

State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services

Meeting Notes
November 18, 2008 (10:00 AM-12:00 Noon)
Labor Education Center
New Brunswick, New Jersey

Attendance

Robert Berezny (for M.Barry)
Dianne Ciesla
Lansing Davis
Elissa Director
Nancy Fisher
Leigh Freeman (for E.Christopherson)
Terri Hughes
Paul Jurmo

Jill Lewis
Claudia Merkel-Keller
Margaret Milliner
Renita Ragan
Julio Sabater
Robert Santare
Barry Semple
Robin Widing

Welcome, Robert Santare, Acting Chair, State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services.

Robert Santare opened the meeting, welcomed attendees and asked each person to introduce themselves.

SETC Update, Robin Widing, State Employment and Training Commission.

Robin Widing provided a brief synopsis of her background, indicating that before joining the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) she led The Widing Group, a national consultant firm that specialized in building high performance workforce systems. Over a 17-year period, among her clients were Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), One-Stop Career Centers, County Colleges, and in that capacity she had worked with the SETC and most of the local workforce investment areas in New Jersey. Prior to establishing a consultant business, she worked for a Private Industry Council (PIC) and a local Chamber of Commerce.

Ms. Widing noted that Dennis Bone is the new Chair of the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC). He is reaching out to stakeholders and intends for the SETC to establish inclusive planning and development processes in addressing the many workforce investment challenges facing the State.

The global economic crisis is one of these challenges facing the State, as well as the nation. The state-based locally delivered workforce development system must develop strategies to effectively address this "perfect storm." Because New Jersey has a statewide literacy council (SCALES) and is the only known state to establish literacy

centers in each of the comprehensive One-Stop Career Centers, it is better positioned to develop sound strategies to assist dislocated workers who need to improve their literacy skills levels. New Jersey should be a national model.

While this global crisis was brewing, however, the federal government was cutting approximately 40% of the funding from the workforce system. States are faced with reduced funding, but escalating unemployment rates. We have to build-in greater accountability and efficiencies to the system, and be more effective with fewer resources. There are good things going on in New Jersey's workforce system, but we need to do a better job of communicating what we are doing.

The growing number of dislocated workers is a major concern of the SETC. As a call to action, the SETC will conduct a webinar for WIB members and elected officials to outline the scope of the problem and to lay the framework for local planning to address the crisis. We also will focus on this at the next SETC meeting on November 25, 2008.

Local Literacy Plans - For at least the next six months, we anticipate the WIB planning agenda to be full. The financial crisis will consume much of the WIBs' time and energy because they must focus their attention on ensuring that the workforce system is geared up to handling the increased volume of dislocated workers – some SCALES members confirmed that they have observed significant increases of job seekers in their local areas. It is also essential that the workforce system well position itself to work with businesses who are downsizing and those who are hiring. We also anticipate that WIA planning will be required by USDOL sometime in 2009. Most of the State's WIBs are also participating in one of three Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) grants, which focus on regional planning. Additionally, the WIB literacy plan update process, which SCALES recommended and helped develop the guidelines for, has been shared in draft form with the WIBs. Rather than requiring development and submission of separate plans for each issue, we are considering a more comprehensive planning process.

It was, therefore, agreed at the meeting that WIBs will not be required to submit updated literacy plans at this point; however local WIBs are expected to conduct WIB literacy committee meetings to plot future direction. The questions contained in the draft literacy planning guidelines should be the basis for their discussions. These discussions should extend beyond the WIB planning area and should also be incorporated into the WIRED (regional planning) process. In addition, planning should consider the needs of the lowest level literacy customers, as well as those with higher level skills.

The SETC will ask WIBs to take another look at the draft literacy planning guidelines to see if there are additional issues they should address in their planning. WIBs should submit minutes from their literacy committee meetings, as well as key questions to the SETC. The draft literacy planning guidelines will be redistributed to SCALES members.

Update MIS System for NRS, Claudia Merkel-Keller, Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development has contracted with Literacy Pro for data reporting. When the US Department of Education met with New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development in 2007 to review its administration of WIA Title II, it noted that the State needed a management information system for collecting literacy program outcome data for the National Reporting System (NRS). Ten other States are using the Literacy Pro system.

New Jersey will conduct 17 trainings in the use of the system for local literacy training providers. The system should be fully operational for reporting 2009-2010 data for the NRS. This new system will enable data to be uploaded to the Consumer Report Card as well. The system will make it easier for local programs to monitor their progress and be informative for WIBs as they do their planning. Some programs in New Jersey have already been using the system.

LVNJ Training Grant, Elissa Director, Literacy Volunteers of New Jersey.

Literacy Volunteers of New Jersey (LVNJ) received a \$97,500 grant from the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to recruit and train new volunteer tutors. Each new volunteer tutor received approximately 15 hours of pre-service training. Of the 1,283 volunteers who enrolled in the training, 980 successfully completed. As of June 30, 2008, 814 of the tutors had provided instruction to 1,919 adult learners.

The local adult literacy system looks to LVNJ to provide instruction for the lowest level students. Once these students improve their skills sufficiently, they are referred to other programs such as WIA Title II. Over 1000 people are on LVNJ's waiting list.

College - Yes Program Essex County, Renita Ragan, Essex County College.

Renita Ragan just returned from the National Conference on Effective Transitions in Adult Education where she presented a workshop about the College -Yes program at Essex County College. The College -Yes program is a result of a \$700,000 grant to increase the number of 18-24 year olds who successfully complete adult secondary education and transition to postsecondary education. The program not only focuses on academic skills necessary for successful transition, but also looks at life circumstance issues that would impact success, such as homelessness. To be included in College - Yes, students must have a 6th grade or above academic level. The focus is to prepare people to enter college without taking remedial courses.

Ms. Ragan expressed interests in working with SCALES to develop policies and programs around secondary to college transitions for adult learners.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.