

State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services

Meeting Notes

April 29, 2010 (9:00 AM-12:00 Noon)
Burlington County College Enterprise Center
BCC Board Room
Burlington, New Jersey

Welcome and Approval of Minutes – Robert Santare, Chair

Robert Santare called the meeting to orders at about 10:10 and welcomed attendees. A motion was made to approve the minutes of the November 18, 2009 meeting. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Conference Call Meeting: Summary – Lansing Davis

Because of facility issues, the State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services April 8, 2010 meeting at the Rutgers University Labor Education Center was changed to a conference call meeting, and the scheduling of this April 29, 2010 meeting.

Chairperson Robert Santare noted that a number of members had expressed concern that the proposed State education budget may have a significant impact on the adult education system. Although the in-person meeting was rescheduled to April 29, 2010, using the April 8, meeting time for a conference call, provided an opportunity for members to discuss their concerns.

The conference call opened with Mr. Santare welcomed everyone and asked all callers to identify themselves. The goal of the call was to discuss the implication of the proposed budget on the adult education system. Mr. Santare emphasized that the discussion should focus on what is known about the status of adult literacy programs, how to collect additional information, and to brainstorm on what, if any, adjustments to the system should be recommended to maintain high quality services and ensure access.

Although the overall impact of the budget crisis on the adult education system was still unknown, feedback from an informal outreach effort by NJALL and anecdotal information suggests that a number of adult high schools will close or significantly scale back their operations. It was suggested that Mr. Santare ask Dennis Bone to schedule a meeting with the Commissioners of Education and Labor and Workforce Development to discuss the impact of budget cuts on adult education and adult education's impact on the economy. Lansing Davis was also asked to convene a small group of members to prepare a briefing paper for Mr. Bone.

A second conference call was held on Wednesday April 14, 2010 at 2:00 p.m. to finalize the briefing paper and to share updated program information. It was decided that rather than asking Mr. Bone to meet with the two Commissioners as previously requested, SCALES should ask to be placed on the agenda of the May 11, 2010 Commission meeting to discuss challenges facing the adult education system.

The system analysis paper that SCALES will produce should present a clear problem statement which needs to be supported by facts. Programs are heavily reliant on grants; a reduction or loss in one of these funding sources can have a rippling effect on the entire program and the system. Adult high schools are a core component of the system, providing a significant piece of the adult literacy instructional delivery infrastructure. Other possible sources of funding programs, such as federal grants, should be explored. The paper also needs to clearly define the adult literacy system. Adult education currently serves a diverse population with varied goals including young adults (16 and older) and adults; employed, unemployed, and those out of the workforce; those without a high school diploma as well as those who have the high school credential, but low skill levels; learners who need to improve their basic skills to get a job or training, immigrants seeking to improve their English skills or gain citizenship, etc. Equally important, adult education program should help prepare learners to transition to postsecondary education and training because it's not until one earn a credential at this level that significant economic benefits of education are realized.

Low skills have a detrimental impact on one's ability to find and maintain employment that provides self-sufficient wages. Those with low skill are also highly correlated with receipt of welfare assistance and incarceration.

Lack of funding reduces the intensity and comprehensiveness of services that programs and the system can offer. There needs to be a renewed commitment to adult education and an acknowledgement of its role in developing a skilled workforce and a strong economy. The focus should be to create a permanent adult education system with a consistent and sufficient funding base.

A bill A-217, reintroduced as from he last Assembly session would require the State to provide State aid for public school adult high school programs. Claudia Merkel-Keller indicated that Title II funding has been fairly stable with some redistribution – a reduction of about \$800,000 in the current grant to the State.

Some leadership money will be distributed to support WLL, including those within the correctional system. LWD is still working to identify funding for the NJN project which provides the instructional context for this computer-based resource.

Although the short term goal should be to have funding restored for all adult education programs, the long term goal should be to develop a coherent and comprehensive plan for the adult education system that optimally meets the broad workforce needs of the system.

Attendance

Members and Alternates

Hal Beder- retired

Bob Berezny - Department of Education

Norma Blake- New Jersey State Library

Elissa Director- Health Literacy

Nancy Fisher- Jewish Vocational Services

Leigh Freeman- NJN Public Television

Patty Friend- NJ Department Corrections

Terri Hughes- Department of Human Services

Claudia Merkel-Keller- Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Felecia Nace- Department of Education

Robert Santare- Champion Fasteners, Inc.

Barry Semple-retired

Ed Correa - NJ State AFL-CIO

Staff

Lansing Davis- SETC