

An Evaluation of the NCSALL Publication *Focus on Basics*

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Key Findings

- With its national scope and articles targeted to the state, program, and classroom level, *Focus on Basics*, a quarterly NCSALL publication that connects research and practice, provides adult basic education practitioners with a sense of the broader field to which they belong.
- *Focus on Basics* influences readers' beliefs about adult basic education, and provides them with concrete ideas they use to change their programs and practice.
- *Focus on Basics* enables readers to make a connection between research and practice.

"I used topics from Focus on Basics at staff lunch meetings for program improvement. The dialogue that resulted was very productive."

The goal of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) is to conduct high-quality, relevant research that contributes to the improvement of the quality of education provided by adult basic educators. NCSALL is also committed to ensuring that research is shared with practitioners in formats that are accessible and supporting practitioners in putting research findings to use. To accomplish this, the publication *Focus on Basics* was launched in 1997.

NCSALL conducted a survey to evaluate the impact of *Focus on Basics* on its readers. At the time of the survey, 28 issues of *Focus on Basics* had been published. A total of 292 readers responded to the Web-based survey, which asked why adult education practitioners read the publication, how it influences them, and what impact it has on their practice.

In the simplest terms, the evaluation demonstrated that *Focus on Basics* is having an impact. Reading professional literature does help produce change in practice. Readers report that *Focus on Basics* has influenced their beliefs about adult basic education.

Many adult basic educators get their jobs without realizing that they have, in fact, entered a "field." The publication has helped readers feel connected to the larger education community as professionals.

Almost three-quarters of those who completed the survey reported that they interact with their colleagues around *Focus on Basics*

articles. *Focus on Basics* is promoting contact between practitioners and thus contributing to the development of communities of practice.

Focus on Basics is a mainstay for professional development providers, who draw upon it for ideas, information, and materials.

Focus on Basics readers report that it helps them make a connection between research and practice.

Suggestions

Respondents to the survey suggested that *Focus on Basics* could be better publicized, so it is accessed by

more teachers. It could contain more “classroom-ready” materials. And NCSALL could provide more forums and suggest activities via which practitioners could come together to digest the information contained in the publication and plan ways in which to put it to use.

All issues of *Focus on Basics* can be found on NCSALL's Web site at <http://www.ncsall.net>. For the full report, which includes information about how readers use the publication, go to: <http://www.ncsall.net/?id=29#27>

What is NCSALL?

A federally funded research and development center focused solely on adult learning, the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) is a partnership of the Harvard University Graduate School of Education, World Education, Rutgers University, Portland State University in Oregon, and the Center for Literacy Studies at The University of Tennessee in Knoxville. NCSALL is funded by the Educational Research and Development Centers Program, Award Number R309B960002, as administered by the Institute of Education Sciences (formerly Office of Educational Research and Improvement), U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. NCSALL's efforts are dedicated to improving practice in educational programs that serve adults with limited literacy and English language skills, and those without a high school diploma.

This Research Brief, along with almost all the materials produced by NCSALL, can be downloaded free from NCSALL's Web site at:

www.ncsall.net

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