

State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services

Meeting Minutes

February 14, 2012 (10:00 AM-12:00 Noon)
New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development
Trenton, New Jersey

Welcome and Approval of Minutes – Robert Santare, Chair

The Chair called the meeting to order about 10:00 a.m. and welcomed attendees. Members were asked to review the minutes from the September 14, 2011 and the December 14, 2011 meetings for approval. A motion to approve the minutes for both dates was made, seconded and approved with one abstention.

School Approval Review – Sandy Fountain, Department of Labor and Workforce Development and Lansing Davis, State Employment & Training Commission

A brief history of school approval was discussed and handouts were distributed. Since 2004, with the consolidation of To-Work programs under the umbrella of one state agency, approval for private vocational schools moved to the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) who also retained authority for 531 provider approvals.

There are about 400 approved private vocational schools and 531 providers. Their literacy programs provide instruction in areas such as English as a Second Language (ESL), the Adult Basic Education (ABE), and GED preparation. When students finish these programs, they receive a certificate of completion. Participation for the majority of the students is supported by State or Federal funding. These literacy programs are required to be listed on the eligible training provider list.

The School Approval Unit within LWD is responsible for oversight and compliance of these schools. However, due to staff attrition (a retirement and a transfer) there are insufficient personnel to perform the literacy review process and monitor these programs.

The School Approval Unit is requesting that the State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services (SCALES) assist it with the following goals:

- To develop literacy curricula standards for Adult Basic Education, GED Preparation and ESL programs;

- To develop appropriate pre-requisites, pre and post-testing guidelines, grading, evaluation tools and instructor credentials;
- To develop a process for the evaluation and approval of literacy programs submitted to LWD's School Approval Unit; and,
- To eliminate the back-log of unapproved literacy programs.

After discussion, a motion was made and passed to form a subcommittee to assist the School Approval Unit with accomplishing the four goals listed above. Lansing Davis was asked to solicit volunteers for the subcommittee and begin working on the task.

Literacy Study: Update – Erik Jacobson, Montclair State University

As part of the current adult literacy system analysis, historical adult literacy reports were reviewed; national, state, county, and local program data was collected and analyzed; and meetings were conducted with stakeholders to get their input. Primary focus areas were the need for adult literacy services, accessibility to these services, intensity of these services, and articulation between programs that provide these services.

Handouts that illustrate literacy need and service accessibility and intensity were distributed and discussed. For example, a chart that showed by county the adult population that has not completed high school. This chart also indicated by county the percentage of adults who are estimated to function at the lowest literacy level as measured by the National Assessment of Adult Literacy. Another chart provided data by county on the adult population that indicated that they “speak English less than very well” – a proxy for determining the need for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) literacy services. Estimates of the provision of literacy services by county were also presented. Additionally, the numbers of literacy classes reported being offered throughout the state as well as in each county area and the length of stay for students within a class were shared. Sample maps that display the population density within a county along with the location of literacy service provision were also provided.

It was also noted that a number of programs reported that they maintain waiting lists because the need is greater than the availability of services, while others indicated that wait lists were not kept because of the delay for class openings.

The report should make the point that investment in adult education pays off. Improved literacy skills make one more employable as well as enhance one's ability to handle other tasks of adulthood. Likewise, fiscal benefit to the State can be measured in reduced public support and greater tax revenues.

As one of its recommendations, the study should address local planning. Programs operate within a county/workforce investment area. So Workforce Investment Board (WIB) planning is important. The State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) should issue guidelines for WIB literacy committees to develop plans for a fully articulated adult literacy system that facilitates transitions from basic adult education

through postsecondary and work readiness. Another recommendation should address professional development, especially activities that support implementation of an articulated system.

The report should also recommend that the State develop and communicate a clear philosophy for adult education and establish principles for system and program operation. The recommendations should also address funding. Funding is inadequate to address the need. Additionally, a number of programs expressed concerns that the current per student funding amounts and enrollment targets encourage programs to exit students once a learning gain has been achieved rather than focusing longer term outcomes. Best practices from other states such as North Carolina, Massachusetts, and Connecticut can provide suggestions for specific recommendations. However the report and recommendations must reflect the charge in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The report should include an executive summary and SCALES should consider developing a policy brief.

Department Updates

Department of Corrections: A new state statute (see Assembly bill 4202) requires mandatory education for some inmates, but the law did not provide additional funding for education.

Department of Education: The Department is considering piloting the computer delivery of the GED in five sites throughout the State. However, the Department is still exploring alternatives to the GED which could result in multiple paths for testing to meet the high school requirements

New Jersey State Library: As of December 2011, the State Library through the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) grant has delivered 845 new computers to 125 public libraries, upgraded the broadband access at 85 libraries and purchased job-seeking online content that grows in use daily. With the help of the Community College Consortium, the library has delivered training to over 566 local librarians and 6,583 of their library customers. Dr. Susan Hildreth, Director of the Institute of Museums and Library Services, announced during a trip to New Jersey sponsored by Congressman Holt, that 16% of the people who went to libraries nationally seeking job assistance got jobs. Assuming the impact in New Jersey is similar to the national percentage, then close to 50,000 residents got jobs with the help of libraries last year.

A motion to conclude the meeting was passed and the meeting ended at 12:00 p.m.

Attendees:

Larry Breeden
Hal Beder
Norma Blake
Lansing Davis
Hugh DeHaven
Nancy Fisher
Betsey Garlatti
Erik Jacobson

Terri Hughes
Heather McKay
Robert Santare
Barry Semple
Keisha Smith-Carrington