

State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services

Meeting Notes
April 14, 2009
Burlington County College
Mount Laurel, New Jersey

Attendance

Marie Barry – Department of Education
Norma Blake – NJ State Library
Elissa Director – Literacy Volunteers of America
Patty Friend – Department of Corrections
Terri Hughes – Department of Human Services
Sandra Love – Assemblywoman
Heather McKay – Center for Women and Work
Claudia Merkel-Keller – Department of Labor and Workforce Development
Robert Santare – Champion Fasteners, Inc.
Barry Semple – NJALL
Daniel Sperrazza – Aide to Assemblywoman Love
Chris Estevez – NJ AFL-CIO
Felecia Wright – Department of Education

Welcome

Chairman Santare called the meeting to order at approximately 10:10 a.m. and welcomed all in attendance and extended a special welcome to Assemblywoman Love and her Aide, Daniel Sperrazza. Chairman Santare asked everyone to introduce themselves.

A motion to accept the minutes of the February 18, 2009 meeting was made and approved.

Adult High School

The Chair noted that at the March 31, 2009 meeting of the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) there was a discussion concerning the lack of dedicated funding for adult high schools. The SETC asked that SCALES address this issue and make recommendations back to the SETC.

Barry Semple referenced a letter from the New Jersey Council of County Vocational-Technical Schools to highlight that the lack of funding for adult high schools (AHS) has resulted in reductions in the number of schools and students served. Senate Bill 2115 proposes a permanent and predictable source of funding for adult high school programs by including them in the State aid formula. Currently only 34 AHS exist in the State, down from 55 programs in 2002. Adult high schools adhere to State high school standards and follow local district graduation requirements. AHS provide opportunity for many young adult and adult learners, including those who were served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Given the significant number of New Jersey residents who do not have a high school diploma, it is essential to maintain this high school completion option.

AHS also provide added value to local area WIA Title II consortia, which provide ABE, GED, ESL, and civic education, in that these programs can leverage AHS infrastructure, including facilities, staff, materials, administrative services and supplies.

Supporters of adult high schools are conducting a major advocacy effort to save these important education institutions. This includes a virtual march in Trenton and an email campaign to State Legislators.

Attendees discussed the importance of AHS and other adult education programs such as literacy volunteer and prison education, which are all experiencing funding shortfalls in this economic downturn. Also discussed was the use of federal stimulus money to help address adult education program funding gaps. Another recommendation for the utilization of stimulus funds was to use some of these dollars to support worker retention efforts.

State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services (SCALES) recommendations on adult high schools should be presented at the next SETC meeting on May 26, 2009. Based on the ideas presented during this discussion, Lansing Davis was asked to draft recommendations to share back with SCALES for their further input and then to finalize to send to the SETC (both the Chair and the Executive Director) and the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act: Workforce Investment Planning

Lansing Davis indicated that the United States Department of Labor is requiring states to submit a modification of their state Workforce Investment Act (WIA) plan to address American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding. The plan is due June 30, 2009, but states must first submit, by April 15, a request to extend their current WIA plan, as well as indicate any requested waivers and changes in performance targets. To assist in the overall State planning process,

the SETC will issue guidelines this month for local WIB ARRA plans and the draft of these plans will be due to the SETC sometime in May.

Transitions to Postsecondary Education and Training

Barry Semple reported on the first day of New Jersey Association of Lifelong Learning (NJALL) Conference held on March 26, 2009, which focused on transitions to Postsecondary Education. The conference day was well attended and the presenters, which included expert practitioners both from New Jersey and outside the State, were informative and well received.

Adult education programs do not adequately prepare their students to transition to postsecondary. The focus is mainly on preparing students for GED level, which correlates with high school completion skills, but does not match up with what is needed to succeed at the postsecondary level. Adult education programs should also prepare GED level students for the Accuplacer, the test that the State's Community Colleges use to determine applicants readiness for college-level work.

Also adult education programs do not provide learners with transitional experiences and linkages students consider postsecondary and connect to important services such as counseling and financial aid. Currently, the vast majority of GED completers, like many high school graduates, will have to take remedial courses if they enroll in college. However, individuals' earning power increases significantly with the completion of at least one year of postsecondary level coursework.

Claudia Merkel-Keller indicated that the College Yes program at Essex County College will receive additional funding. They will work with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) to develop and pilot a project to align adult secondary-level curriculum with the skills tested for in the Accuplacer. Professors Dorothy Strickland and Lynda Ginsburg, both from Rutgers University, have been asked to work with College Yes on this project.

Apprenticeship programs are developing initiatives to ensure that their students achieve the skill levels to be successful in college. Apprenticeship is now being looked at as an alternate entry point to college. New Jersey Pathways Leading Apprentices to a College Education (NJPLACE) provides a vehicle to facilitate this transition.

We need to find out what is working with transitions. SCALES should survey State literacy programs. Transitions should be a priority focus in the WIB literacy planning process. Also transitions should be an outcome measure in the NRS.

Online Forum Group

Heather McKay briefly described the online forum she set up for SCALES. The forum can be used for discussion and information sharing, but also for polling and surveys. Please refer questions to her.

Updates and New Business

LWD will issue a Continuation of Funding for Title II notice for 2010 in this month. Federal funding for Title II was reduced.

LWD will also provide support through a competitive process to build strong connections between faith- and community-based organizations and the One-Stop system. This program is called Project Connect.

Literacy Volunteers of New Jersey (LVNJ) held a Health Literacy Summit at Burlington County Community College on April 3, 2009. The summit was well attended and the health care community was well represented, but participation from the adult education community was not as great as expected. As a follow up, there will be future meetings to discuss health literacy.

LVNJ conference will be held April 25, 2009.

Newest GED center open at La Casa Del Don Pedro in Newark.

A new version of the GED will be released in January 2012. Once the new test is released test takers must pass all the new subtests to pass the GED battery.

A motion to close the meeting was made and approved. The meeting ended at approximately 11:52 a.m.