OVAE CONNECTION

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL AND ADULT EDUCATION

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Adult Literacy Report Released by National Research Council

On Aug. 31, the Committee on Learning Sciences of the National Academies of Science, released its report *Improving Adult Literacy Instruction: Options for Practice and Research*, which was sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences and the US Department of Education in partnership with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. The report synthesizes research on literacy, draws implications for instruction in adult reading programs, and recommends a more systemic approach to research, practice, and policy in those areas. The report identifies factors that affect literacy development in adolescence and adulthood in general, and examines their implications for strengthening literacy instruction for these populations. It also discusses technologies that can assist with multiple aspects of teaching, assessment, and accommodations for learning. . The report recommends several other instructional practices: a wider use of evidence-based practices and professional development; improving learner persistence through the use of technologies, social service support, and incentives; and improved coordination of program improvement, evaluation, and research.

The pre-publication report is available to download now at http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13242#description; the full book will be published as a free pdf in the coming months.

A Conversation About the GED 21st Century Initiative™

The LINCS Assessment Discussion List will host a guest panel discussion from Sept. 12–15 titled: "A Conversation about the GED 21st Century Initiative ™: Moving from GED® test to a career and college ready assessment system." The panelists will discuss the initiative, with primary focus on the upcoming version of the new GED® assessment system (currently known as the GED test) set to be released in early 2014. Topics will include the components of the *Initiative*; an overview and current activities for the new GED® assessment system; how content and format will differ from the current GED® test; expected outcomes of the revised test, and how instructors and programs can begin to prepare for these changes. Panelists from the GED Testing Service® will be Martin D. Kehe, vice president for products; CT Turner, public affairs director; Tracy Gardner, senior director of assessment services; and Debi Faucette, senior director of field outreach. For the complete announcement with further information and resources and to subscribe to this discussion, please visit the link above.

Report on Successful K–12 STEM Education (Part of a Continuing Series)

In order to bring attention to the need for more and more highly qualified workers to meet the demands in the STEM fields, the National Research Council, a component of the National Academy of Sciences, established a committee to make recommendations regarding improving STEM education. The report, Successful K-12 STEM Education: Identifying Effective Approaches in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, is the committee's contribution to making "strategic decisions about improving STEM education," focusing on the science and mathematics parts of STEM.

The committee's first topic concerns the appropriate goals for STEM education in the United States. According to the report, "Questions about effectiveness can be addressed only in the context of the purposes or goals one wants to measure. Three broad and widely espoused goals for K–12 STEM education … capture the breadth of the purposes for STEM education and reflect the types of intellectual capital needed for the nation's growth and development in an increasingly science- and technology-driven world." The first of these three goals is discussed below. The second two will be discussed in a future issue.

Goal 1. *Expand the number of students who ultimately pursue advanced degrees and careers in STEM fields and broaden the participation of women and minorities in those fields.* The flow of students into STEM majors and careers is said to be decisively important for our nation's competitiveness. American dominance in education generally and in the STEM fields more particularly during the 20th century "…propelled the United States to the forefront of an innovation-based global economy." Other recent studies have made the same case as this report that "…more than half of the tremendous growth in per capita income in the 20th century can be accounted for by U.S. advances in science and technology." (See, *e.g.*, Goldin and Katz, *The Race between Education and Technology*, 2008). It is imperative for our nation's well-being that we provide all our students with the fundamentals of education that will enable those with interests in STEM fields to successfully pursue their aspirations.

Increasing the participation of groups that both have been historically and are currently underrepresented in the sciences and mathematics is a crucial dimension in achieving this goal, per the report. Of particular concern are blacks, Hispanics, and low-income students who "disproportionately fall out of the high-achieving group" in K–12 education. Only "10 percent of all STEM doctorates are awarded to nonwhite, non-Asian students, although these groups now represent one-quarter of the U. S. population." The growth of these groups as a percentage of the U.S. population will require that they be included in the STEM fields if our nation is to meet the STEM challenge. From an equity point of view, it "is important to provide opportunities for highly talented students from these groups."