



**Wednesday, September 24, 2014  
Department of Labor and Workforce Development  
13<sup>th</sup> Floor Auditorium  
Trenton, NJ 08625**

**Minutes**

**Welcome and Approval of Minutes**

Hal Beder, Acting Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 10:01 A.M. He asked attendees to introduce themselves. After introductions, a motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the minutes of the June 19, 2014 meeting.

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title II/Standards**

Howard Miller pointed out that at previous meetings he has asked SCALES to consider adopting the Common Core State Standards: College and Career Readiness Standards.

For years federal adult education funds were administered by the NJ Department of Education (DOE) with educational attainment, i.e. grade level advancement and high school equivalency completion, the primary focus. Even with the enactment of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and NJ's consolidation of "to work" programs, including Title II Adult Literacy, into the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD), the educational culture and state implementation have not changed much, though the funding has shrunk.

The adult literacy program going forward is expected to change and money and standards will be key drivers for change. Currently for example, LWD through a competitive process distributes WIA Title II funding to local consortia. These partnerships typically include county colleges or school districts as the lead agency. Requirements for hiring teachers are based on the standards under which each provider operates. There should be a uniform set of standards for adult education teachers.

He also noted that LWD has increased the per participant served rate to \$1000 for WIA Title II. This higher reimbursement is to encourage programs to increase the intensity of instruction in order to improve outcomes though it might reduce capacity (fewer individuals served). Currently, approximately 27,000 people are served through Title II programs yearly. It takes between 50 and 60 hours to achieve one grade level improvement; the greater instructional intensity (more hours) the better learner outcomes.

The next step in changing the literacy system focuses on implementation of the College and Career Readiness Standards. New Jersey, as well as most states, has adopted the standards and they represent the criteria on which New Jersey's Title II outcomes will be judged going forward. Furthermore, the three high school equivalency tests approved in New Jersey are benchmarked to these standards. *Yet SCALES still embraces the EFF standards and has not voted to adopt these new standards.* This sends conflicting messages to local programs, though they will have to follow the College and Career Readiness Standards to be funded. It would show consistency if SCALES endorsed these new standards, and it would reinforce their importance.

WIA provided incentives for high performance; WIOA moves to fines and penalties for low performance. USDOL who provides Title II funding is aligning its metrics to the new standards and plans to incorporate them into the National Reporting System performance measures.

In response to Mr. Miller comments, attendees raised a number of concerns about WIOA outcomes and how they will impact serving learners. The primary adult literacy outcomes for WIOA are transition to postsecondary education and/or employment, while grade level improvement is only secondary. Many factors that affect postsecondary and employment transition, including the individual's goals, their educational level upon enrollment, their financial situation, the economy, etc. are beyond the control of adult education programs.

LWD has been working with the lead agencies of the Title II consortia. These agencies have been told to educate programs within their consortia about the changing expectations and standards driven by WIOA.

LWD wants to consider early implementation of WIOA though the regulations for this new law will not be released until January 2015.

The College and Career Readiness Standards and expected outcomes should be clearly communicated to programs and to students. Given these expectations, Title II may not be appropriate for some students at a given point in time. Programs performance in achieving outcomes will determine future funding. Going forward, programs will have to work more closely with the One-Stop System and community colleges to facilitate college and career outcomes. Like the standards, these are all policy issues that if not addressed by SCALES will be addressed by LWD at the program level.

Barry Semple made a motion that SCALES adopt/recognize the College and Career Readiness Standards for the adult literacy system. No one seconded the motion. Some attendees who were there representing others questioned whether they were voting members.

There was further discussion about student goals, which may or not be achievement of high school equivalency. It was noted that this is especially true of many ESL students. Going forward, SCALES should discuss program and system philosophy and goals, effectiveness, and quality (including that of instructional staff).

Mr. Miller reiterated that EFF is the standard that SCALES has set for the literacy system. However, the standards on which New Jersey will align federal state adult education programs are the College and Career Readiness Standards. This inconsistency creates confusion in the system.

Barry Semple reintroduced the motion to recognize College and Career Readiness Standards for the adult education system. After additional discussion about the appropriateness of the standards for different population and the ability to move this discussion into the SETC policy and planning arena, Michele Boronkas seconded the motion. After more discussion, an alternate motion was made to table the motion and vote on adopting the College and Career Readiness Standards until the next SCALES meeting in November.

### **SCALES Empowerment Plan**

Hal Beder move to a discussion on the plan that SCALES adopted to reinvigorate the Council. The first strategy was to work towards full membership. Michele Boronkas indicated that the membership categories and appointing authority is defined in the law. The SETC can identify candidates to fill vacancies on SCALES and make recommendations to the appointing authority, which depending on the membership category is either the Governor, the President of the Senate, or the Speaker of the Assembly. Final decisions are made by the appointing authority. Members can submit to Lansing Davis suggestions of people to fill vacancies on SCALES.

The second strategy was to establish yearly goals and measures for SCALES and report on the success of achieving them. Acting Chair Hal Beder indicated that much of the focus around goals and direction are currently dependent on the plan and strategic blueprint for change project that was to be initiated through Deputy Commissioner Fichtner's Office. Michele Boronkas indicated the project is on hold. Barry Semple made a motion to send a letter to the Deputy Commissioner inviting him to the next SCALES meeting to discuss the status of the plan and blueprint and the new law, WIOA. The motion was passed with a unanimous vote.

The remaining strategies were identified. It was agreed that only ones that have been addressed at this point were membership (which is in process) and consistent meeting schedule. If the Deputy Commissioner attends the next meeting, it will be important to discuss the strategies in the context of being responsive to the literacy needs of the system and providing an appropriate policy framework to meet those needs.

Michele Boronkas emphasized the need to increase communication and collaboration in the system. SCALES can provide the policy foundation to drive change as well as fortify decisions already made. She also noted that the SETC has been awarded a technical assistance grant through the National Governors Association to create a policy structure in collaboration with the Governor's and Lieutenant Governor's Offices to better align education, higher education, and workforce training with the economy. The focus is to create system dependent investment strategies rather than simply relying on the decisions of individual actors.

At this point the fire alarm sounded and the meeting was adjourned to evacuate the building.

## **SCALES Attendees - 9/24/14**

### **Members/Representatives**

Jean Baptiste Department of Corrections

Hal Beder- Retired

Michele E. Boronkas- NJ State Employment and Training Commission

Terri Hughes- Department of Human Services

Erik Jacobson- Montclair University

Howard Miller- NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Patricia Swartz- Department of Community Affairs

Barry Semple- Retired

### **Guest**

Peggy Cadigan- New Jersey State Library

David Kring- NJALL

Judy Larkin- Department of Community Affairs

Frank Losey- Department of Community Affairs

Tiffany McClary- New Jersey State Library

### **Staff**

Lansing Davis- NJ State Employment and Training Commission