

**GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE BOARD RI  
ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**OCTOBER 1, 2007  
MEETING MINUTES**

Members Present: Jack Warner, Armeather Gibbs, Mario Bueno, Robert Nangle,  
Robert Paniccia and George Nee  
Members Absent: Paul MacDonald, Joseph MarcAurele  
Others Present: Johan Uvin  
Board Staff Present: Michael Koback, Stephen Schaefer, Nancy Olson, David  
Francis, and Maureen Mooney

With a quorum present, Chair J. Warner called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

A motion was entered to approve the Adult Education and Literacy Meeting Minutes of June 18, 2007.

**VOTE:** A. Gibbs moved to approve, seconded by G. Nee. All approved.  
The motion passed.

Chair J. Warner began the meeting by introducing the topic of content standards indicating that this is the core of building a system. He noted that an overview of the standards will be presented and that the standards were approved by the Board of Regents at their last meeting. He commended the good work done by Johan Uvin and his staff as well as the core in-state facilitation team of Elizabeth Jardine, Janet Isserlis and Judy Titzel.

**Board of Regents Vote re: Content Standards**

Chair Warner turned the meeting over to Dr. Johan Uvin who provided an overview of the content standards. J. Uvin indicated a milestone in adult education has been reached as many have worked on establishing a core set of content standards for some time. He indicated he is pleased to report that the Board of Regents unanimously approved the content standards at their September 27, 2007 meeting. He noted there were two action items raised by the Board of Regents. The first was regarding the next steps of the assessment process and how this process relates back to the content standards. Additionally there was encouragement by the Board to make the content standards available to colleagues working with high school reform.

On the assessment question, J. Uvin informed the Board of Regents of progress being made in adult education with standardized testing. At this point in time, there are a number of standard tests that have been approved by the U.S. Dept of Education of which a limited number have been chosen for use in our state testing. J. Uvin reported that there was agreement to research how these standardized tests relate to content standards. He also agreed to do a comparison of the NECAP tests as well as the GED tests. These comparisons will assist in developing a better understanding of how the content standards and testing utilized in the adult education system relate.

A. Gibbs inquired about what happens when the comparison is complete and there is not a good match between the testing in place and the standards. J. Uvin responded that he believes there will be a high level of correlation. He indicated he is quite confident in saying this because Massachusetts developed a set of content standards and also invested \$1 million in developing tests based on the standards. They are finding that even though they built the tests around the content standards, the correlation between the test results and the content standards in actuality is much higher than it is with the existing tests. He also noted there is no control on how much emphasis teachers place on content standards in their classroom.

Chair Warner inquired if Rhode Island and Massachusetts standards relate to each other. J. Uvin responded that an increasing number of states have developed adult education content standards, which are basically statements about what participants should know about and should be able to do. He noted there is great overlap among states, which is reassuring. Chair Warner pointed out the implementation timetable for addressing the standards and mapping them into the curriculum. J. Uvin mentioned this timetable relates to item 5 on the agenda and provided a brief overview of the development of the current writing, reading, math, listening, speaking, and technology standards. He noted the primary goal for this first year is to provide an orientation of the standards to every person who has responsibility in providing adult education including directors, teachers and volunteers. Included in this orientation will be instruction on how to develop the standards into lesson plans and curriculum. A secondary goal will be to provide a series of in-depth trainings on the specifics of the standards. J. Uvin explained that there is a sequence to the learning process if you want adults to be successful in reading and writing for the first time.

G. Nee inquired about the number of adult education teachers in RI. J. Uvin indicated there is a small labor market in RI consisting of approximately 1000-1200 volunteers and 400 paid staff of which only 100 are full-time teachers. G. Nee asked if there is a database listing all of the adult education instructors suggesting that each person could be provided with a copy of the content standards. J. Uvin agreed this is an important objective over the next 18 months. He mentioned he was unsure how successful the outreach will be for the volunteers, noting their commitment is to the individual they are tutoring. However, he explained that part of the orientation process for the Executive Directors of the agencies will be to understand and communicate expectations for their staff and volunteers.

Chair Warner noted the planned sequence of training for the agencies. J. Uvin commented that it would not be productive for professional development purposes to bring everyone together at one time. A. Gibbs asked if the 20 practitioners who assisted in developing the standards were part of the agencies that provide adult education. J. Uvin responded that these 20 people represented 75% of the agencies and that these individuals will play a role as train the trainers. They will become resource persons further along in the process because not only do they understand the standards but they were instrumental in developing them.

M. Koback offered assistance with marketing and public relations from the GWB. J. Uvin indicated that the completion of the content standards is a major milestone after an 8-10 year effort. M. Koback suggested J. Uvin discuss a marketing strategy with Laura Hart. J. Uvin agreed this was a good idea, and also suggested that Elliot Krieger from the Dept. of Education (DOE) could assist in this joint marketing effort. Chair Warner

suggested an event such as a kick-off might be an effective strategy and suggested involving the teachers.

Chair Warner noted the 6 levels of achievement within any given set of standards. He reported that this was a feature of the design when the Adult Education task force was formed in 2003. One of the primary principals was that each level be measurable in order to implement a certification process. He also noted the importance of developing the writing standards to meet college readiness standards for assessment in reading, mathematics and writing. He reported that approximately 35% of students exiting high school cannot write the essay required for the satisfaction of collegiate ready standards.

M. Bueno indicated that from his experience working with students that many do not have any idea about what levels they need to reach for competency. He suggested that when creating a progression for students that they be informed of where they place within the levels.

J. Warner noted that in RI, there are varied methods to satisfy the standards and that he envisions that as progress is made, the various levels will be communicated and made clearer for college and modern workplace readiness.

M. Koback indicated that current work with the Industry Partnerships involves developing career ladders. He indicated a next logical step is to determine how to correlate these specific levels of the standards with the different rungs of the ladder for people entering the workforce. For example, at what level would someone be proficient to become a CNA? The end result would be to map the levels of proficiency with jobs. It was suggested by Chair Warner that perhaps the Newport Skills Alliance could pilot this work because the businesses are at the table. J. Uvin agreed it would be effective in this process to determine how content standards relate to entry and midlevel employment.

M. Koback indicated that the Industry Partnerships can play a significant role in determining how industry and the content standards relate. S. Schaefer mentioned that the work of the partnerships is moving in that direction and that there is a natural link to work and the content standards. M. Koback indicated that this is not only applicable for new workers but also for incumbent workers. At the end of this discussion it was agreed that by the next committee meeting, work on the development of a plan between adult education standards and the Industry Partnerships would begin. It was agreed that this is a great next step.

M. Bueno added that industry and technology are constantly changing and noted the importance of addressing this changeable environment within the content standards. He did not want to see workers set up to fail nor did he want to see barriers created to entry for jobs. It was noted by S. Schaefer that an alignment of benchmarks on the industry side was important as well as staying agile in both environments.

### **Funding FY08 Wrap-up**

J. Uvin thanked the committee and the GWB for their support. He reported they now have resources in the adult education initiative that enable them to make a difference in addressing some of the waiting list issues. He emphasized that grant negotiations were slightly delayed due to the summer announcement and that currently they are negotiating performance expectations with each of the providers. This will result in

higher levels of performance and the providers will be held accountable for performance targets. There are very few remaining issues with the funding process. There is one coverage issue in the north end of which he cannot take action. The issue is about not having access because the agency did not pass performance standards. J. Uvin reported that he is in communication with Mayor Ciciline about this situation.

Chair Warner reported that the selection process was done well. Proposals were ranked for quality first. When the quality ranking was reviewed, it was apparent that huge geographic gaps existed around the state. To compensate for this, quality ranking by geographic area was done to ensure access. The ultimate selection was a compromise between those two sets of important values for the program. He also noted that the RFP process was designed to make sources of funds invisible to the clients, in order to evaluate the program by one set of standards and principals. This is a huge advance over what was in place before. It was also noted that out of 50 respondents, only 5 people challenged the process.

A. Gibbs asked for a list of agencies and providers who received grants. Chair Warner suggested the 2008-2010 Adult Education Investment Grants event program contains this listing and could be sent to committee members by email.

### **Professional Development Center**

Chair Warner reported that the Center is up and running and that the contract has been awarded. A public event is planned and will be hosted by Rhode Island College (RIC). Co-funders and other interested parties will be invited. It was suggested that this event could weave in with the public relations event previously discussed. Chair Warner noted that RIC is very good at hosting major events as they have classroom space, as well as central convening areas.

J. Uvin reported there was a person identified as the director of the Professional Development Center but that person withdrew. He indicated they are still working on identifying a new director for the center and that second interviews are occurring now. J. Uvin indicated that with the committee's permission, he would like to bring this person to the next meeting.

### **Demonstration Project Updates**

J. Uvin provided a brief history of 2 demonstration projects supported by the Strategic Investments Committee. One project involved the establishment of an urban one stop career center. As part of this project, a goal was to refine their capacity to deal with an increasing number of one stop career center customers with literacy and English barriers. The investment has been made and as a result, there will be at least 4 urban one stops with dedicated resources for people to work on skill development, including technology based learning. M. Koback noted that initially there had been a few logistical issues with the centers dealing with computer hook ups and other related issues but those appear to be resolved.

The second project was initially approved as the interagency demonstration project which later became the Newport Skill Alliance. The premise behind this project involved working collaboratively with business, the local provider community and state agencies to find a more effective way to prepare people for jobs that are available in the high growth sector of the economy. Some results of this project include a good understanding of the Aquidneck Island economy, a good relationship with leading

employers, and a consensus from the employer community to work collaboratively to create a skills alliance that can be sustained over time. This will assist in providing opportunity for those whose skill sets are not at the point where they can easily enter the employment sector. This six week intensive program addresses topics of work readiness, organizational skills, employment opportunities, as well as transportation and day care issues. The program also has an industry and work exposure rotation program where people go to different sectors to learn what the jobs are about. There is also an extensive labor market information piece affiliated with this program. And finally, organized employer round tables are offered which have proven to be extremely valuable.

Chair Warner indicated this is an exciting project to be part of. One important feature is the number of different agencies who have identified potential clients for referral to the training hub. A second feature is the active involvement of employers indicating that we are working on the demand side and portraying the importance of how standards link more carefully to employment needs. Four sectors of the Newport economy are active participants: health care, banking, yacht restoration, and hospitality.

### **Grant Proposal to U.S. Department of Education**

Chair Warner reported on the grant proposal to the U.S. Department of Education and indicated that with cooperation from the Office of Higher Education, RIDE, and DLT a grant writer was retained to write this grant. This minimal investment will pay dividends if the grant proposal of \$980,000 for a two year period is obtained. The focus of this proposal is on adult and secondary education and college readiness preparation of young adults 18-24 years old. Chair Warner mentioned that J. Uvin conceptualized the process and the grant writer translated it into the language required for this federal grant. Chair Warner thanked J. Uvin for providing the leadership for this effort.

In closing, J. Uvin mentioned that today was the kick-off of the Welcome Back Center which is an initiative that prepares foreign born professionals to enter or advance to employment levels that are more aligned with their prior training, education and experience. He was encouraged that this Center will allow many professionals who have had to work at low paying, entry level positions to contribute to the economy with the skills and knowledge that they have achieved.

Chair Warner asked if any further business was to come before the committee. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to adjourn.

**VOTE:** A. Gibbs moved to adjourn, seconded by R. Nangle. All approved.

The meeting adjourned at 10:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Mooney