

# **Adult Education and Literacy**

## **Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

### **September 19, 2018 Meeting**

A duly posted open meeting of the Adult Education and Literacy Advisory Committee was held on Wednesday, September 19, 2018, at 1:30 p.m. at the Texas Workforce Commission Main Building located at 101 East 15<sup>th</sup> St., Austin, Texas, 78778, Room 244.

### **Members Present**

Tiffany Johnson

David Barron

Traci Berry

Jesus Hernandez Jr.

Samuel Keeler

Donald Tracy

Mignon Lawson

Laurie Larrea

Mary Jo Ochoa-Hernandez

### **Executive Staff Present**

Kerry Ballast

### **Agenda**

#### **1. Introduction and Opening Remarks**

Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Director, Anson Green, called the meeting to order and Kerry Ballast welcomed members. Mr. Green stated the comment period for TWC Rules for proposed changes related to Advisory Committee member terms has closed and is pending Commission approval. He described the Committee's charge to make recommendations to the Commission and the current stage of those recommendations related to employer engagement on multiple fronts.

#### **2. Information and Updates**

Mr. Green provided an overview of a meeting to be held September 20 which will convene different adult education organizations to collaborate on timing of statewide events.

The first presentation came from Committee member, Samuel Keeler, on Tyson Foods' Upward Academy corporate program and the program at the Tyson plant in Sherman, Texas. He explained 400 employees signed up for classes in Sherman and due to the demand, management created 8-week ESL classes in partnership with Grayson College. He described how the Sherman program is different from other Upward Academy programs as it provides classes during work hours and pays employees for that time.

Mr. Keeler answered questions from Committee members, including whether classes are contextualized for the employees' jobs, whether the program has positively impacted turnover rates and if employee families are able to enroll in classes. He explained that the program is in its early stages but that students from the first classes are still employed at Tyson, and that the classes are general English as a Second language classes and citizenship and available to Tyson employees. In response to whether classes impact production, he responded that both seniority and departmental staff availability drive the class make-up, in order to ensure that a single department won't be impacted by staff attending classes, and that scheduling classes is very strategic.

Ms. Ballast asked about those that leave classes and don't complete the program; Mr. Keeler responded that they try to sit down with those students and find out why left, with some leaving because it's too difficult. Mr. Green asked what the thought process was in deciding to pay for the employee time to attend classes. Mr. Keeler said that they wanted to make sure the program was successful, and wanted to do it differently. They hadn't tried having classes both during work hours and paying, so they got the buy-in from leadership to pay, which is about \$120 a person per week, and so far, they have seen the success. They've done the classes based on seniority. They go through the classes in 8-week blocks, and after 8 weeks, students are referred to the community programs.

Mr. Green also asked whether Tyson discusses the program at a corporate level or individually, and Mr. Keeler said they've met corporately once. Tiffany Johnson remarked that they [Victoria College's Adult Education department] has been doing workplace and has had challenges with production going down when students were in classes, such as at a meat-packing plant. She asked how classes impact production, and Mr. Keeler said he goes by the department and selects a couple of students from each, so one department isn't impacted during busy production times.

The next presenter was AnneMarie Molinari from Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy & Learning (TCALL) at Texas A&M University provided an update on the Content Standards 2.0 project. She explained last year was the Standards Alignment to the Industry Clusters and that TCALL is responsible for publishing and training on the Standards 2.0. She added TCALL has subcontracted with American Institutes for Research (AIR) to assist with rolling out the content and training of the Standards 2.0. The introductory face-to-face training will take place in February 2019 at TALAE, followed up with regional trainings targeted to specific roles in AEL, such as directors and instructional coaches. She explained both subject matter experts in Content Standards from the industry side and, as well as Workforce Solutions specialists, will be working on this project. She

added training will include an introduction to Occupational Informational Network (O\*NET), the new standards, and application of the standards using Labor Market and Career Information.

Traci Berry asked who is able to participate in the project, and Ms. Molinari replied that the training is for target audiences in AEL programs. Mr. Green said that with both Workforce Solutions and employers participating in this, there are other customer groups like Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Solutions counselors that would be interested; they're currently in the deployment phase of this. David Barron commented on how this is good for industries and for Workforce Solutions counselors and that O\*NET is a great resource for students to understand when exploring careers.

Committee member Don Tracy introduced Michael Bettersworth from Texas State Technical College (TSTC), who presented on the "Alignment of College Training with Employer Skill Requirements." Mr. Bettersworth talked about alignment issues between employer needs and readiness, and explained TSTC's work, with help from TWC, to identify skill requirements, and the variations between employers' skill requirements. He went over the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's 60x30TX plan, ways job needs and skills were analyzed, and how using job posting data are essentially advertisements for a job. He showed a free tool created by TSTC for resume development and how the data used from that is used to create a new application. The tool, Calibrate, includes customizable job profiles that employers can provide feedback on. TSTC is working with other agencies on this tool.

He provided an overview and history of the Workforce Education Course Manual, which was created in 1995. He explained that the learning outcome is very high level, and when you try to standardize outcomes, and as it's high-level; the hope is that employer validated data can help improve the WECM. When asked how we can bridge the gap back to the occupations, with the feedback loop, Mr. Bettersworth said we can, ideally, have and collaborate on state-based clusters.

Mr. Tracy added we all have pathways, and how these building blocks fit is important. He mentioned detailed work activity job profiles have been used by some Boards. Ms. Johnson described the challenge of explaining what adult basic education is and how it fits in college. She added when you cluster that together, they would be able to tie it into their pathways classes.

Mr. Bettersworth commented on some issues related to industry advisory groups. He added that hiring managers and instructors building the curriculum is where it happens, on the ground, but someone needs to write those skill requirements. Their theory is that you can't scrape or generalize this data. He concluded by saying in January or February 2019 there will be a release on Calibrate.

Someone asked whether they're working with high schools, and he responded that they're not, but they have been asked.

### **3. Discussion**

Mr. Green opened the discussion on "Employer Engagement Recommendations" by asking what is the gap that TWC as an agency or AEL as a department can help fill?

Mary Jo Ochoa-Hernandez explained that as their AEL program has done this so long, it's easy to forget, especially with teacher turnover. She added that internally they're building a resource library, but that she will take the resources provided in the meeting presentations back to her IET programs. She said we need to think of our student's wages and we need something online, and she referred to the Content Standards book and how their teachers are using the Standards to develop materials and resources.

Ms. Johnson explained that Victoria College shifted to somewhat standardized college prep courses; having a resource like that; it's not about the class, but is instead about how is the student going to be at the end of the program. She said they've had to backtrack and set up some restrictions for program enrollment, reviewing the syllabus.

Mignon Lawson said her program worked with a school of nursing which shared their entire curriculum, and how their Career Navigator was able to monitor and audit the class to see how the school of nursing was presenting that information, which helped the program's success rate.

Ms. Ochoa-Hernandez said her recommendation would be to align through the tri-agency efforts Mr. Bettersworth referred to during his presentation because each speaks a different language. If TSTC is doing work with TEA, we shouldn't compete—it's all the same umbrella.

Mr. Green adjourned the meeting.

[Meeting notes prepared by AEL Program Specialist, Fabiana Ramirez]