

# State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services

## Meeting Notes

June 17, 2009 (10:00 AM-12:00 Noon)  
Labor Education Center, Rutgers University  
New Brunswick, New Jersey

### Members and Alternates

Hal Beder- Emeritus, Rutgers University  
Elissa Director- Literacy Volunteers of New Jersey  
Nancy Fisher- Jewish Vocational Services  
Patty Friend- Department of Corrections  
Jill Lewis- New Jersey City University  
Claudia Merkel-Keller- Department of Labor and Workforce Development  
Margaret Milliner- Department of Human Services  
Barry Semple- New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning  
Felecia Wright- Department of Education

### Guests

Eileen Appelbaum- Center for Women and Work, Rutgers University  
Leigh Freeman- New Jersey Network Public Television  
Paul Jurmo- Union County College  
Heather McKay- Center for Women and Work, Rutgers University  
Nick Montalto- International Institute of New Jersey

### Welcome – Lansing Davis

Lansing Davis called the meeting to order at approximately 10:10 a.m. and welcomed all in attendance. He indicated that the Council Chair, Robert Santare, could not attend the meeting, but had reviewed the agenda.

A motion to approve the minutes of the April 14<sup>th</sup> meeting was made. Elissa Director noted that her affiliation should be corrected to read, *Literacy Volunteers of New Jersey*. The motion was passed with the proviso that the minutes would be amended to reflect that change.

### Adult High Schools – Lansing Davis

The \$10 million funding for Adult High Schools (AHS) has been restored in the budget by the Senate and Assembly Budget Committees. Though AHS funding for FY 2010 appears to be resolved, proposed cuts to this funding have been an annual problem for a number of years. There needs to be a long-term strategy to address this funding problem.

Barry Semple acknowledged the support from key legislator and the efforts of the field. AHS were one of only a handful of items in the budget to be increased or restored. However, he stressed that the budget has not been passed and signed yet, so continued vigilance is needed.

During the discussion, it was indicated that there needs to be stronger communications between the Department of Education (DOE) and the State Council for Adult Education Services (SCALES) and the State Employment and Training Commission on issues related to adult education. DOE is revising regulations on adult high schools at the same time the Department's budget proposes to eliminate funding for them. The State should consider transferring authority and funding for AHS to the community colleges.

AHS are also serving recent high school dropouts, who use these programs as a way of reengaging with the education system and completing the requirements for a high school diploma.

Noting that elimination of funding for adult high schools is a recurring issue, Robin Widing recommended that SCALES analyze all programs of the adult literacy system that can lead to high school completion to compare their key elements and unique attributes and to determine the skill and value they provide the adult learner in their education and career development. It was also suggested that the analysis look at the capacity of the system and each of the component programs to meet learners' needs. This analysis should pay particular attention to AHS and their fit within the overall system. It should look at outcomes of AHS, GED programs, and Learning Links, as well as the 30 college credit option. The review should also look at how well the system and programs facilitate transitions to postsecondary education, but as important, how it contributes to the workforce investment system. Lansing Davis was asked to convene a committee to do the analysis of the adult education system as outlined and draft a white paper for SCALES. The following individuals volunteered to serve on the committee:

Claudia Merkel-Keller  
Leigh Freeman  
Elissa Director  
Barry Semple

This analysis is timely because the new five-year unified state plan for workforce investment to be submitted in 2010 will address how the adult education system fits into the overall workforce investment system. The proposed analysis and white paper will help the SETC get out in front on this. Additionally, SCALES should host a meeting of literacy councils of all local areas to discuss the vision for adult literacy, best practices, and service gaps.

An analysis should be done on the goals and needs of different populations, especially immigrant groups. The SETC or SCALES should apply for funding to have professional researchers conduct this analysis.

Many of adult literacy students have learning disabilities. An analysis should also be done on the percentage of students with learning disabilities. Unfortunately, most programs have not systematically assessed learning disabilities or provided appropriate remediation, because of limited resources. Catherine Match in the Greater Raritan WIB area was using a learning disability assessment. More information is needed about this.

#### State and Local ARRA Plans – Robin M. Widing

The focus of ARRA workforce investment funding is on training individuals and helping them move into the workforce. The bulk of these funds are expected to be spent on occupationally-based training. The majority of youth funding should be used to operate summer youth employment programs in 2009. New Jersey is emphasizing transitioning these youth to employment, training, or education programs after their summer employment. ARRA increases the age eligibility of youth to 24 years old. Work readiness outcomes are the only performance measure for summer youth employment; however, the regular WIA performance measures apply for youth who continue to be served after September 30, 2009.

As part of the requirement for ARRA funding, each State must submit a plan to the US Department of Labor (USDOL). As indicated in the announcement of this meeting, the draft ARRA plan is on the SETC website along with request for waivers and proposed changes in performance measures. SCALES members' comments on the plan and accompanying documents are welcome as well as input on the plan from the general public. The final State ARRA plan is due to the USDOL by June 30, 2009. The SETC also issued guidelines for local plans with drafts due by May 29, 2009. We are now in the process of reviewing these local plans, which can be found on each WIB's website and comments on these plans can be submitted to the given WIB.

With WIA up for reauthorization next year, the State will be required to submit a new five-year plan to USDOL. Once the ARRA plan has been submitted and any feedback from USDOL has been addressed, the SETC will begin organizing a process for the new five-year plan.

#### Work Readiness Literacy Module – Heather McKay and Eileen Appelbaum

A beta version of the first modules of the *BuildingSkills4Work* work readiness curriculum will be available in July. The lessons are self-paced, but a teacher should initially help the learner get started. Each lesson will start with a description of the EFF skill being addressed. This online curriculum is being designed to help learners develop the work readiness skills that employers have

identified as critical for success in entry-level jobs. Development of this curriculum is being led by the Center for Women and Work (CWW) at Rutgers University with assistance from the Center for Literacy Studies (CLS) at the University of Tennessee. The curriculum focuses on employer identified EFF skills that are the basis for the Work Readiness Profile and Credential. This project has been funded in-part by the Nicholson Foundation and the technology development is being done by R&D Media Solutions.

This Internet-based program will be available free of charge. Heather McKay provided a demo of the program and responded to questions.

Paul Jurmo indicated that Union County College would be interested in piloting the modules.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:05.