not at adult education but at the federal government’s growing role in providing direct economic assistance to its citizens. Part of this view entails a level of distrust of individuals to use financial resources effectively, or at least in ways deemed acceptable by policymakers. If the federal government bypasses state governments and gives resources to local communities, then states have no control over how communities will use those resources. Much of the opposition to the Economic Opportunity Act came from Republican members of Congress who disagreed with the level of executive power the law would allow. Because of the haste with which it was moved through committee, claimed the opposition, the law gave too much power to the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), thus weakening state governments. The states’ rights issue was prominent during debate of the EOA and centered on the potential inability of states to actually administer their programs, since the language of the policy was so vague in terms of state control and since most of the power would lie with the Director of the OEO (see, for example, Cong. Rec. 23 Jul. 1964 16712, statement of Sen. Javits). As Representative Watson (D-SC) pointed out during debate, some policymakers were also concerned that a lack of state authority in the law would allow too much local control. This concern is clearest in the opposition to the community action programs funded by the legislation. Representative Watson claimed that such programs

would allow the so-called “poverty czar” to completely bypass State and local government and pay part or all costs of any antipoverty program carried on by a public
Johnson’s message to Congress on March 16, 1964, emphasized “local plans,” saying his proposed programs “are based on the fact that local citizens best understand their own problems” and that “their components and emphasis will differ as needs differ.” Despite this claim, some members of Congress feared either too much federal control or a local abuse of federal money, fears that eventually led to the demise of Johnson’s War on Poverty.

Conservative opposition feared the local power that was given to civil rights groups through efforts like the community action programs. After passage of the Economic Opportunity Act, the opposition continued to voice its concerns, and by 1966, criticism of the antipoverty programs abounded. In particular, conflict rose between a conservative establishment and civil rights activists that supported expanding the reach of the antipoverty program to address political and economic advancement among minorities. For example, the National Center for Community Action Education, Inc. drew negative attention from Congress in 1965 when it proposed a program that would combine private and public funds to combat adult illiteracy. The program would have been led by James Farmer, national director of the Congress of Racial Equality. Congress denied funding for the program because many members believed Farmer would extend beyond adult education into “political mobilization of the poor” (Levitan 87). While claiming to support an end to poverty, some congressional members seemed to oppose increasing the political power of those citizens in poverty.

Debates about the reauthorization of the Economic Opportunity Act in 1966 further defined poverty alleviation as resting not on direct federal assistance but on education and training that would presumably help individuals to help themselves out of poverty. The place of literacy education in federal policy rested on a specific vision of federal government and its relationship to citizens, particularly the unemployed and un- or undereducated. Out of the growing dissent among members of the GOP came Representative Quie (R-MN) and Representative Goodell’s (R-NY) Opportunity Crusade Act of 1966, an alternative bill that would abolish the Economic Opportunity Act and with it, most of the responsibilities of the Office of Economic Opportunity, since all of the programs covered by the OEO would be transferred to existing agencies (Cong. Rec. 7 Mar. 1966). While adult education, then, would become an explicitly educational program under the governance of the Office of Education, the kind of education promoted was one that served the interest of work, particularly for private industry. According to Quie, the Opportunity Crusade Act “would put the emphasis on jobs—not on make-work jobs, but jobs in private industry—so they could learn skills necessary to hold down the kinds of jobs [that] would make them
taxpaying citizens who would be an asset to the country rather than a burden and taking from the tax revenues of the Federal Government” (5013). Senator Griffin (R-MI), introducing the same bill in the Senate later that year, claimed the “President’s lagging war on poverty,” resulted in “government handout-type programs, instead of genuine, self-help opportunity-generating programs” (Cong. Rec. 20 Jul. 1966 16380). Such statements reinforce the perception that the federal government should not provide direct assistance to citizens through job creation and further promote the perception that citizenship rests on one’s ability to gain productive employment that supports both the individual and the country.

**Defining Adult Education: Productive Citizens and National Progress**

Federal interest in adult education in the mid-1960s exhibits what Graff and Arnove discovered about national literacy campaigns—that “literacy is never itself an isolated or absolute goal” but is “one part of a larger process and a vehicle for that process” (275). Granted, adult education policy differs in significant ways from the literacy campaigns Graff and Arnove examine. However, their argument puts into perspective why early federal efforts that centered on reading and writing instruction dealt with those terms in very limited ways and actually rarely addressed literacy directly. While the terms “literacy” and “illiteracy” figure into congressional debates about adult education policies, the laws themselves rarely employ such terms, focusing instead on reading and writing, the benefits of obtaining these skills, and the disadvantages of lacking them. The policy was intended to develop educational efforts in order to address broader national concerns with poverty and unemployment. This became clearer just two years after the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act, when adult education was given its own title in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The Adult Education Act served a more explicit validation of the programs begun under the Economic Opportunity Act, but the shift to overt education policy and the Office of Education suggests a stronger sense that human capital development had become the aim of literacy education.

The purpose of the Adult Education Act of 1966 reflects this aim, as well as its relation to fostering a stronger social and economic order by developing productive and responsible citizens:

> It is the purpose of this legislation to encourage and expand basic educational programs for adults to enable them to overcome English language limitations, to improve their basic education in preparation for occupational training and more profitable employment, and to become more productive and responsible citizens. (Sec. 302)

This statement of purpose is complemented by definitions that perhaps more explicitly articulated the scope of the law. The definition for “adult basic education” is a
restatement of the purpose included in the Economic Opportunity Act, reestablishing the deficit view of adult learners as dependent on others, as well as the power of education to create more responsible and productive citizens:

education for adults whose inability to speak, read, or write the English language constitutes a substantial impairment of their ability to get or retain employment, with a view to making them less likely to become dependent on others, to improving their ability to benefit from occupational training and otherwise increasing their opportunities for more profitable and productive employment, and to making them better able to meet their adult responsibilities. (Sec. 303)

As Rose argues, “From the very beginning adult education legislation was framed in terms of employment rather than as a basic human right” (8). Both the definition and the purpose focused most explicitly on literacy’s role in allowing individuals to obtain and retain employment; being employed, in turn, should improve one’s status as an adult American citizen by making them more “productive and responsible.” The definition of adult basic education implies that a good adult citizen is one who can not only hold a job, but also seize opportunities for career advancement. By pursuing such opportunities, it seems, one would exemplify the responsible adult; indeed, adult responsibilities seem to revolve around employment. The act indicates that the abilities to speak, read, and write in English will grant more opportunities for employment, which will render adults more independent and responsible, both of which the policy and the preceding policy discussions confirmed as desirable characteristics of an American citizen.

It should be emphasized that the citizen imagined in this legislation does not reflect characteristics of active and critical democratic participation. The ideal American citizen, rather, was defined as a productive worker, and the goal of adult education had become, to a great extent, developing this ideal citizen. Such human capital development, however, was part of a larger vision for an adult education system that would complement the elementary and secondary public school system. The definition of “adult education” from the act itself specified “services or instruction below the college level for adults who do not have a certificate of graduation from secondary school and are not currently enrolled in schools” (Sec. 303), clearly distinguishing adult education from college education and aligning it more closely with secondary education.

Comments to the Senate by Senator Hartke (D-IN) upon introducing the Adult Education Act included a number of rationales for its adoption: an increase in jobs filled by high school graduates and a decrease in jobs filled by those with only an elementary school education, the claim that the majority of the unemployed (64%) consists of those without a high school degree, and the fact that other legislation provided educational opportunities for children and college students (Cong. Rec. 2 Mar. 1966). Possibly the most notable rationale, however, was the demand for
officially moving adult education from the Office of Economic Opportunity to the Office of Education and the public school system. It was clear that many legislators disagreed with the placement of adult education in the antipoverty program. The question was, where to put it? Because of the level of subject matter, positioned as “basic,” it seemed public secondary or elementary schools would be more appropriate than colleges, despite the fact that colleges arguably had greater experience with adult students.

Citing a 1964 report by the Senate Subcommittee on Employment and Manpower, Hartke indicated that too small a portion of the school systems offered adult education or adult basic education courses. The majority of adult education initiatives, led by community organizations, colleges and universities, churches, and business and industry, primarily served the wealthy and well-educated. According to Hartke, the public school system had a better chance of reaching the undereducated. Hartke’s perspective was echoed in the House by Representative Bell (R-CA), who introduced an amendment to the Economic Opportunity Act that would increase funding for adult basic education. He claimed, “[I]n the past, unfortunately, adult education has meant cultural and academic enrichment programs for middle and upper class adults who wished to learn new ideas and skills” (Cong. Rec. 29 Sept. 1966 24436). His amendment to expand funds under the Economic Opportunity Act included employment training and job counseling, special project funds, teacher training funds, rehabilitation of narcotics addicts, and expanded job opportunities for the “hardcore unemployed.” While the Bell amendment to the EOA was rejected, much of its purpose was reflected in the Adult Education Act. In fact, the Bell amendment might have been rejected simply because it kept adult education within the jurisdiction of the Office of Economic Opportunity, which many members of Congress wanted to disband altogether.

Moving adult education to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act suggests a recognition that the policy is more educational in nature than economic. However, the economic rationale for adult education never went away. Perhaps a broader consequence of the move is that all education policy—all publicly funded education—was becoming more economically driven. Locating adult education alongside elementary and secondary education policy not only aligns adult education with curricula at those levels, the link between adult education and employment also supports notions that all publicly funded education serves human capital development. Robert Luke, executive secretary of the National Association of Public School Adult Educators, supported the transfer of adult education to the office of Education since, he claimed, ABE is “so obviously an educational function, so necessarily related to state departments of education, so closely aligned in purpose to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act” (qtd. in DeSanctis 12). He agreed with Rep. Bell, who suggested that adult education “does not belong in the Poverty Act because there are
many people throughout the country that are not necessarily in poverty that deserve to have an opportunity for an adult education” (qtd. in DeSanctis 13). The Adult Education Act, because it was part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act amendments, offered a much more popular means for expanding adult education. In the process, though, the relationship between education and work, as well as the status of literacy as a resource gained strength. Adult education, in other words, already carried a distinct connection to human capital and economic advancement. That policymakers agreed adult education would better fit into educational policy suggests that public education also rested in part on economic interests.

This move also further reinforced the link between unemployment, poverty, and remediation. As Brandt’s work demonstrates, changing literacy demands mean that some literacy practices are outmoded as new practices are required. However, the legislation suggests that adults simply need access to literacy skills that they missed out on by failing to complete primary or secondary schooling. This remedial approach centers more on providing opportunities for adults to obtain literacy skills deemed stable and transferable across contexts and time. During legislative debate on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act amendments in October of 1966, Hartke stated that the Adult Education Act would make high school completion the standard for adult basic education, rather than the sixth grade level because, as he and many others argued, a high school diploma was becoming increasingly necessary for employment and occupational training programs (Cong. Rec. 6 Oct. 1966).

Amendments to adult education policy over the next several decades demonstrate continued emphasis on funding those programs that would impart credentials and skills needed for employment.7 By the late 1970s, though, we see calls to hold programs accountable to such goals and to develop an adult education system that can more effectively administer programs. While the National Advisory Council on Adult Education’s 1978 publication of its first assessment of the Adult Education Act provided a primarily positive overview of federally funded adult education, the report also pointed out areas for improvement that indicated a move to create a more independent system of public adult education. The authors concluded that the program lacked administrative effectiveness, claiming the bureaucratic structure prevents efficient dissemination of services to adult clients. Adult education, according to the NACAE committee, should have a broad management system for “lifelong learning,” giving it a status equal to elementary, secondary, and higher education: “A broad management system must be developed which places categorical adult and continuing education programs into the concept of lifelong learning” (40). This evaluation reflects an attempt to separate adult education from public education and give the former an independent educational system.

Such a move was realized in 1998 when the Adult Education Act was replaced by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), part of the Workforce
Investment Act. While publicly funded adult education has become an educational endeavor quite apart from public elementary and secondary education over the last thirty years, it has not retained the NACAE focus on “lifelong learning” that we see in their report. Instead, adult education has continued to focus on functional literacy, basic skills training, and workforce training—in short, the development of human capital.

The economic justification for adult literacy education carried with it an increased concern for developing assessment practices, and such a concern is clearly evident in the NACAE report. The authors maintained that more funding should be directed toward such an endeavor, pointing out that the organization received inadequate support from Congress and the administration to carry out the requirements of the AEA, including a comprehensive review of its programs. This review would include program comparisons and evaluation procedures, which would allow the organization to determine the extent of program effectiveness. The report pointed to the need for federal assistance in developing uniform instruments and assessment processes to accurately measure the demand population. While the report suggests that assessment would simply help to determine who was being served and how to better serve them, it also laid the groundwork for linking program evaluation to eligibility for funding. For example, the authors claim that it is insufficient to merely track program compliance with federal requirements or judge program quality on the basis of high enrollments. Instead, “[E]valuation should identify program strengths and weaknesses” and should include analysis of cost and benefits, staff performance, organizational structures, and programs’ impact on clients (11). The relationship between evaluation and accountability grew stronger in the following decades when critiques of public education at all levels gained momentum.

**Conclusion: Shaping the Future of Educational Policy**

The legislative history of federal adult education policy demonstrates the confluence of events, ideologies, and discourses within the policymaking context that reinforce the view of literacy as a resource possessed by individuals who themselves become more or less valuable resources for national economic productivity according to the kind and amount of literacy they have accumulated. This view still prevails and even shapes the policy work of the adult education field, as evidenced by the following statement from Gail Spanenberg, included in a letter to members of Congress written on behalf of the National Commission on Adult Literacy: “If America fails to educate new workers from these adult ranks, large numbers of them will become a drain on the economy rather than a positive economic force.” Certainly, it may be the case that adult education lobbyists are attempting to work within existing policy discourse to ensure continued funding for their programs. However, such characterizations
of adult literacy education allow little room for alternatives and maintain primarily economic justifications and economic objectives for such learning. I certainly do not intend to criticize the important and difficult work of the adult education field; although the focus and space of this article prevents a full review of their work, it is worth mentioning that adult education scholars and practitioners have made incredible strides in advancing programs that attempt to provide much needed educational opportunities under very difficult policy requirements. As the above quote indicates, though, this work and many arguments about literacy education and funding are constrained by a strongly established human capital discourse.

While all federal adult education policy dating back to the 1960s contained an economic rationale, the representation of this rationale in legislation and policy discourse transformed over the course of the twentieth century. Early legislation enacted within Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society programs maintained the welfare state policies developed by Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal and centered on helping individual citizens, particularly those most in need, to gain economic mobility. During the 1980s and 1990s, however, policymakers focused more on creating legislation that would benefit national economic growth by investing in educational programs that would produce a skilled workforce. This trend is reflected in the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, which replaced the Adult Education Act. Literacy is explicitly defined by the AEFLA as “an individual’s ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute, and solve problems, at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual, and in society” (Sec. 203). While the definition includes the goals of functioning in the family and society, such goals reflect what Brandt describes as “a passing nod to the value of literacy for aesthetic pleasure or political participation” (“Losing Literacy” 306).

The rest of the policy prioritizes the development of human capital. In this legislation, though, we see a consolidation of federal programs and funding streams, which for adult education meant that programs serving anyone from welfare recipients to dislocated workers to individuals pursuing secondary school completion would all be housed under the same law and, as a result, experience greater competition for funding. The most recent revisions of the AEFLA in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 include not only consolidation of services, but also the requirement that adult education programs submit a “unified plan” and meet the same performance measures as other core programs covered by the legislation; in other words, Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act programs, the Wagner-Peyser Act employment services, and the programs under Title I of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act are held accountable to the same performance measures. From a policy perspective—a perspective most concerned with economic rationales for educational investments—consolidation of
services is a more cost-effective way to invest in the literacy education of those who can quickly obtain jobs, filling the needs of a given industry and those businesses directly involved in the local training programs.

Despite the increasing emphasis on workforce training and accountability requirements in adult literacy education over the past two decades, there is little evidence that this produces higher employment, more educated workers, or more effective educational programs. After studying data from reports of program performance, Baptiste and Nayanungo found that of the 64.2 percent of program participants gaining employment, “none seemed to have earned enough to pull a family of four halfway out of poverty” (21). Their study suggests that many participants in adult education do not see the economic benefits promised by the legislation. This is not to say that literacy has no value or that literacy education cannot offer individuals any opportunity, but rather that the focus on basic skills for employment limits the kinds of benefits programs can offer.

Pointing out the limitations of adult education policy is but one part of a project that must also work toward introducing broader and more complex notions of literacy into all areas of federal education policy. In order to increase our level of engagement in the formation of educational policy, composition studies scholars should participate in the lobbying process, urging members of Congress to introduce, pass, or amend legislation that would better serve the literacy needs of learners at all levels of education. NCTE has been active at the federal level through the James R. Squire Office of Policy Research in the English Language Arts, which produces research summaries and policy briefs about evidence-based best practices that are communicated to congressional leaders and executive departments. Since 2002, the College Board’s National Commission on Writing has published studies meant to draw national attention and federal funding to writing instruction.

While the work of NCTE and the National Commission on Writing remains integral to advancing the work of our field in the policy context, we certainly need to do more. For example, we might introduce policymakers to more research demonstrating that job acquisition and retention would be better supported by programs that pay greater attention the particular contexts for literate activity and by instructional practices in the progressive tradition (Au). This requires, however, different kinds of research to support our arguments and to make them convincing to legislators. While recognizing the positive impact of new literacy studies on adult education, Belzer and St. Clair suggest that “unfortunately, this perspective tends to add complexity rather than provide a unidimensional set of measurable skills as demanded by the current policy and accountability context.” Therefore, “it is not a powerful tool for arguing that literacy should be—and indeed must be—more than phonics and standardized tests” (29). The increasing value placed on standardized testing, claims Gallagher, “continues to make inroads in higher education” to the
extent that “upper administrators, policymakers, and the general public continue to imagine faculty and students as targets of assessment rather than generators of it” (452). In order to combat such notions of educators and learners, composition scholars should expand their communication with policymakers and, in order to ensure this communication brings about desired changes in law, perception, and discourse, we should carefully consider the language of policy and the conventions of argument expected and accepted in such a context.

The history provided here is necessarily limited, and there are still many important aspects of this legislative history to consider, including the role of English as a Second Language instruction, bilingual education, and citizenship education. Future research could engage with these and other aspects of both the policy and the political events in which it developed in order to further illuminate how human capital discourses evolved, how it shapes a wide variety of current educational contexts, and how we might improve upon existing educational policies and programs both within and beyond higher education. Furthermore, additional research is needed on the policy process itself in order to better understand and compose arguments that are effective in such contexts.

The 2012 report from the AACU, *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future*, complicates the human capital discourse dominating federal education policies by suggesting that education focused on democratic civic participation is more likely to help people develop skills desired by employers. The report argues against assumptions that higher education has an economic agenda reducible to workforce training and calls on public leaders and educators to recognize the civic dimension of all disciplines. For example, economic stability or economic growth depends on individuals making decisions that affect their local communities and national society; people make better economic decisions when they have deeper and broader knowledge of their own and others’ positioning within the political, social, and economic systems. *A Crucible Moment* offers a refiguring of economic rationales for education that perhaps positions literacy learners as active agents in their learning and in the systems that organize that learning. We might add to this view with Duffy’s critique of popular views of literacy “as instrumental, a means for assimilation into the dominant culture, political institutions, and economy of the United States” (227). While such a critique has been leveled by a number of literacy scholars (for example, Brandt, Graff, Scribner and Cole), Duffy extends this work by underscoring that literacy learning is not simply a passive process, one in which people acquire literacy in order to “fit in.” He reminds us that people actively engage in their learning—they react, they respond, they reflect, and they make choices about texts and the ideas represented in them. Such work offers a stark contrast to the deficit models of adult learners dominating public policy contexts.

As composition scholars participate in efforts to promote situated, context-based
policy approaches to literacy education—and we should—we can emphasize literacy education that helps students develop, in Harvey Graff’s words, a “textual power” that “they can use not merely to meet but to question the demands their society makes upon them” (644). The history of federal adult education policy tells us much about how human capital discourse has evolved and how we might contribute to such discourses in the policy context today in order to reshape and redirect political efforts that align economics and education. While it may be important to calculate the returns to educational attainment in economic terms, it is equally important to understand such attainment in ways that are not so easily quantified. Composition studies is well positioned to contribute to a conversation that seeks to understand broadly what is gained from investments in education.

Notes

1. For the remainder of the article, I use “composition studies” (which I also connect with literacy studies, writing studies, and rhetoric and composition) to denote the primary stakeholders in this argument. However, I also recognize the interests that the broader discipline of English has in the development of federal adult education policy and the economic rationales for literacy education therein.

2. Though my focus is on early legislative efforts, later policies reflect important developments in the federal rationale for administration of adult literacy education. The National Literacy Act of 1991 amended the Adult Education Act in order to better coordinate existing programs and also established the National Institute for Literacy and the National Workforce Literacy Assistance Collaborative. The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 repealed the Adult Education Act and placed more emphasis on accountability by instituting a national reporting system for adult education programs (see Appendix for policy statements of purpose).

3. In the Senate, Senator McNamara (D-MI) submitted S. 2642, “A bill to mobilize the human and financial resources of the Nation to combat poverty in the United States,” to the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare (Cong. Rec. 16 Mar. 1964). In the House, Representative Landrum (D-GA) submitted H.R. 10440 and Representative Powell (D-NY) submitted H.R. 10443, both of which were identical in purpose to the Senate bill, to the Committee on Education and Labor.

4. A congressional debate on “Changing Demands on Education and Their Implications” cited human capital theory at length. During this debate, Senator Morse (D-OR) submitted to the record chapters of a report by the same name in which a section on human capital heavily cited the work of Theodore Schultz (Cong. Rec. 28 Mar. 1963 5058–59). On September 15, 1965, during debate of the Higher Education Act, Representative Curtis (R-KS) submitted to the record his testimony before the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee’s Subcommittee on Employment...
and Manpower; this testimony included extensive discussion of education as a form of human capital (*Cong. Rec.* 15 Sep. 1965)

5. Representative Brown (R-OH), echoing the arguments of many other Republican members of Congress, claimed that the EOA was “loosely drawn,” “poorly prepared,” “poorly written,” and “badly documented” (*Cong. Rec.* 5 Aug. 1964 18196). Senator Lausche (D-OH) raised concern that, without appropriate language in the bill, local governments could wind up under direct federal control (*Cong. Rec.* 23 Jul. 1964).

6. Community action programs were included in Part A of Title II.

7. See Appendix for a brief overview of significant amendments.

**Works Cited**


**Appendix: Legislative Timeline**

The following timeline includes legislative measures relevant to the development of federally funded adult education. Public laws that most significantly impacted this development appear in bold.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Executive Office</th>
<th>Year Introduced</th>
<th>Year Enacted</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Defense Education Act</td>
<td>Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare</td>
<td>1958, by President Eisenhower</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>“to strengthen the national defense and to encourage and assist in the expansion and improvement of educational programs to meet critical national needs and for other purposes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manpower Development and Training Act</td>
<td>Department of Labor</td>
<td>1961, by President Kennedy</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>“... to require the Federal Government to appraise the manpower requirements and resources of the Nation, and to develop and apply the information and methods needed to deal with the problems of unemployment resulting from automation and technological changes and other types of persistent unemployment”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Education Act</td>
<td>Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare</td>
<td>1963, by President Kennedy</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>“An Act to strengthen and improve the quality of vocational education and to expand the vocational education opportunities in the Nation, to extend for three years the National Defense Education Act of 1958 and Public Laws 815 and 874, Eighty-first Congress (federally affected areas) and for other purposes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Opportunity Act, Title II, Part B: Adult Basic Education Programs</td>
<td>Office of Economic Opportunity</td>
<td>1963, by President Kennedy</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>“It is the purpose of this legislation to initiate programs of instruction for persons 18 years old and older whose inability to read or write the English language constitutes a substantial impairment of their ability to obtain or retain employment”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act</td>
<td>Sponsor(s)</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity Crusade Act</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Called for dismantling Office of Economic Opportunity and reassigning all programs to existing federal agencies. Adult basic education would fall under jurisdiction of the Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Education Act, Title III of Elementary and Secondary Education Act</td>
<td>Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare</td>
<td>1966, by Senator Vance Hartke (D-VA)</td>
<td>“It is the purpose of this legislation to encourage and expand basic educational programs for adults to enable them to overcome English language limitations, to improve their basic education in preparation for occupational training and more profitable employment, and to become more productive and responsible citizens.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Education Act Amendments</td>
<td>Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare</td>
<td>1970, by Rep. Carl Perkins (D-KY)</td>
<td>Revised purpose: “It is the purpose of this title to expand educational opportunity and encourage the establishment of programs of adult public education that will enable all adults to continue their education to at least the level of completion of secondary school and make available the means to secure training that will enable them to become more employable, productive, and responsible citizens.” • Adult is redefined as an individual of at least 16 years of age • Established the National Advisory Council on Adult Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Literacy Act</td>
<td>Department of Education and Department of Labor</td>
<td>1991, by Rep. Thomas Sawyer (D-OH)</td>
<td>“To enhance the literacy and basic skills of adults, to ensure that all adults in the United States acquire the basic skills necessary to function effectively and achieve the greatest possible opportunity in their work and in their lives, and to strengthen and coordinate adult literacy programs.” Established the National Institute for Literacy and the National Workforce Literacy Assistance Collaborative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of Workforce Investment Act</td>
<td>Department of Education and Department of Labor</td>
<td>1997, by Rep. Howard McKeon (R-CA)</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>“It is the purpose of this title to create a partnership among the Federal Government, States, and localities to provide, on a voluntary basis, adult education and literacy services, in order to (1) assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency; (2) assist adults who are parents to obtain the educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children; and (3) assist adults in the completion of a secondary school education.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title II: Adult Education and Family Literacy Act</td>
<td>Department of Education and Department of Labor</td>
<td>2013, by Rep. Virginia Fox (R-NC)</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>“It is the purpose of this title to create a partnership among the Federal Government, States, and localities to provide, on a voluntary basis, adult education and literacy activities, in order to— (1) assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency; (2) assist adults who are parents or family members to obtain the education and skills that— (A) are necessary to becoming full partners in the educational development of their children; and (B) lead to sustainable improvements in the economic opportunities for their family; (3) assist adults in attaining a secondary school diploma and in the transition to postsecondary education and training, including through career pathways; and (4) assist immigrants and other individuals who are English language learners in— (A) improving their— (i) reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension skills in English; and (ii) mathematics skills; and (B) acquiring an understanding of the American system of Government, individual freedom, and the responsibilities of citizenship.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>