



## Maryland Health Disparities Conference

*Optimizing the Health of Minorities During Economic Restructuring: Politics, Economy and Health Equity*

# Reducing Health Disparities Through Health Literacy

**Bonnie Braun, Ph.D.,  
Endowed Chair and Director  
University of Maryland College Park School of Public Health  
Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy**

**May 19, 2009**



# Three Forces Changing Our Future

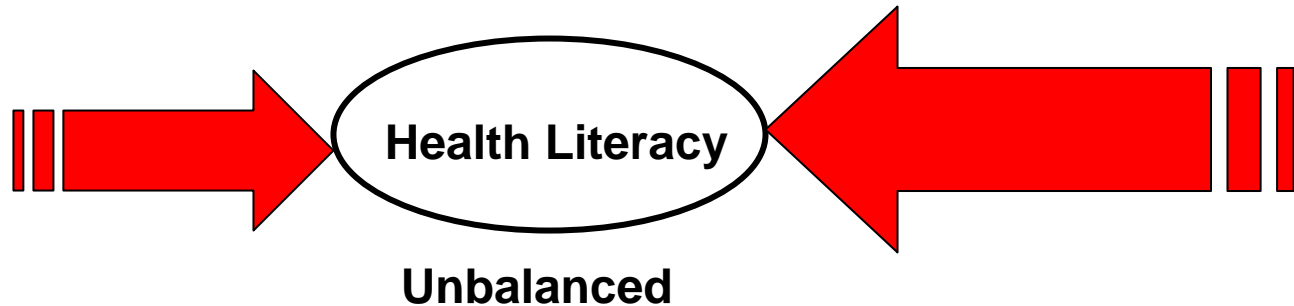
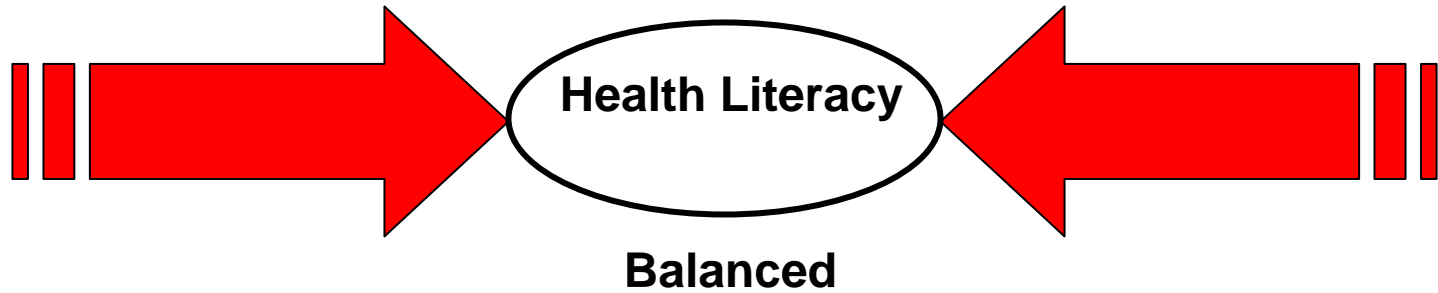


- Shifts in demographic profile of population
- Demands for higher skills
- Inadequate literacy & numeracy skills among large segments of youth and adult population

# The Challenge

**Individual  
Skills & Abilities**

**Demands & Complexity  
of Health Care**



# What is Health Literacy?

HEALTH  
LITERACY

The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.

Cultural &  
Conceptual  
Knowledge

Numeracy

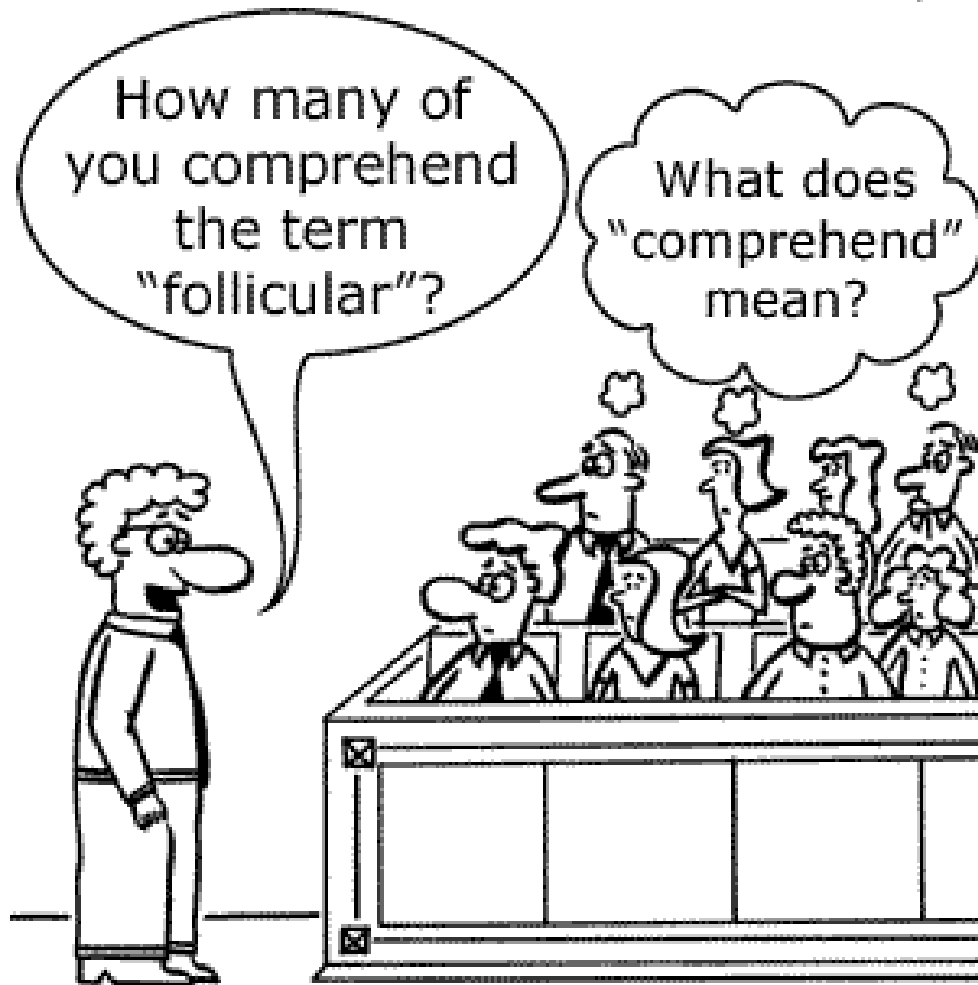
Listening

Speaking

Writing

Reading

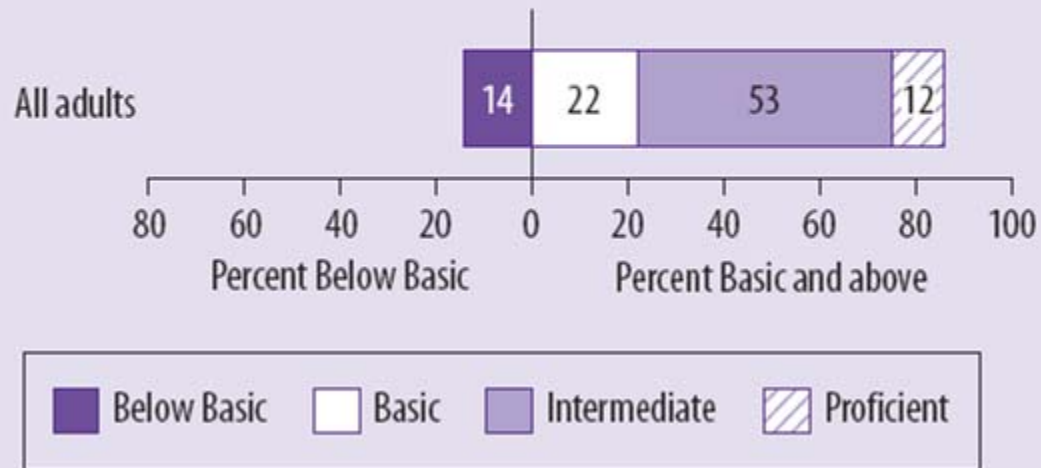
Adapted from Kaphingst's presentation of Neilsen-Bohlman, et al, 2004





# What Is the Need?

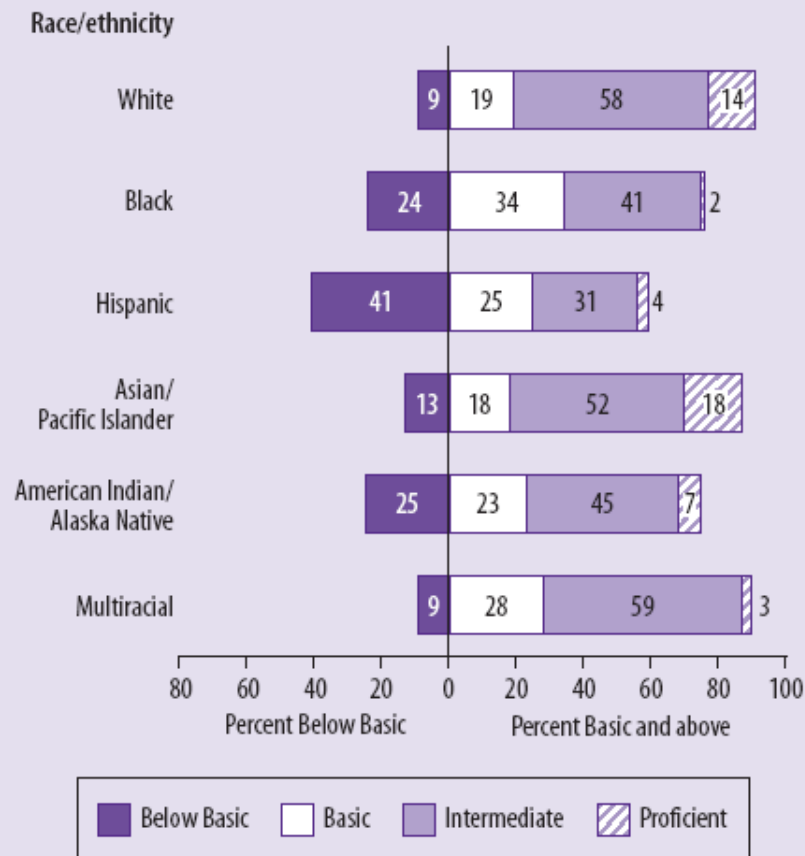
Figure 2-1. Percentage of adults in each health literacy level: 2003





# What Is the Difference By Race/Ethnicity?

Figure 2-5. Percentage of adults in each health literacy level, by race/ethnicity: 2003



# Benefits of Health Literacy Improvement

- Enhanced communications skills
- Greater adherence to desired behavior
- Increased ability to engage in care of self and others
- Greater efficiency and cost savings to the health care system
- Improved health status of diverse populations

Quick Guide to Health Literacy DHHS

**Herschel S. Horowitz**  
**Center for Health Literacy**  
**Vision~Mission**

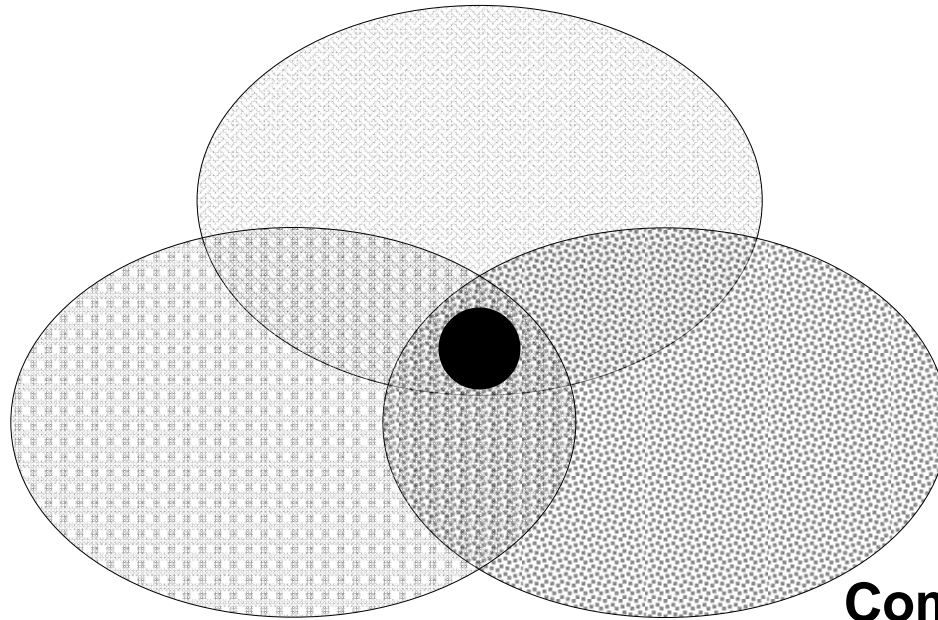


- **Vision:** Our vision is that all of Maryland's population knows, understands and appropriately acts upon science-based health information to increase their health and well-being as a result of encounters with professionals in public health.
- **Mission:** Our initial mission is to strengthen the capacity of the public health workforce to both know and apply health literacy principles to their practices.

# Advancing a Better State of Health Through Health Literacy

Together we can make change happen

University of Maryland--College Park School of Public Health  
Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy



University of Maryland  
System  
Other Institutions  
of Higher Education

Community Partners  
DHMH  
County Departments of  
Health, Social Services  
Adult and Health Educators

---