

State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services (SCALES)
Wednesday, June 19, 2014
Department of Labor and Workforce Development
13th Floor Auditorium
Trenton, NJ 08625

Minutes

Welcome and Approval of Minutes

Hal Beder, Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:05. He asked attendees to introduce themselves. After introductions, a motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the minutes of the February 26, 2014 meeting.

Department Updates

Department of Education (DOE)

Larry Breeden, GED Administrator, stated that high school equivalency testing under the new system started in February 2014. There are concerns that the passing scores on the HiSET, the ETS high school equivalency test, may have been set too low. The pass rate in one location was greater than 90%. There is a meeting on June 27, 2014 with the states that use the HiSET to determine if passing scores should be higher. ETS sets the minimum passing scores, but states can set them higher. There has been a problem scoring the pencil and paper version of the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC), the high school equivalency test from CTB/McGraw-Hill. The wrong answer key was used in some cases, but this problem has been corrected. Currently there are only three testing centers in the state that administer the GED. However, a pending decision to open up high school equivalency testing to nonprofit and profit organizations is anticipated to significantly expanding the number of locations that offer the GED. DOE is designing a database to record test results and to issue state high school diplomas. Currently, the state doesn't have a complete data set of those who passed the tests.

Due to lack of funding, test examiners in some counties are not testing in the county jails. Test centers must be approved by DOE and then contract with one of the test vendors. Foreign test takers must present a passport and other approved forms of documentation.

Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD)

Howard Miller, Chief of Customized Training and Acting State Director of Adult Education, reported that the Notice of Grant Opportunity (NGO) for WIA Title II for FY 2015 has been issued. It is a one year extension for the existing grantees. Two significant changes in the NGO are the flattening of the fee structure and increasing the allocation per student to \$1000. This was done to promote improved outcomes, encouraging programs to keep customers enrolled longer to improve performance. Title II funding for 2015 is about \$14 million as was 2014's. Because the state included a one-time additional \$7 million in carryover funding to FY 2014 distribution, FY 2015 dollars are less.

United State Department of Education (USDOE) has indicated that they would like to see College and Career Readiness Standards implemented and all programs migrate to a manage enrollment process, in which learners agree to certain expectations and programs work with them to ensure commitment and progress.

State Library

Peggy Cadigan, Deputy State Librarian for Innovations, reported that Long Branch Public Library was recognized for its reentry program, Fresh Start, which provides career and job search assistance to ex-offenders. The program provides up to 15 hours of training to improve literacy and develop digital skills. It is hoped that other libraries will replicate this program.

Revised Recommendations to Strengthen the State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services (SCALES)

Lansing Davis indicated that at the February 26, 2014 meeting SCALES approved, with minor changes, recommendations aimed at strengthening the Council. He reviewed the revisions and the changes were approved unanimously. The Acting Chairperson asked that the Council devote time at the next meeting to discuss how these recommendations will be implemented.

Content Standards for Adult Education: EFF to Common Core

As background, Hal Beder indicated that until Equipped for the Future (EFF) the state did not have standards for adult education. With the development of the EFF by the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) there was a push to link literacy skills to real world tasks adults have to do in their everyday lives. SCALES adopted EFF as the adult literacy standards for the state. Unfortunately the State did not have the resources to provide the necessary professional development and technical assistance to needed to fully implement EFF. With the closing of NIFL, federal support of EFF ended. The University of Tennessee provided technical support and training for EFF, without federal funding and a clear mandate for the standards this effort has been limited. EFF remains a viable philosophy for adult education, but lacks the support to be an instructional system. Literacy related documents from LWD still reference to EFF.

Howard Miller pointed out that USDOE, the funding agency for WIA Title II, has embraced the Common Core and College and Career Readiness Standards. The three tests that New Jersey approved as valid to measure high school equivalency are aligned with these standards. SCALES has not endorsed these standards but continues to embrace EFF.

Members agreed that the new standards are important, but struggled with whether to replace EFF with the new standards or to make them an additional requirement. There was reluctance replace EFF, which incorporates soft skills that are essential for work readiness and applied basic literacy skills, with the new skill standards. Although high school equivalency and postsecondary transition are major goals, enhancing employability with soft skills development is equally important. It was noted, however, that LWD promotes soft skills development.

Mr. Miller emphasized again that USDOE has already established the Common Core and the College and Career Readiness Standards as its benchmarks, the latter incorporating the skills needed to be work ready. LWD, to be in compliance with its funders requirements, is embracing the new standards, while SCALES is still debating the value. Mr. Miller agreed to draft a resolution for acceptance of the new standards and do a presentation at the next SCALES meeting.

Skilled Immigrant Project Charter

Lansing Davis indicated that in 2013 the New Jersey Association of Lifelong Learning (NJALL) wrote a letter to the SETC concerning the problem of unemployment and underemployment of highly educated and skilled immigrants. After reaching out to Nick Montalto, President of Diversity Dynamics and board member of NJALL, the SETC has referred the issue to SCALES, requesting that they study the problem.

Mr. Montalto noted that this issue surfaced through the work of the NJALL Taskforce on Immigrant Integration. He provided a PowerPoint presentation that showed the following:

- New Jersey has the third largest concentration of immigrants in this country, 21.2% of the state's population is foreign born.
- Nationally, the proportion of high skilled immigrant in comparison to the overall immigrant population has increased. In 1980, 40% of immigrants were low skilled as compared to 19% high skilled. In 2010, the proportion of low skilled immigrants dropped to 27.8%, but high skilled increased to about 30%.
- In New Jersey in 2012, 21% of immigrants had an undergraduate degree and another 15% had a graduate degree – total of 36% high skilled immigrants. While 21% of the state's immigrant population were low skilled, not having a high school diploma.
- Mal-employment (people working in jobs significantly lower than their skill or ability training level) for native born US college graduates is 24%; for the foreign born college graduates, it is 26%. However, if immigrants' degrees were earned abroad the rate increased to 36%.
- Immigrants with college degrees from Africa or Latin America have a mal-employment rate of almost 50%.
- Risk factors for mal-employment for the foreign born are:
 - a foreign degree
 - a degree from Africa or Latin America
 - lack of English language skills
 - majored in humanities, social sciences, or business
 - entered US with family reunification or refugee visa, rather than employment visa
- Barriers skilled immigrants face included:
 - difficulties with credential recognition
 - lack of familiarity with US job market
 - weak professional networks in the US
 - lack of English language skills
 - hesitation by employers to hire people with foreign backgrounds
 - discrimination
 - gaps in education and training as compared to US standards

Cultural differences and social capital were also mentioned as factors influencing employment.

Mr. Montalto stated that SCALES is being asked to form a Skilled Immigrant subcommittee. With the Council's approval, the subcommittee will develop an information brief that clarify skilled immigrants and immigrant entrepreneurs' roles within New Jersey's workforce development strategy, suggest policies and strategies to maximize their economic contribution, recommend next steps, and identify resources for program and professional development. Proposed membership categories for the subcommittee were reviewed. It should take about 6 months to draft the information brief, which will be presented to SCALES for its approval and then to the SETC.

Acting Chairperson Beder noted that the scope of this issue is broader than literacy, but since it was referred to SCALES, the Council should do the initial analysis, before giving it to the SETC.

A motion was made to establish a Skilled Immigrant subcommittee of SCALES as delineated in the project charter document. The motion was amended to include employers on the subcommittee. The revised motion was passed unanimously.

Teacher Standards for Adult Educators

Acting Chairperson Beder noted that teacher standards SCALES developed in 2008 were good and an excellent starting point for discussion on this issue. Because of the limited time left for this meeting, he will table this item until the September meeting.

Career Certificates and State-Issue High School Equivalency

Staff from the Division of Continuing Studies, Rutgers University (John Shino, Associate Vice President Strategic Growth, Jim Morris, Associate VP, Continuing Education, and Sharon Raynor, Program Coordinator, Workforce Development and Certification Exams) talked about their on-line high school diploma and career certificate programs. These programs are offered in partnership with Career Online High School, which is accredited through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI). Career certificates are offered in a number of occupational areas, including child care, food and customers service, security, and transportation. NJDOE doesn't recognize the high school portion of the program, so Rutgers is exploring preparing NJ students to pass one of the approved high school equivalence tests. Rutgers is interested in working with the State to identify high growth occupation areas and develop career pathways with stackable credentials.

The speakers discussed Makerspaces, which are spaces, equipped with micro-manufacturing tools, such as 3D printers and manufacturing computer software, and where people from different discipline and skill sets are brought together to collaborate on creating product prototypes. Rutgers operates a Makerspace at which people create product models and learn the skills needed in micro-manufacturing. This provides an opportunity to develop a career path for people who may not have a college degree, but are interested in creating products. This Makerspace is like an entrepreneur incubator. It is also a training ground for individuals who want to work in manufacturing. As the field develops credentials for skills training, Rutgers anticipates offering them. Not only will individuals be able to earn credentials, but they will have product portfolios of the things they created. It was pointed out that the State Library has funded 15 Makerspaces in local libraries.

Much like the example for micro-manufacturing career pathways, Rutgers can provide skill training that prepares one to earn credentials for entry and advancement in the food industry. Credentials include ServSave, customer service, and a variety of food management certifications.

Within selected occupational areas, Rutgers could provide core competency skills training and preparation for high school equivalency tests and occupational skills training that leads to stackable credentials along career tracks. Learners will have to pay for the training, unless their tuition is subsidized through an agency. The program design should incorporate online and classroom instruction.

Lansing Davis, Howard Miller, and Larry Breeden agreed to meet with John Shino and his team to discuss policy implications of career pathway programs and to suggest next steps for Rutgers in promoting their programs to the workforce system.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:02 pm.

**SCALES Meeting
Attendance Sheet
June 19, 2014**

Members

Jean Baptiste for Department of Corrections

Hal Beder- Retired

Larry Breeden for Marie Barry- Department of Education

Peggy Cadigan- New Jersey State Library

Lansing Davis- State Employment and Training Commission

Elissa Director- Consultant

Nancy Fisher- Jewish Vocational Services

Terri Hughes- Department of Human Services

Howard Miller- Department of Labor and Workforce Development

Julio Sabater- Workforce Advantage USA

Barry Semple- Retired

Marie Virella for Betsy Garlatti- Office of the Secretary of Higher Education

Guests

Nick Montalto- Diversity Dynamics

Jim Morris- Rutgers University

Sharon Raynor- Rutgers University

Sheri Shafer- New Jersey State Library

John Shino- Rutgers University