

# State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services

## Meeting Notes

November 18, 2009 (10:00 AM-12:00 Noon)  
Labor Education Center, Rutgers University  
New Brunswick, New Jersey

### Members and Alternates

Robert Berezny – Department of Education  
Norma Blake – New Jersey State Library  
Elissa Director – Literacy Volunteers of New Jersey  
Nancy Fisher – Jewish Vocational Services  
Terri Hughes – Department of Human Services  
Claudia Merkel-Keller – Department of Labor and Workforce Development  
Julio Sabater – Universal Communication Enterprise  
Robert Santare – Champion Fasteners  
Robin Widing – State Employment and Training Commission (SETC)

### Guests

Leigh Freeman – New Jersey Network Public Television  
Paul Jurmo – Union County College  
Nick Montalto – International Institute of New Jersey  
Felecia Nace – Department of Education  
Jessica Tomkins – Literacy Volunteers of New Jersey

### Staff

Lansing Davis – State Employment and Training Commission (SETC)

### Welcome and Approval of Minutes – Robert Santare, Chair

The meeting was called to order at about 10:15 a.m. The Chair had all attendees introduce themselves.

A motion to approve the minutes of the September 22, 2009 meeting was made and approved by the members. It was suggested that all acronyms in the minutes be spelled out.

### Adult Literacy Program Update – Claudia Merkel-Keller

The recession has affected literacy funding. For example, State funding for Workforce Learning Links (WLL), which is derived from a percentage of the Unemployment Trust Fund, has significantly declined because of the dramatic increase of unemployment claims. As a consequence, Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) has had to reduce WLL funding to local areas and the Department of Corrections (DOC) for their WLL programs.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title II funding for a number of states had been reduced for program year 2009-2010 based on a federal level recalculation of funding formula. New Jersey had lost almost 10% of this funding. However, the US Department of Education has recently agreed to restore \$231,000 to correct for the shortfall.

LiteracyPro Systems' LACES Data System is now being utilized by LWD to collect outcome data for Title II programs and report it to the federal Department of Education. This will give LWD the ability to provide accurate and reliable data for these programs. Claudia Merkel-Keller indicated that she will share the data report with SCALES. She anticipates that the narrative report will be ready for the next meeting.

Ms. Merkel-Keller distributed information about the Title II grantees, including their award amounts and enrollment performance as of November 2, 2009.

The question of how the State uses WIA Title II leadership money (\$1.6 million) was raised and Ms. Merkel-Keller agreed to provide a breakdown for the next meeting. She will also keep the Council updated on the leadership funding going forward. It was also noted that SCALES be given the opportunity to provide advice and make recommendations on the use of this leadership money. These funds should be used to support professional development and innovative projects; and through SCALES and other avenues, adult educators, students and other stakeholders should have the opportunity to influence these initiatives.

As part of the planning for the use of ARRA funds, LWD promoted a bulk purchase training initiative with the New Jersey Council of County Colleges. Local areas were asked to commit funding for the training and in return be given training slots for their customers. It is anticipated that the first bulk training will focus on work readiness. The Council should also be accountable for these training efforts and data should be open to the public and assessed by the system. There must be transparency and local areas should be given the opportunity to provide input.

The integration of literacy with occupational training is also an important concern. Strategies to link literacy programs with occupational training must be developed. This provides participants with the opportunity to improve basic skills while applying them to occupational training efforts, making learning more relevant to them. Essex County is looking at identifying the basic skills needed for entry into training so literacy instruction can focus on providing those skills.

Ms. Merkel-Keller attended the High School Summit in New Brunswick, which was hosted by the State in collaboration with America's Promise. The Summit is part of a statewide campaign to keep young people in school and increase high school graduation rates. The summit marked the second year of the initiative that brings together leaders in business, education, the community, State

government and parents and students. The Summit was well attended and a key recommendation from the meeting was to create a system that helps young people move from each level of education through college completion. The new paradigm for the education system must be that everybody can succeed given appropriate supports and these supports should help learners transition from basic to advanced literacy on through postsecondary education.

#### SETC Transition Report to Governor-Elect Chris Christie's Administration – Robin Widing

The SETC is preparing a brief transition report that highlights its mission and key responsibilities. The report will provide a description of all its committees, including SCALES and identify recent accomplishments. This report will be integrated into LWD's transition report which gets submitted to the Governor's Transition team. The SETC also anticipates preparing additional information for the incoming Administration.

A major focus for the SETC going forward will be on transition to postsecondary education. NJPLACE (New Jersey Pathways Leading Apprentices to a College Education) is an important transitional strategy in that it links organized occupational learning to postsecondary credits while encouraging apprentices to pursue a college degree. It also sets in the minds of young people and their parents that apprenticeship is another route to postsecondary education, rather than a path away from it.

At the SETC meeting on November 17, 2009, Sue Schurman, Professor of Labor Studies and Employment Relations at Rutgers University, gave a presentation about the 21st Century knowledge requirements and acquisitions relating to front-line workers. She also highlighted the flexible, integrated approach used by NJPLACE to equate apprenticeship learning with college-level learning.

SCALES members discussed the importance of integrating literacy skills with occupational training to more effectively address the learning needs of the individuals with low literacy and low occupational skill levels. Programs that integrate literacy and occupational training are reporting success in meeting students needs to efficiently prepare for entry-level work.

#### Adult Literacy System Analysis – Lansing Davis

The analysis of the literacy system and the resulting recommendations should be shared with Governor-Elect Chris Christie's Administration. It should describe what the current system looks like and provide a vision for the future, which should help to define the priorities and direction for adult education for the new Administration. This report/white paper should be the next iteration of the master plan that SCALES is responsible for submitting as part of its legislative mandate.

Members suggested that the report discuss how resources should be allocated and the impact that decreased funding has on programs and people served. Also SCALES should be responsible for facilitating literacy program and system evaluation, which should include onsite reviews. This should be incorporated in the report.

People who go through training programs should have their basic skills addressed so that they are better prepared for the workplace and job-ready. These basic skills should not be taught in isolation, but also should include work readiness skills. The report should include examples of best practices in integrating basic skills and occupational skills training. There must also be more assessment to ensure that people are actually acquiring skills and preparing for the next level of educational/occupational skills training, with the broader goal focused on completion of at least one year of postsecondary education. The point is that literacy skills can help make people more employable; and that integrating occupational and literacy skills that improve program success needs to be made.

Both Julio Sabater and Nancy Fisher volunteered to join the literacy system analysis workgroup.

Lansing Davis was asked to prepare a series of questions to solicit input to the report from SCALES members. He will prepare the questions and email them to the Council.

New Jersey Association of Lifelong Learning (NJALL) will conduct a webinar on literacy to college transitions on November 23, 2009 at 2:00 p.m. Hal Beder can be contacted to signup for the webinar. NJALL will also hold its annual conference on March 25 and 26, 2010. The first day will focus on transitions.

Next meeting of SCALES will be in February with the date to be determined. Once the date is determined, Lansing Davis will send out a notice.

The meeting ended at 12:00 p.m.