

State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services

Meeting Notes

September 14, 2010 (9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.)
Department of Labor and Workforce Development
13th Floor Auditorium
Trenton, New Jersey

Welcome and Approval of Minutes – Robert Santare, Chair

Meeting was called to order at 9:40 a.m. Robert Santare welcomed attendees and asked them to introduce themselves. Members were asked to review the minutes. Elissa Director indicated that her affiliation was not updated to Health Literacy; she was still listed as representing LVNJ. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes with the noted correction for Elissa Director's affiliation. The minutes were unanimously approved by the members in attendance.

WIA Title II and Workforce Learning Links Updates – Dr. Claudia Merkel-Keller, Assistant Director, Department of Labor and Workforce Development

The source of funding for Workforce Learning Links (WLL) had been the Supplemental Workforce Fund for Basic Skills, which was derived from a portion of the Unemployment Compensation Fund. High unemployment has significantly increased the number of unemployment insurance claims, virtually depleting the fund.

To compensate for some of the lost dollars, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) will use a portion of the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title II funding to support WLL. As a result, WLL will be supported with both State and federal funds.

State funds will support WLL clients who have a high school diploma or its equivalent and those with or without HS diploma who are only interested in Personal Computer Basics (PCB) with a goal of obtaining or retaining employment. For these clients, programs will continue to use the America's One-Stop Operating System (AOSOS) for reporting purposes. WIA Title II funding will support WLL clients who lack a high school diploma or equivalent. Programs serving clients with these funds will use the LACES data system for reporting. Regardless of which funding source, clients must have a minimum 4th grade reading level to use WLL services. Clients who don't meet WLL eligibility requirements are referred to other adult education programs.

LWD has made about \$14 million in WIA Title II funds available for its competitive grant program that funds literacy consortia in each Workforce Investment Board (WIB) area and education programs within the Department of Corrections' institutions. As with the previous grant cycle 17 literacy initiatives are being funded throughout the State.

The LWD adult education unit is in the process of preparing the Performance Report due to the US Department of Education by December 31, 2010. The report will include a narrative summary as well as the National Reporting System (NRS) statistical tables. Because the LACES contract ends in the summer of 2011, the unit has begun the process for preparing a Notice of Grant Opportunity for bids to provide a data management system for a minimum of 3 years beyond the current contract.

LWD is closing out its 10 year partnership with the New Jersey Network (NJN). NJN supported the development and implementation of the WLL Program. Funding for NJN was not provided in the Governor's budget this fiscal year.

Adult High School Update – Robert Berezny, Manager, Bureau of Adult Education & Family Literacy/GED, Department of Education

Because of budget cuts, 19 adult high schools indicated that they were planning to close while 21 were planning to continue operating. On the other hand, 4 new GED Testing Centers were opened.

It was suggested that the State explore the use of virtual adult high schools to fill the gap caused by program closures.

Another suggestion was that SCALES request a meeting with Rochelle Hendricks, Acting Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Education, to discuss adult education programs with specific emphasis on adult high school funding. An alternative suggestion was to ask Dr. Hendricks to attend a SCALES meeting. The Chair asked Lansing Davis to draft a letter to Dr. Hendricks to request a meeting.

It was noted that some of the gaps in literacy funding have been filled with carryover dollars this year, but it's anticipated that these reserves will not be available. Robin Widing suggested that we look at other states to see what they are doing with literacy programming and funding. NJ has not fully achieved integration between basic skills, workforce, and career development. Again, we should look at models from other states to identify best practices.

Overview of SCALES Presentation at the SETC – Lansing Davis, Sr. Policy Analyst, State Employment & Training Commission

At the September 2, 2010 State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) meeting, Robert Santare provided a brief overview of SCALES. Hal Beder then

gave a PowerPoint presentation titled *Challenges to the Adult Literacy Delivery System*. The presentation provided data showing that a significant portion of New Jersey's adult population could benefit from improving their literacy skills and how this could contribute to economic and workforce development. Dr. Beder also discussed the impact that reduced funding has had on the adult literacy system.

A paper copy of the PowerPoint slides were distributed at the SCALES meeting. Lansing Davis noted that the presentation went well and that both Robert Santare and Hal Beder indicated that SCALES would draft a report sometime in the future to present to the Commission.

Adult Literacy Program Census and Draft Paper – Lansing Davis, Sr. Policy Analyst, State Employment & Training Commission

To get a better handle on the current status of adult literacy programs, Hal Beder drafted a census questionnaire to collect data from program providers. (Copies of the questions were distributed.) Lansing Davis asked SCALES to review the questions and provide him with feedback. This information will help SCALES analyze the current system and make recommendations for improvement. A partial and very rough draft of the adult literacy report was also shared for comment. Feedback on the draft should also be sent to Lansing Davis.

Health Care Workforce Council – Robin Widing, Acting Executive Director, State Employment & Training Commission

The SETC, in partnership with the State Chamber of Commerce, submitted a proposal for an Affordable Care Act State Health Care Workforce Development Planning Grant through the US Department of Health and Human Services. If received, the grant will support a year-long comprehensive planning effort to assess New Jersey's Health Care workforce needs. The SETC has formed a Health Care Workforce Council and intends to engage in the planning regardless of whether the grant is funded. Among its responsibilities, the Health Care Workforce Council will be asked to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the State's health care labor market including the identification of education and skill needs to meet current and future demand and identify curricula and successful strategies to prepare the health care workforce.

The SETC needs SCALES' input on strategies to prepare the low literacy skill workforce for health care occupation with career ladders. A key question is how to build the literacy skills of the workforce, while providing them with specific health care training. The SETC anticipates forming a workgroup to address this question and will reach out to SCALES for participation.

The meeting adjourned at about 11:35 a.m.

Attendance

Robert Berezny – Department of Education
Norma Blake – New Jersey State Library
Lansing Davis –m State Employment and Training Commission (SETC)
Elissa Director – Health Literacy
Nancy Fisher – Jewish Vocational Services (JVS)
Leigh Freeman – New Jersey Network (NJN)
Erik Jacobson – Montclair State University
David Kring – Consultant
Felecia Nace – Department of Education
Claudia Merkel-Keller – Department of Labor and Workforce Development
Robert Santare – Champion Fasteners, Inc.
Barry Semple – New Jersey Association of Lifelong Learning (NJALL)
Robin Widing – State Employment and Training Commission (SETC)