

**Read/Write/Now Adult Basic Education program of the
Springfield City Library
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**Information prepared by Janet Kelly, director of
Read/Write/Now and presented by Jean Canosa Albano at
the Massachusetts Library Association's Annual Conference,
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**I. From FY 2004 Fact Sheet—Adult Basic Education Needs
in Springfield rev. 3/21/04**

28% of adults over age 25 have not completed high school; 35% of adults lack the adequate training and basic skills needed to meet the demands of today's workplace; more than 730 adults are on waiting lists that grow daily for 240 slots funded by DOE grants in ABE and ESL programs in Springfield; 40% of Hispanic youth that start ninth grade never finish high school; 22% of African American youth drop out before finishing high school; 21% of all Springfield families have income under the federal poverty level; 45% of households in Springfield receive means-tested public assistance and non-cash benefits; currently, RWN offers 48 total slots for ABE with a waiting list of 105.

II. Read/Write/Now, a brief history - It was started in 1987 by the Springfield Library with a grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. From the beginning, the program was designed to offer small classes facilitated by professional teachers, with support by trained volunteer tutors. The focus was on basic literacy because there were almost no other programs serving adult beginning readers in Springfield.

17 years later, Read/Write/Now is still one of the only programs in the city that offers basic literacy classes. The program has survived a major flood, budget cuts and changes in funding, staffing changes, and two moves. It remains a library-based program, with access to all of the materials and services that are part of the Springfield library system. Read/Write/Now is a library department which is supported by grants. Currently, over 90% of its funding comes from the Massachusetts Dept. of Education, Adult & Community Learning Services.

III. R/W/N offers three levels of classes both day and evening, which include reading, writing, mathematics and computer literacy. The class levels span beginning, developing and intermediate readers, or non-reader – Pre-GED level. Reading and writing get equal time, and publishing student writing is an important part of the program. History, geography, current events, and science are woven into the reading & writing classes. Students' goals and interests are central to the curriculum, which is continually being developed by teachers for their classes using a multitude of sources, including the library collection right next door. We collect materials that reflect the cultures of our students as well as the rest of the world. The Annotated Bibliography of Diversity & Multicultural Materials for ABE includes many of the materials we use. (See sample) It is available online at <http://www.sabeswest.org/diversity/divbiblio4.pdf> and was published by SABES (System of Adult Basic Education Support).

IV. Samples of Read/Write/Now publications – (all will soon be available on line at www.readwritenow.org) Any can be sent to interested participants by contacting the program, except for Nina's Story (see below), available through <http://www.peppercornbooks.com/>

Nina's Story – four-volume set originally written & published at RWN while she was a student with us, now out from Peppercorn Press

Behind Closed Doors – Stories of Survival (the final product of a year long exploration of the impact of violence on learning)

Eat Right Now – Food Memories, Poems, Stories & Recipes (15th anniversary publication from RWN writers and eaters)

We are From... Our Lives in Poetry – an anthology of We are from... poems from RWN learners

Believe in Yourself, It's Never Too Late – personal narratives with moving photographs of each writer, the book was developed with a student editorial board who also named the book

Read Write Now Learner Handbook – outlines mission and policies of the program

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