

Issue No. 19, August 15, 2011

The E-News reports on CAAL's programs and publications, including follow-up activities related to the National Commission on Adult Literacy. It also presents news about nationally significant work by the federal government and other entities in adult education and workforce skills development. Occasionally, profiles on exemplary state and organizational efforts are offered, as are articles on topics of strategic interest to policymakers and planners.

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NEWS IN BRIEF



ALERT: A National Workforce Week of Action (August 15-19) is being coordinated by the National Skills Coalition, its purpose to encourage groups at state and local levels to urge their elected Congressional officials not to cut funding for workforce education and training programs. Although the issue is larger than the Workforce Investment Act (in which Titles I and II, and the Adult Education and Economic Growth Act are imbedded), WIA could be in jeopardy. CAAL joins the NSC and more than two dozen other national leadership groups in this campaign in urging its readers to take action by calling their Senators and Representatives during **August 15-19**, when members of Congress will be in their home districts. What your elected officials need to hear at this time is that you oppose any funding cuts for federal education and training programs (including adult education

components) under the Fiscal Year 2012 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill. For specific steps you might take, go to NSC at <http://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/get-involved/week-of-action>.

▶ [Integrating Technology and Student Centered Learning](#) is new from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation (July 2011). Written by Babette Moeller and Tim Reitzes of the **Educational Development Corporation** who managed the grant project, the report has primarily to do with technology uses that equip students with skills needed for college, work, and life in the 21st century. Although focused on K-12 students, many of the findings are relevant for adult education.

▶ **Promoting Teacher Effectiveness in Adult Education.** The American Institutes for Research (AIR) was awarded (June 28, 2011) a three-year U.S. Department of Education (OVAE) contract to examine issues of teacher effectiveness in adult education. The effort intends to build on OVAE projects already carried out on this topic. A new staff person is being recruited; the job is posted at <http://jobs-airdc.icims.com/jobs/6635/job>. A Ph.D. or graduate degree is needed plus appropriate adult education experience.

▶ [Stronger by Degrees. A Strategic Agenda for Postsecondary and Adult Education](#) is new from the **Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education**. It will guide Kentucky through 2015 with a focus on four strategic areas: college readiness; student success; research, economic, and community development; and efficiency and innovation.

▶ [GED Preparation through Distance Learning in Rural Pennsylvania](#) has been released by the **Center for Rural Pennsylvania** in collaboration with Penn State University's program in Adult Education. The study examines GED needs, benefits, and participation. Among its recommendations are English and Spanish awareness campaigns, establishing GED testing centers in rural areas, better data collection and reporting systems, and accelerated GED courses for some students.

▶ **Literacy Partners' PUSH to Central Harlem.** Literacy Partners, the only nationally accredited adult literacy program in New York City, has opened a comprehensive adult education resource center in Central Harlem. The effort was developed by the New York State Board of Regents and the State Education Department. In addition to classes in basic education, ESL, and GED, which will be based in a Family Welcome Center, employment workshops, job counseling, and a variety of other services will be offered. Case workers will oversee referrals to health care, housing, food, school, immigration, and other community resource groups, and they will assist with any difficulties encountered by the students. A variety of local organizations are partners in the effort, thus the PUSH acronym (Partners United in Strengthening Harlem). The overall goal is to provide pathways out of poverty, and a major focus will be on health care needs and issues. For more information, lreich@jgordonassociates.com.

▶ [Improving Access to Apprenticeship: Strengthening State Policies and Practices](#) has just

been issued by **The Working Poor Families Project** (WPFP). This 24-page Policy Brief is a clearly written primer on what apprenticeships are and it deals in concrete terms with the challenges and opportunities for expanding apprenticeships across the country. The Brief addresses such issues as the difficulties of engaging employers, access by under-represented workers (disadvantaged and low-skilled adults), high costs of training (which usually takes place in community colleges), low completion rates in current programs, and insufficient ties to education and workforce systems. It then deals with state and federal efforts to overcome these problems, including a table on state regulations for pre-apprenticeship programs. The work of WPFP is funded by the Annie E. Casey, Ford, Joyce, and Mott Foundations.



REL Appalachia has released [Aligning Career and Technical Education with High-Wage and High-Demand Occupations in Tennessee](#). Written by research analyst Christine Mokher, the report results from a project administered by CNA Analysis and Solutions, with funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. Although focused on Tennessee and on high school graduates, it should be useful to adult education and to policymakers in other states and nationally. It seeks to align available high school career and technical education programs in Tennessee with current and future labor market demands. The main body of the report is only 16 pages long, but the complete publication includes several appendices with tables on all sorts of demographic, occupational, and wage data in Tennessee. The report looks at how the outcomes of high school graduates in current programs align by region and statewide with high-wage and high-demand job projections through 2016.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

A number of employers have been stepping up to the challenge of helping low-skilled employees do a better job, move up the education and work ladder, and live more productive lives. Some in-house programs are small and target a specific problem on a one-time basis. Others are ongoing and/or large in scope and enrollment. As a way to recognize the importance of workplace education/literacy programs, two committed employers are profiled below, one a major national medical center and the other a highly respected regional dairy business.

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ESL Class at Stew Leonard's

STEW LEONARD'S, a family-owned business, began as a small dairy store with seven employees in 1969. It has since grown to become the world's largest dairy store. It has 2,500 employees and annual sales of nearly \$300 million. Of its four stores, three are located in Connecticut (Norwalk is the main store) and one is in Yonkers, NY.

Over the years, the company has expanded its fresh dairy concept to meats, fish, produce, baked goods, cheese, and other specialties. Unlike traditional grocery stores that sell about 30,000 items, each Stew Leonard's store carries only 2,000, chosen specifically for freshness and quality. Some 80% of all goods are made fresh or prepared daily

on the premises.

One reason for Stew Leonard's' success is its customer service policy. Etched on a three-ton granite rock at each store's entrance is this motto:

Rule #1 -- The Customer is Always Right

Rule #2 -- If the Customer is Ever Wrong, Re-Read Rule #1.

The company is widely recognized for its management philosophy: Take good care of your people, and they, in turn, will take good care of your customers. A part of their signage reads "You can't have a great place to shop without FIRST making it a GREAT PLACE TO WORK." Stew Leonard's has been on FORTUNE Magazine's 100 Best Companies to Work for in America list for the last ten years. A New York Times article called the company "the Disneyland of Dairy Stores" noting that it features costumed characters, free entertainment, a petting zoo, and animations throughout the stores.

Consistent with Stew Leonard's philosophy, basic skills and ESL training services are offered to part-time and full-time workers and their families at all four stores. Almost every person hired full-time stays an average of 20 years. The Norwalk store has about 700 employees including ground workers, packers, butchers, chefs, and managers. The company's policy is to promote from within and it rarely hires middle or upper management from outside. It seeks people with a "good attitude" and provides whatever educational support they need. If promising workers lack basic skills, they'd rather teach them than lose them. They offer three levels of basic skills and ESL classes once a week in the store for 1-1/2 hours. They pay for half the time (45 minutes is on the clock, 45 minutes is personal time). The classes are also open to all family members at no cost. Employees are taught by staff from Literacy Volunteers of America which teaches reading, writing, and basic math. At the advanced level, students carry out creative writing projects and write articles for the company magazine, *Stew's News*.

Because every aspect of every job is computerized, the company encourages staff to become computer literate by offering on-site computer classes. Each year they bring in 12 computers for five weeks and the head of their MIS Department gives anyone interested classes from the most basic to more advanced levels. And every year they do a survey of the entire staff asking what the company can do to help them improve their job skills. In some cases, they pay 50% of tuition for college or hire private tutors.

Before entering the program, each worker gets a three-hour orientation. All employees are then tracked in terms of the training they take, the skills they master, and what they need to move to the next level.

One inspiring success story is Pierre P from Haiti. Chris Arnette, who runs the ESL program, hired him many years ago, using an interpreter because he couldn't read, write, or speak English. But he had a great attitude and she had a good feeling about him. He started working in the parking lot, and kept at it. He now manages 60 people in one of the company's kitchens.

The staff is treated like family, which engenders great loyalty. The workers rarely quit and the company has never laid anyone off, preferring instead to cut business costs in other ways.

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High School Graduation at Johns Hopkins

JOHNS HOPKINS HOSPITAL (JHH) in Baltimore, MD is a world-renowned hospital located in the middle of a poor city neighborhood. It is firmly committed to helping the community and its own employees learn the basic skills they need to move ahead in life and on the job. Its Skills Enhancement Program (SEP) originally started with a federal workplace literacy grant in partnership with a local community college. The first phase of that project consisted of seven hospitals, including Johns Hopkins, and ran for a year and a half. The second phase included 12 hospitals. But after the program ended in November 1997, Johns Hopkins was the only hospital to continue and it expanded the

program. Barbara Edwards, Workforce Education Manager, who administered the community side of the original grant, came to work at the hospital to manage the SEP program on site.

SEP is now funded completely by the Johns Hopkins Health System Corporation, and delivered through the Human Resources Office of Organizational Development and Training. It offers classes in Basic Skills Review, ESL, GED Preparation, College Entrance Prep, Basic and Advanced Medical Terminology, English as a Second Language, Microsoft Word, and Practical Spanish.

"Johns Hopkins Health System's special commitment to serve the people of East Baltimore, combined with the shortage of trained individuals and the growing skills gap, led us to a Skills Enhancement Program" says Ron Peterson, Johns Hopkins' President. "It's proven remarkably effective to help attract, retain, and upgrade the skills of our workers. We believe that one of the most cost-effective ways to rapidly meet the workforce and skills shortages in our industry is to do all we can to keep the people we have and to provide them with the skills we need. One of the most meaningful events that I have attended was our first GED graduation ceremony. It was marvelous - there was such pride in every face in the room!"

The primary goal at Johns Hopkins is to help people in entry-level jobs advance to better jobs. For example, a person might start out cleaning rooms but to move ahead, they need a high school diploma, some knowledge of medical terminology, and math skills. The SEP staff interviews, pretests, and assesses everyone entering the program. Even high school graduates may demonstrate far from 12th grade-level skills, and SEP can address the problem in its GED program. To receive a certificate of completion in any SEP course, each student must have at least 75% attendance. In addition, the various specialty courses each have their own content requirements. The program also serves high school graduates who are not college-ready with services that bridge the gap to qualify for community college.

Johns Hopkins hires and pays a staff of part-time and full-time qualified teachers. Twenty classes are given over 6-14 weeks during each of two core semesters and a short summer session (including basic skills, GED, computer applications, and community college bridge courses). The classes are held on-site at the main East Baltimore campus of the Hospital, and meet during the day and in the evening to accommodate the schedules of interested employees. Classes are two hours twice a week and accelerated GED classes meet more frequently. Employees usually take classes on their own time rather than during work hours. Spring classes generally begin in February/March; fall classes start in August/September. Between 300-400 people a year are served in some way.

Except for medical terminology, the programs are not job specific. While they are "workplace related," they are not narrowly focused on medicine because the Hospital recognizes that participants need skills in their other life activities. The only participants paid release time are a small group of people tutored in GED--usually about 15 people each semester. All instruction is classroom-based. Students welcome the interaction this gives them, as many don't have access to computers at home.

Karen Haller, Vice President of Nursing, says of the Skills Enhancement Program. *"In a world of rapid change, some jobs become obsolete while new jobs evolve. For example, our Radiology Film Clerks became obsolete as we entered the digital age. Taking such incumbent workers--responsible and engaged--and offering training for new opportunities and advancement is a win-win-win. The individual wins, the organization wins, and the economy wins."*

It was recently announced that the position of Clerical Associate was being eliminated. That position required people to transcribe doctors' orders, work at the nurses' station, answer phones, direct visitors to patient rooms, and interact minimally with the public. The new position, Clinical Customer Service Representative, needed those skills and others as well, including proficiency in Microsoft Word, ability to engage in computer learning of various medical content areas once on the job, and deeper customer service skills. Rather than replace loyal clerical staff, Johns Hopkins offered its clerical associates customized classes to acquire the needed skills.

In addition to its current employees, JHH tries to give back to the community by reaching out to ex-offenders and people living in homeless shelters, and it has had good results with many of these students. Dale K is one amazing example. He dropped out of school as a teenager, had a drinking problem from the age of 12, spent time in shelters, and developed frostbite from living on the streets of Baltimore in the freezing winter. In late 2000, he was taken to Johns Hopkins where several toes had to be amputated, and he spent two months attending the Hospital's First Step program that helps recovering addicts. Eventually, Johns Hopkins gave him work in General Services (cleaning, delivering meals, etc). He then enrolled in SEP and his skills advanced to the point where he earned his high school diploma in 2007. With the Hospital's help, he went on to college and earned a B.A. in social work.

Again, he wins, Johns Hopkins wins, and so does the economy.

For more details contact Barbara Edwards, Workforce Education Manager, bedward@jhmi.edu

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