

State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services

Meeting Minutes

December 14, 2011 (10:00 AM-12:00 Noon)
Burlington County College
Burlington, New Jersey

Welcome and Approval of Minutes- Robert Santare, Chair

The Chair called the meeting to order about 10:15 a.m. He welcomed all attendees and members and asked them to introduce themselves. He then asked members to review the minutes, but did ask for a vote to approve them because there was not a quorum. The Chair directed Lansing Davis to send a memo to all members to asking them to review and approve the minutes for September 14, 2011.

Daryl Minus-Vincent- Department of Education

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) has partnered with the Department of Education (DOE) to pilot the Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) at three sites: one in Asbury Park, Camden, and Newark. Using federal funding, LWD has provided a grant to DOE for \$500,000 to operate the program which will serve twenty in-school youth per site. The program currently focuses on in-school, at-risk youth who are juniors or seniors in high school. Though students continue to attend their regular high school classes, JAG provides additional remediation and employability skills training.

Larry Breeden- Department of Education

The Department of Education hosted a GED conference on November 18, 2011 at Mercer County Community College. Representatives from the GED Testing Service at the American Council on Education and Pearson, Inc. were there to discuss their new partnership to revise and deliver the GED test through a computer based testing format. States are being asked to recommend sites to pilot the computer-based testing format. New Jersey is considering as many as 8 pilot sites and Mr. Breeden indicated that he would like to see them in operation sometime early next year. Testing sites will need to meet certain requirements to deliver the computer-based test though it is not clear what the specific requirements are. The revised test will be launched in 2014.

DOE has also convened an assessment team to consider alternatives to the GED. WorkKeys, Accuplacer, and TABE are all possible alternatives. If the State selects alternative test to measure high school proficiency, DOE anticipates that it will still issue a State diploma for passing.

There also was discussion about whether the new GED or an alternate test would measure work readiness. WorkKeys purports to do so. However, it was noted that New Jersey was a founding partner in the development of the Work Readiness Credential Test and this should be used to assess work ready skills because unlike other tests, it was designed based on employer specifications.

Lansing Davis- State Employment and Training Commission

The State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) has been collecting data for the literacy analysis. This includes program data from LWD for WIA Title II programs, Workforce Learning Links, and Supplemental Literacy funding through Customized Training. A survey was also sent to various State departments to determine if these agencies fund literacy initiatives. The Department of Education has provided data on Adult High School programs and the Higher Education Commission has provided data on enrollments in remedial noncredit course offered by colleges. Additionally, the SETC has sent a questionnaire to all seventeen of the State's Workforce Investment Boards (WIBS) to assess local literacy coordination and planning. The SETC is also finalizing a survey to send to WIA Title II programs to collect data on local literacy program capacity, intensity of services, and program linkages.

The SETC organized three regional stakeholder meetings (north, central, and south) to gather data on local literacy services and suggestions for improving them. Dr. Erik Jacobson from Montclair State University and the principle researcher for the literacy analysis facilitated the stakeholder meeting by providing preliminary findings and asking focused questions.

Erik Jacobson- Montclair University

Dr. Jacobson gave a PowerPoint Presentation that provided an overview of the work plan, data collection, key issues and preliminary findings.

The data will be used to provide a State and county by county profile of the literacy system. The report generated from the analysis will identify key areas of concern, strengths to build on, and look at other model/best practices from other states. The data reviewed to date includes information from the following programs: adult high schools, Youth Corps, Literacy Volunteers of New Jersey, WIA Title II, college remediation, and Workforce Learning Links (WLL). In addition, census and National Assessment of Adult Literacy data is also being reviewed. Dr. Jacobson is working with the SETC to identify other relevant literacy data.

The data shows a clear correlation between literacy skills and economic and workforce outcomes. For example, the median income in New Jersey is \$42,725. But those with less than a high school diploma average about \$21,462 annually and those with just a diploma or equivalency earn only \$31,408. Those with a bachelor's degree or a graduate or professional degree earn \$57,947 and \$80,851 respectively. Likewise, the higher the educational level, the greater the chance of being in the labor force.

Conversely, the lower the education level the greater chance of not being in the labor force. As to be expected a significantly greater portion of those with less than a high school diploma and those with only the high school credential are below the poverty level.

When one considers the number of adults within the State who have not earned a high diploma or its equivalency and those who are foreign language speakers who need to improve their English speaking skills, the system only has the capacity to serve about 3% of this group. Even if adult high school funding was restored, it would not result in a significant increase in system capacity. Related to the lack of capacity to serve significant numbers of adult learners is the limited intensity of instruction. That is, the frequency of class time available to students per day/week tends to be inadequate to enable learners to make significant gains in a reasonable timeframe.

Recommendations to strengthen existing programs, change policies for reimbursement, reconceive learning centers, increase support for integrated programs, expand use of hybrid courses, and support online self-study will also be considered.

In response to Dr. Jacobson's presentation, it was suggested that a comparison between 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011 for adult high school funding, enrollments, and outcomes be included in the analysis.

Adult education expenditures by county should be reviewed and it should be noted if any areas did not spend all their adult education allocations. Title II waiting list reports should also be reviewed.

Once the report is completed, SCALES should meet with high level stakeholders to discuss the findings.

The next SCALES meeting will be held sometime in February 2012. A reminder notice will go out before the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at about 11:55 p.m.

Members and Alternates:

Larry Breeden, Department of Education
Nancy Fisher- Jewish Vocational Services
Terri Hughes-Department of Human Services
Erik Jacobson-Montclair University
Robert Santare- Champion Fasteners, Inc.
Barry Semple- Retired

Guests

Daryl Minus-Vincent- Department of Education (Rep. Keisha Smith-Carrington)

SETC Staff

Lansing Davis, State Employment and Training Commission