

PAACE 2005 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE – Senator Santorum Response

The Pennsylvania Association for Adult Continuing Education (PAACE) is a non-profit educational association whose mission is to enable its diverse members to help adults achieve lifelong educational goals and to represent its members by exercising leadership at the local, state and national levels. PAACE is the only statewide professional organization in Pennsylvania which serves as an advocate for adult and continuing education. The membership includes professionals and volunteers from all aspects of adult continuing education.

PAACE has over 1,000 members whose programs reach 65,000 adult learners in the Commonwealth.

PAACE member programs include: adult basic and secondary education, English as a second language, continuing higher education, family literacy education, literacy tutoring, corrections education and workforce development.

QUESTIONS

1) The Adult Education State Grant Program creates a partnership among the federal government, states, and localities to provide adult education and literacy services. Its purpose is to assist adults in becoming literate and in obtaining the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency. President Bush has called for a 66% cut for FY2006 reducing funds from \$569 million to \$200 million. Literacy organizations nationwide are calling for a reversal of this cut. PAACE strongly supports increasing Adult Education funds to \$1 billion to meet basic needs, such as: the rising demand for English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction; funding for at least one full-time teacher for every adult education program; and increasing the use of instruction technology.

Do you support \$ 1 Billion for the Adult Education State Grant Program? If so, what would you do to have this increase realized?

I support the Adult Education State Grants program, which allows states to support low-literate adults by providing them an opportunity to transform their lives through learning. These grants have helped adults earn high school diplomas, prepare for job training, complete literacy programs, and help non-English speaking adults achieve language proficiency. These skills are absolutely essential to succeed in the fast-paced economy of the future. Students who participate in these programs remind us that the fight against unemployment at home and global competition abroad begins with the fundamental skills of reading and writing. To that end, I have repeatedly written the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education in support of meaningful increases to strengthen adult education programs. To help realize this goal, during debate of the Fiscal Year 2007 budget, I supported an amendment that provided this subcommittee with an additional appropriations allowance of \$7 billion with the intent to provide greater funding for education programs, including adult education.

2) The reauthorization of TANF will have a direct impact on many current and future adult education students. The measure, when passed, should encourage adults to pursue adult education to enhance their ability to find lasting, good jobs.

What provisions will you work for to enable welfare reform to enhance educational opportunities?

I am pleased that we have passed a reauthorization bill that will continue to build upon the successes of previously enacted welfare reform. The reauthorization will allow millions of Americans, and thousands of Pennsylvanians, to replace dependency on government with the dignity of receiving a paycheck. TANF reauthorization maintains current-law activities that count as work, including allowing 12 months for education and training. TANF reauthorization allows the states to determine which activities may be counted as work activities.

3) Jobs are becoming increasingly information sensitive. More than 50% of all new jobs will require some post-secondary education. In order to stay competitive in the global marketplace, more of Pennsylvania's workforce will need to increase their skills through adult education programs. In addition, many new immigrants will need ESL classes to help them become more productive and integrated members of society.

Do you believe that Adult Education programs are an important part of any strategy to grow the economy?

Yes, access to adult education programs is essential for ensuring our nation's economy remains competitive and is supported by a well-educated workforce. A shortage of skilled workers is detrimental to the economy. The higher the quality of America's workforce and the more skills our workers acquire the better prepared our nation will be to compete in today's global marketplace. A serious investment in adult education programs is essential to better prepare adults for postsecondary education and the workforce, and this is one of the reasons why I have advocated for increased funding for adult education programs. It is important to invest in our nation's workers once they enter the workplace to ensure that our nation can sustain its competitive edge. Life-long learning remains a defining characteristic of a competitive workforce and economy. I have advocated for continuing education opportunities through my SEEK Math and Science Act, which would provide strong incentives for companies in the science, technology, math, and engineering sectors to allow employees to pursue postsecondary education or training. Employees must continue to educate themselves as rapidly changing technologies and advancements enter the workforce, or they risk falling behind their competitors. When under-prepared adults gain the skills they lack, the economy is fueled by productive workers.

4) The American Medical Association estimates that \$74 billion in annual health care costs is attributable to the effects of under-education and limited proficiency in English. For example, parents are not always able to read or understand prescription instructions for themselves and their children.

What will you do to address Health Literacy?

Low literacy plays an important role in health disparities and evidence suggests that the lack of health literacy may contribute to lower quality care and even medical errors. I have supported measures to help bridge health literacy gaps in our nation's healthcare system. In the 108th Congress, I cosponsored the Patient Navigator, Outreach, and Chronic Disease Prevention Act, and I supported passage of this bill in the 109th Congress. The Patient Navigator Act helps medically underserved communities and individuals with language and cultural barriers have access to prevention, early detection, treatment and appropriate follow-up care services. The Patient Navigator Act is essential for helping patients navigate and overcome barriers in the healthcare system, including health literacy. Improving health literacy is fundamental to reducing health disparities and improving the overall health of our nation. I support HHS' Healthy People 2010 initiative, which emphasizes developing appropriate written materials for audiences with limited literacy and improving the reading skills of persons with limited literacy.

5) Family literacy programs encourage reading and other educational activities between parents and children. Family literacy programs have received funding through the federal Even Start program, which this year has been zeroed out in the President's budget based on a national evaluation. The most recent evaluation was completed prior to changes in the LIFT Act and No Child Left Behind legislation that added more stringent accountability measures, resulting in a national effort that has improved Even Start services and, subsequently, parent and child literacy outcomes.

Will you seek to reinstate funding for Even Start to its current level of \$248 million?

I supported the reauthorization of the Even Start program in the 106th Congress. Throughout my tenure in the Senate, I have supported increased funding for this program, which is the only federal program specifically dedicated to providing services to both disadvantaged young children and their parents. The President proposed eliminating funding for the Even Start program in Fiscal Year (FY) 2007; however, during the months of deliberation on the budget, Congress has modified the President's proposal. During debate of the FY 2007 budget, I supported an amendment which increased the advance appropriations allowance by \$7 billion with the intent to restore and provide greater funding for health, education, training, and low-income programs, including Even Start.

6) The baccalaureate degree is becoming the entry point to the workforce for the majority of students, making it increasingly important that the transfer from two-year to four-year institutions work well. The Community College Partnership Act of 2005 (H.R.1031) has been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives to encourage partnerships between community colleges and four-year colleges and universities. Improving the effectiveness of transfers from two-year to four-year postsecondary institutions will be the key to national progress in closing the gap among racial groups in degree attainment and has the potential to affect far more students than affirmative action policy.

Will you support initiatives such as House bill 1031 that encourages partnerships between two-year and four-year institutions of higher education to take the lead in preparing America's multicultural workforce for the 21st century?

Postsecondary education is important for preparing America's students to enter into an increasingly competitive workforce. Strong partnerships between high schools, institutions of higher education, and businesses will help better meet the needs of our nation's workforce. I strongly believe that we should support students at each stage of their postsecondary endeavors, and that they should be exposed to the rigorous and challenging coursework needed to prepare them for success in a competitive workforce, regardless of the institution in which they choose to pursue their studies.

7) Nearly 50% of adults in Pennsylvania need literacy skills to be effective workers, parents, and citizens. State and federal funds for Adult Basic and Literacy Education only reach about 53,000 Pennsylvanians, or 1.5% of the population in need. In addition, nearly 100,000 families in Pennsylvania are eligible for Even Start family literacy services based on the ages of children and the educational attainment of the children's parents. Even Start only reaches about 3,500 families each year, or 1.8% of those families in need.

What will be your legacy with regard to Adult Education and Family Literacy?

I have been a leader in the poverty alleviation agenda during my tenure in the Senate, especially in areas of welfare reform, asset building, and family issues. Both welfare reform and asset building have stressed the need for education and the importance of work, especially in low-income families. Increasing the number of positive, educated role models could have a far-reaching impact on future generations. One way to help individuals achieve self-sufficiency is to provide them with the tools they need to ensure long-term employment success. To that end, I have and will continue to support Adult Education and Family Literacy programs.