

LITERACY EDUCATION

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 5, 1989

Deemed Relevant by Board of Managers

February 2021

- WHEREAS,** The National PTA recognizes illiteracy as a severe problem which is prevalent throughout the country and exacts a great cost from society in terms of welfare, unemployment, lack of productivity and crime; and
- WHEREAS,** While as many as 23 million adult Americans are functionally illiterate (lacking basic skills beyond a fourth-grade level) and another 35 million are semi-illiterate (lacking skills beyond an eighth-grade level), and a recent survey indicated that 85% of all juveniles appearing in court are functionally illiterate, as are 40% of minority youth; and
- WHEREAS,** The U.S. Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 requires temporary residents of the U.S. who wish to apply for permanent residence to, among other requirements, demonstrate minimal understanding and knowledge of the English language and U.S. history and government; and
- WHEREAS,** Adult illiteracy has reached critical proportions in California with an estimated 25% of the state's adult population, 4.8 million, not meeting the state's standard for literacy; and
- WHEREAS,** The family helps mould the child and greatly influences the child's success in education and preparation for living; and
- WHEREAS,** There are parents who are unable to read well enough to read to their children or to read and comprehend information important to their own and their children's well-being; and
- WHEREAS,** PTA can be a factor in encouraging the coordination of educational services to meet family needs, and can work to reduce illiteracy at every age level; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to inform their membership and communities about the problem of adult illiteracy, and to work with local news media to publicize the problem; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to give information to the community about available local resources for reading/literacy programs; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its districts and councils encourage all units to support development of adult/child reading programs within their schools and communities; and be it further

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- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to support and encourage consideration of the needs of the immigrant population in all literacy programs; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to assist local libraries to secure volunteers trained to help teach basic skills to adult learners; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA support legislation that would provide funding to assist communities to secure adequate literacy education services; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA submit this resolution to the National PTA for consideration at the June 1989 National PTA Convention in Atlanta, Georgia.

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BACKGROUND SUMMARY

Adult illiteracy is a problem which has reached critical proportions in California as well as across the nation. An estimated 4.8 million Californians are functionally illiterate and, therefore, cannot read, write or comprehend at a level necessary to function in everyday life. Illiteracy is not a new problem, but it is becoming more critical in an increasingly information oriented and technologically based society.

Illiterate adults face continuous difficulties and hardships in life's most basic endeavors, i.e., employment, citizenship, education and parenting. Illiterate adults jeopardize their own health and safety and the health and safety of others. They cannot read prescriptions, ingredients of household products (lethal or non-lethal), instructions for operating appliances or tools and utensils, danger signs and warning labels.

Illiterate adults typically lack self-esteem. Illiteracy is a painful and embarrassing problem for adults, and a source of anxiety and isolation within a society that has become increasingly tied to written communication.