

State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services

Meeting Notes

November 16, 2010 (10:00 AM – 12:00 Noon)
Burlington County College Enterprise Center
Burlington, New Jersey

Welcome and Approval of Minutes – Robert Santare, Chair

The meeting was called to order at about 10:10 a.m. Robert Santare welcomed attendees and asked members to review the minutes of the September 14, 2010 for approval. A motion to approve the minutes was made and accepted.

Update: WIA Title II and Workforce Learning Links – Dr. Claudia Merkel-Keller, Assistant Director, New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development

The WIA Title II performance reports have been completed for the program year 2009-2010 and sent to Commissioner Harold Wirths, Department of Labor and Workforce Development. The reports were also being forwarded to the US Department of Education. For the 2009-2010 program year, approximately 33,000 adults received WIA Title II services throughout the State.

To help compensate for a reduction of Supplemental Workplace Literacy money used to support Workforce Learning Links (WLL) for program year 2010-2011, these programs will also receive WIA Title II funding. Programs will be responsible for following appropriate eligibility and reporting requirements for students depending on the applicable funding source. Also, with the reduction in Supplemental Workforce Literacy funding, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) cannot renew the contract with New Jersey Network to provide technical and curriculum support for the WLL.

LWD is encouraging programs to use of the newer Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) version 9-10; however, some are still using the older 7-8 version. The State cannot do a bulk purchase of the TABE and distribute them to programs because a bulk purchase would be subject to a competitive bidding process.

The LACES data system is finally in place. It is providing the LWD, local programs, and the US Department of Education, the federal agency that funds WIA Title II programs with useful and accurate data. All programs and appropriate LWD staff have been trained on the use of the LACES system. However, the initial contract that funded this project is expiring and must be reopened for bid through another competitive process. If another vendor wins

the contract, a new system will have to be developed and piloted and LWD and programs' staff will have to be trained to use it.

LWD is considering making money available to fund a displace homemakers grant program.

Update: Broadband Technology Opportunity Program (BTOP) – Norma Blake, State Librarian, New Jersey State Library

The State Library with assistance from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation won a National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Broadband Technology Opportunity Program (BTOP) grant in the public computer center category. The program goals include offering affordable pricing for high-speed Internet access services to libraries, enabling them to provide computer access to many additional users. Through the program, the State Library will also provide training to library staff throughout the State and users to better enable them to utilize the computer technology. The program will make available online content and databases to the unemployed and underemployed to help them improve their skills and to aid them with job searches.

The State Library is considering using the New Jersey Network (NJN) workforce literacy content that is available at the Workforce Learning Links; however this resource may not be available because State funding for it is being cut.

Update: Adult High Schools – Robert Berezny, Manager, Bureau of Adult Education & Family Literacy/GED, New Jersey Department of Education

There has been a steady reduction in State aid for adult high schools culminating in no funding appropriated for the 2010/2011 school year. These reductions have resulted in program and enrollment cuts in this sector.

Adult high schools have gone from 63 programs in 1997 with State funding in excess of \$18 million dollars to the current 15 programs with no available State funding. Overall enrollments are down from 8357 in 2008 to approximately of 2500 currently, a reduction of 70%. During the 2009/2010 school year, there were 38 adult high school programs in operation. However, as of October 2010, only 15 programs remain in operation and all of these reported drastic reductions in their enrollment capacity. Furthermore, at least two of the current programs have indicated that they will close after this current school year.

The State Board is looking at the adult high school situation. As part its review of education code, the Board is also considering if sections that address adult education should be altered to reflect the transfer of WIA Title II adult education programs to LWD.

Adult high schools provide an important alternative to the GED. These programs provide graduates with a locally issued high school diploma, while requiring them to meet the same district requisites as traditional age high school students. For

adults who have completed a significant portion of the high school requirement prior to leaving school, adult high school may be a more appropriate option than the GED. Also some employers and the military prefer local district diplomas over the GED. Adult high school also attracts a number of recent dropouts from traditional high school, who are still interested in earning a diploma.

Update: LACES Webinar– Claudia Merkel-Keller, Assistant Director, New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development

A 1½ hour webinar will be presented to help SCALES members and other selected adult education stakeholders to show case the data resources and administrative features of LACES system. The webinar will provide an overview of the system and highlight current and potential outcome data that can be generate through LACES. LACES was developed to meet the reporting requirements of the National Reporting System (NRS), but it could be setup as a management information system to provide real time data on a broad set of program inputs and outcomes, including class-level information to help teachers and administrators monitor learners' progress. Youth Corp is also considering using LACES system to help manage its programs and track outcomes.

Update: Health Care Grant – Lansing Davis, Senior Policy Analyst, New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), US Department of Health and Human Services has awarded the New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) an Affordable Care Act State Health Care Workforce Development Planning Grant for \$150,000. In anticipation of receiving this grant the SETC has established a Health Care Workforce Council (HCWC) and this body will conduct a year-long research and planning initiative to determine the workforce development needs of the health care industry. The research and subsequent analysis of this data will inform the development of a strategic plan that will address the current and projected workforce demands in New Jersey.

Among the issues that will be addressed in this planning initiative are strategies to improve the basic skills of literacy students while simultaneously providing entry-level training for health care occupations, and building career pathways to enable individuals to advance within the health care field. The HCWC will reach out to SCALES to draw on its expertise in adult literacy, postsecondary transitions, and career education to focus on this specific issue.

Discussion

The outlook for adult education in the short term is not optimistic. State funding cuts in the Supplemental Workplace Literacy funding, which supports Workforce Learning Links and elimination of funding which supported adult high schools, coupled with expected level Title II funding, does not bode well for meeting the needs of the significant number of adults who have not earned a high school

diploma or GED and those who regardless of their education attainment perform at low literacy levels.

The hope is that in the long term the State will adopt a vision for a rational literacy system that incorporates a variety of options for adults to improve their literacy skills, earn high school and work-related credentials, and to pursue at least one year of postsecondary education. All public funded adult education programs in this new system should be accountable for a consistent set of performance standards that look at employment, skill and credential attainment outcomes. All relevant State departments and agencies should be partners in this endeavor and likewise each WIB should serve as the platform for all local partners to work together in implementing this system.

SCALES must articulate such a vision for adult education. There needs to be a strategic plan that communicates this vision to key policy makers and provides the workforce/economic development rationale for implementation.

The meeting adjourned at about 12:00 pm.

Attendance

Members and Alternates

Robert Santare – (Chair) Champion Fasteners, Inc.

Hal Beder – Professor Emeritus, Rutgers University

Bob Berezny – New Jersey Department of Education

Norma Blake – New Jersey State Library

Nancy Fisher – Jewish Vocational Services

Terri Hughes – New Jersey Department of Human Services

Eric Jacobson – Professor, Montclair State College

Claudia Merkel-Keller – New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce
Development

Barry Semple – Retired and Chair, Monmouth County WIB Literacy Committee

Staff

Lansing Davis – State Employment and Training Commission