Literacy Committee Meeting

Atlantic County Workforce Development Board

March 2, 2021

Attendance:

Francis Kuhn, Exe. Dir. Barbara Kozek Carol Spina Dan Adams

Ken Olivenbaum Pat Constantino , Chair Greg Freelon Marian Woodson

Joe Ingemi Linda Novelli Tim Kreischer

Ms. Pat Constantino called the meeting to order at 2:00pm.

Ms. Pat Constantino opened the meeting with introductions of the committee members and a review of the minutes from the prior meeting along with the current agenda. A motion was moved and seconded to approve the minutes. Ms. Constantino noted the attendance at this meeting of the various (WDB) Board members to give them a feel for literacy services being provided by the Workforce Development Board.

Partner Update

Ms. Constantino asked Mr. Dan Adams, Supervisor of Literacy Services to give a brief overview of literacy services provide by the One Stop.

Mr. Adams proceeded to give a summary of the TASC exam and the CASAS assessment along with the academic remedial services offered by the Learning Link and the Learning Lab, together with our partners at Atlantic Cape Community College. Mr. Adams also noted that remedial work and instruction is available in English as a Second Language (ESL) thru Atlantic Cape Community College.

Mr. Francis Kuhn added comments about the literacy service aspect of the Workforce Development Board as it pertains to employment and training for meaningful occupations. Mr. Kuhn noted the funding sources for these various programs.

Marion Woodson, the One Stop Operator, give a report on the number of clients assessed using the CASAS exam, explaining the current numbers are somewhat low given the COVID-19 pandemic and the social distancing the WDB has been adhering to since last March. See testing reports for January – March, 2021 attached.

Mr. Kuhn asked Mr. Adams, supervisor of literacy services, for an overview od services available at the One-Stop for the benefit of the new Board Members attending the meeting. Mr. Adams give a brief review of the services including the TASC exam or the High School Equivalency (HSE) exam and the CASAS assessment, as well as the remedial instruction to help clients with the HSE exam and to improve their academic standing to get into a training program. Mr. Adams also noted contracted services in the remedial instruction area provided by Atlantic Cape Community College. Mr. Kuhn added that the purpose of the Workforce Development Board is to oversee services related to employment and training; and that literacy services is just one component of that overall service. Mr. Kuhn noted that in addition to preparing clients for the HSE exam, the CASAS assessment and related remedial instruction is used to qualify clients for training grants. He also noted the limited funding for the contracted programs.

Ms. Constantino asked about remote testing. Mr. Adams and Mr. Kuhn responded, noting the added costs to the students for the proctor. It was noted that given the testing facilities we have, people are comfortable wit coming into the One-Stop for testing as we have reduced the number being tested at any one time, given our social distancing policy.

Our discussion turned to the Learning Link. Mr. Adams pointed out that instruction in the classroom is limited do to COVID and the social distancing requirements in place. Mr. Adams explained a typical day in the Learning Link. The instructor spreads her time between in-class instruction and students learning virtually. A brief discussion ensued regarding testing, academic performance and the corresponding training programs that require a specific level of academic performance. Ms. Constantino asked Mr. Ken Olivenbaum, our Chief Examiner for the HSE Exam, to provide a brief synopsis of the HSE Exam. Mr. Olivenbaum explained the current testing process do to COVID. He explained his concerns about health safety for all concerned. Mr. Olivenbaum reviewed operational processes and issues which must adhere to New Jersey Department of Education and TASC administrative procedures. Mr. Olivenbaum reviewed the number of examinees and tests proctored over the past year. Given COVID restrictions, our numbers are lower than the prior year. Mr. Olivenbaum reviewed the pricing schedule for the HSE Exam, again, for the benefit of the newer Board Members.

Next, Ms. Barbara Kozek, Assistant Director for Literacy Services at Atlantic Cape Community College, explained the programs she oversees and their relation to services rendered at the One-Stop. She explained the Title II programs she manages, which are funded by the US DOE thru the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Ms. Kozek noted that as part of the Atlantic Cape Community College, she serves both Atlantic and Cape May counties. The Atlantic County funding provides free literacy classes in addition to ESL (English as a Second Language) classes.

Two levels of instruction are provided in reading and math to give students an opportunity to learn at the appropriate level for the HSE exam and to improve their academic standing in order to get into a training program. This program year Atlantic Cape’s level of service contract calls for 486 students. Ms. Kozek reviewed the current level at 302 or 62% of budget. Ms. Kozek also noted prior years’ LOS (Level Of Service) budget to Actual for literacy services.

Ms. Kozek proceeded to review all literacy programs at the Community College that benefit clients of the One-Stop, including NJ Indoors and the Atlantic City Leisure and Hospitality Grant which provided culinary classes and instruction in table games; including Blackjack, Roulette and Bokhara.

Old Business

Ms. Constantino moved the discussion on into Old Business.

Ms. Constantino asked Mr. Kuhn to provide an update on the Atlantic City Electric (ACE) Program in terms of the great opportunity it presents. Concern was expressed by the Chair regarding the interested people in this program not making the cut due to their poor academic standing and the requirements of the program.

Mr. Kuhn confirmed the concern that our population that is interested in the ACE program do not have the academic standing required.

A discussion followed on remediation instruction for those scoring below the 9th grade level required in the program. This led to a discussion about the Supplemental Learning Lab and when we had that program here at the One-Stop, staffed by the instructors from Atlantic Cape Community College. The program now is housed in the Worthington Center in Atlantic City.

Ms. Kozek noted that the Supplemental Learning Lab is operating at the Worthington Center two days a week in person and on-line or virtually. Ms. Kozek also mentioned that she is still seeking referrals about achieving the academic standing needed for the ACE program. A discussion followed regarding the TABE vs. the CASAS assessment being used for the determination of academic standing. It is generally believed that the TABE math exam is somewhat easier than the CASAS exam.

A brief discussion followed regarding the TABE vs. the CASAS exam and the required 9th grade level of performance for the ACE program.

Chairwoman Constantino noted that Mr. Kuhn wanted to make sure the agenda included an item on digital literacy. Mr. Kuhn mentioned his recent work on unemployment and the only way to communicate with the UI Office was through email. Mr. Kuhn explained that he has seen the difficulty some people are having regarding the computer and receiving public services. This has been highlighted with the rollout and scheduling appointments for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Mr. Kuhn mentioned that he has a call into Mr. Matt Dibella, who is the director of the library system for Atlantic County. Mr. Kuhn is looking to engage him to see what kind of programs they are offering and what kind of programs can be developed relative to computer literacy to help some of these folks that are somewhat behind in computer skills. This led to a discussion about remotely working from home and the shifting of people into coastal communities from North Jersey and New York City.

New Business

Ms. Kozek started a discussion regarding the Title II programs for PY2021 and the competition and grant process of submitting a good competitive application for review. Mr. Kuhn noted that the contextualized learning process that Atlantic Cape Community College has, especially the one that they set up with the casinos, is perceived as a “Best Practice” in New Jersey and is talked about a lot in the Workforce Development community. Ms. Kozek added that the program has been recognized by the Feds as an excellent program that really works and has proven successful.

After additional comments and discussion, a motion to adjourn was made and seconded.

The meeting ended at 3:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Adams