

New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development
Adult Literacy Programs

Workforce Investment Act Title II

Narrative Report Program Year 2014
(July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015)



December 2015

New Jersey Narrative Report 2014-2015

A major focus of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) during the 2014 program year was our literacy programs. In PY 2013 the LWD renewed New Jersey's State WIA plan. The state plan identified four key foundations of an individual's workforce development needs. The first of those foundations was the recognition that an individual's literacy level is fundamental to future success.

New Jersey is in the process of developing a statewide literacy strategy allowing for a more streamlined approach to services. By streamlining literacy services, we hope to maximize all programs regardless of funding stream and coordinate these services so that all programs are complimentary to one another. Guided by the 2012-2017 [State Unified Workforce Investment Plan \(Section A, page 5\)](#), and in line with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act we continued redesigning how we provide basic skills and workforce readiness programs and services to our adult population.

Through solicited feedback from employers and other stakeholders, we found that work opportunities require a variety of skill levels to perform a wide range of jobs. We need to bridge the gap between the current skillset of jobseekers and the requirements of their potential employers. We need to create solid career pathways. Jobseekers pursuing entry-level jobs must recognize that basic skills in the 21st century require greater knowledge and adaptability than in the past. The fact is that successful job applicants must demonstrate to prospective employers that they possess the kind of skills that will allow them to function in any organization or workplace.

In response to this, the LWD identified four core values that helped guide its strategic and programmatic decisions. Our Core Value 3, Equipping the Workforce for Employment, recognizes that jobseekers must possess basic skills, and literacy and workforce readiness skills in order to secure and retain employment. This is the critical foundation for all of the state's talent development initiatives.

State Leadership Funds

As stated in last year's final narrative report New Jersey was selected as one of 13 states to participate in the Moving Pathways Forward grant managed by Kratos Learning. This opportunity allows New Jersey to utilize the grant as the springboard to advance discussions across multiple state departments for purposes of building our own career pathways network. During the 2014 program year New Jersey held a Career Pathways summit that was designed to begin the discussion of a Career Pathway pilot project in two counties specifically between the Title II programs and the local Workforce Investment Boards. We expect the conversations to continue through PY2015 as these pilot projects get planned out and move into the implementation process.

New Jersey also developed a common definition for Career Pathways to help direct our programs into development of career pathway systems. The common definition is as follows: A series of education and training experiences resulting in industry-valued credentials leading to employment, promotion and/or advanced education. Career Pathways are industry-focused, have diverse entry and exit points, and include integration of adult basic skills, digital literacy, employability skills and work-based learning.

In hope of developing innovative strategies to adult education, the Literacy Innovations competitive grant wrapped up on June 30, 2015 for 6 of the 8 grantees. Two of the grantees, the New Jersey State Library

and the Jersey City Public Library, received extensions. The Literacy Innovations grant, supported by our State Leadership funds, provided funding for eligible training providers to upgrade curriculum and instructional practices to be in line with the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) or to create a pilot to expand current service delivery. As a result of the completion of the Literacy Innovations grant, we have received final reports and inventive curriculums from the grantees. They will be sharing their findings and breakthroughs with the entire WIA Title II community of practitioners through the best practice meetings. Many of the Literacy Innovations grantees participate in best practice committees developed by LWD to ensure all programs are aware of the wealth of knowledge gained during the grant process.

For national reporting standards compliance the state continues to utilize LiteracyPro Systems, Inc. as its management information system (MIS), which provides New Jersey's student record management and reporting system, Literacy Adult and Community Education System (LACES). This year New Jersey began utilizing newly created reports to meet our specific reporting needs. These reports were developed to enhance the ability for LWD to provide an optimal level of technical assistance. These reports have helped to save staff time and allow for a better understanding as to where providers are in meeting their performance targets during the year. A listing of these reports can be found below. Training was provided by LiteracyPro Systems to all WIA Title II staff and partner agency staff. State technical assistance staff review LACES data on a regular basis and provide technical assistance to any program having difficulty with data input or output. In order to better provide trainings to our grantees targeted trainings for the LACES database were also provided. These trainings are individualized to each grantee and allow for clear guidance to be provided while looking specifically at the data for each grantee. It is our belief that these trainings have been an asset to cleaning up the data collection issues that existed in the past.

Significant efforts were undertaken regarding the implementation of the LACES data system for reporting into the NRS. These efforts included:

- Data quality assurance and quality control efforts;
- Export of data files from LACES into the LWD's NJ Consumer Report Card;
- Data matching from the wage record system to LACES to capture more accurate data for core indicators dealing with attainment of employment and job retention; and
- Targeted customized training efforts to improve the data entry for outcomes reported on NRS Table 5.

The following is a listing of the LACES customized reports:

- Adult Basic Education (ABE) educational gains by location report
- English as a Second Language (ESL) educational gains by location report
- Follow-up measures by location report
- Contracted enrollment summary
- Retention and posttest rate report
- Performance results summary report
- State, consortium, and agency report cards

The LWD's goal is to promote and provide adult literacy programs throughout the State of New Jersey. Professional development is a required component of WIOA Title II, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA). In an effort to uphold and maintain the excellence of instructional programs in adult literacy, WIOA Title II grant recipients must submit yearly professional development plans which identify their specific needs. These plans are then utilized by the LWD Literacy Services Unit to create a needs assessment plan, which is then facilitated by the Literacy Services Professional Development

Coordinator. During PY 2014-2015, the following professional development initiatives were undertaken:

- The data management software, LACES, continued to be a major professional development initiative for adult education administrators and practitioners. LACES training was provided to WIA Title II grantees on a regional basis, individual/targeted agency basis, through webinars, and online through LiteracyPro’s helpdesk.
- Sponsorship and support for a number of seminars and panels at statewide conferences with literacy organizations such as the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning Annual Conference (NJALL); LVNJ-Literacy for Life Seminar; Garden State Employment and Training Association's (GSETA) Annual Conference; and support for volunteer literacy tutor training.
- Program directors' seminars on policy and program topics including federal and state requirements; and grant preparation and development (Intake, Goal Setting, Assessment, Evaluation, Follow-Up Survey and Professional Development policies).
- Each WIA Title II consortium was provided a professional development award to address the individual training needs of the consortium. These “consortium professional development trainings” specifically targeted staff training activities, which were not provided by the LWD.
- LWD has built a dynamic relationship with the LINC'S Region 1 Professional Development Center. In doing so, we have connected our consortia and their partner agencies with a multitude of free professional development webinar opportunities. Our Literacy Services Unit has also participated in many of these webinars in an effort to stay informed of the challenges facing our service providers.

In summary, 33 separate professional development activities were provided by the LWD serving a total of 617 participants.

Performance Data Analyses

Educational functioning level (EFL) gain performance targets for PY 2014 were established and agreed upon by the LWD literacy staff in collaboration with the USDOE. Performance targets for the core outcome follow-up measures were established by New Jersey and provided to WIA Title II programs. Chart 1 provides a breakdown of New Jersey’s performance targets for PY 2012, 2013, and 2014 and our actual performance toward meeting the targets.

Chart 1: New Jersey Adult Education Performance of the last three years

Performance Objectives	PY12 Target	PY12 Performance	PY13 Target	PY 13 Performance	PY14 Target	PY 14 Performance
ABE Beginning Literacy	32%	28%	32%	33%	39%	48%
ABE Beginning Basic Education	36%	30%	32%	31%	38%	42%
ABE Intermediate Low	35%	29%	32%	30%	36%	42%
ABE Intermediate High	28%	23%	30%	24%	35%	34%
ASE Low	32%	21%	25%	23%	33%	34%
ESL Beginning Literacy	45%	36%	35%	37%	40%	46%
ESL Beginning Low	49%	40%	39%	43%	49%	49%
ESL Beginning High	43%	46%	40%	47%	48%	50%
ESL Intermediate Low	35%	42%	40%	41%	45%	52%
ESL Intermediate High	20%	32%	35%	30%	38%	35%
ESL Advanced	32%	23%	23%	24%	25%	36%

Entered Employment	38%	34%	32%	52%	35%	54%
Retained Employment	30%	65%	40%	95%	65%	98%
GED or Diploma	43%	82%	39%	66%	75%	87%
Entered Postsecondary	38%	Invalid*	30%	12%	20%	19%

*Invalid = less than 50% response rate. A 50% response rate is needed to count on NRS Table 5.

This chart shows data over the past three years on educational gains in the areas of: reading, writing, and speaking the English language, numeracy, computing, problem-solving, perception and comprehension for English language communication and other literacy skills. The chart also includes data on the follow up measures: entered employment, retained employment, receipt of a secondary diploma or New Jersey state issued diploma, and entry into post-secondary education or training. Over the last three years, New Jersey has demonstrated improvement in all of the 11 EFL gain areas and in all the core outcome follow-up measures.

New Jersey increased its performance to 2,841 individuals who met the entered employment outcomes (increased by 125 from last year). For retained employment, New Jersey captured 8,223 students who met the retained employment outcome for this year, (increased by 2,669 from last year). The GED/HSE PY14 performance outcomes for PY14 is 1,101 which is a decrease of 218 from last year. Discussions with providers has shown that the new High School Equivalency exams are proving to be more difficult to pass all sections. The inability to complete data match on the new HSE tests has also contributed to the decrease in the number of participants obtaining a GED/HSE.

Goal I: To Enable Adults to Acquire the Basic Educational Skills Necessary for Literate Functioning

During PY 2014, educational services and instruction to adults were provided through a wide variety of program offerings including: ABE, ESL, volunteer literacy programs, adult high school programs, GED/HSE test preparation, and programs at correctional institutions and at other state institutions.

For PY 2014, WIA Title II programs served 21,694 adult participants. The populations served included 8,507 ABE participants, 1,126 Adult Secondary Education (ASE) participants and 12,061 ESL participants. See Chart 2 for a breakdown of participants by EFL for PY 2013 and PY 2014.

Chart 2: New Jersey Adult Education Participants

Educational Functioning Level	PY 2013 Total Enrollment	PY 2014 Total Enrollment
ABE Beginning Literacy	1,097	741
ABE Beginning Basic Education	2,875	1,920
ABE Intermediate Low	4,554	3,138
ABE Intermediate High	3,512	2,708
ASE Low	942	797
ASE High	369	329
ESL Beginning Literacy	9,231	5,078
ESL Beginning Low	3,499	2,208
ESL Beginning High	2,500	1,538
ESL Intermediate Low	2,212	1,423
ESL Intermediate High	1,763	1,198
ESL Advanced	934	616
Total	33,488	21,694

The ABE/ESL and EL/C program services were delivered through 17 consortia and lead agencies with multiple delivery sites throughout the counties coordinated by the individual consortium, community/technical colleges or public and private non-profit agencies and New Jersey State correctional institutions. Together, 77 agencies participated in delivering services in PY 2014.

Goal II: To Provide English Literacy Instruction for Adults with Limited English Proficiency

The ESL programs are offered at many different venues from literacy-based volunteer programs to adult education programs. The programs provide services from ESL Beginning Literacy to Advanced Level ESL. For the volunteer-based programs, services are provided through the use of tutor-learner matches to sponsor volunteer one-on-one or small group tutorial services.

The majority of the ESL students served (42 percent) were assessed at the ESL Beginning Literacy EFL. This population may only understand isolated words or phrases, may have no or minimal reading or writing skills in any language and functions minimally or not at all in English. A total of 21,694 students were served in the WIA Title II program for PY 2014; 12,061 of them were ESL students. New Jersey met five out of six EFL gain targets for PY 2014. This can be attributed to technical assistance and targeted training focused on accurate data entry and improved assessment procedures.

Chart 3: New Jersey Adult Education Participants in Programs for Adults with Limited English Proficiency

Educational Functioning Level	Total Number of ESL Students - PY 2014	Total Percentage of ESL Students - PY 2014
ESL Beginning Literacy	5,078	42%
ESL Beginning Low	2,208	18%
ESL Beginning High	1,538	13%
ESL Intermediate Low	1,423	12%
ESL Intermediate High	1,198	10%
ESL Advanced	616	5%
Total	12,061	100%

Goal III: To Provide Adults with Sufficient Basic Education to Enable them to Obtain and Retain Employment and to Benefit from Occupational Training and Postsecondary Education Programs

Provider agencies were required to provide a system of support services, either on-site or through community referral to allow adults the opportunity to participate in programs that would assist them in obtaining and retaining employment, and benefit from job training and retraining programs.

In PY 2014 the LWD utilized a data matching process that allows participants with the cohort designation of either entered employment or retained employment who also provide a social security number to be matched against wage records. The LWD has worked closely with program providers and LiteracyPro to eliminate any errors in the process and to ensure that program providers are doing their best to capture participant’s social security numbers allowing for a much larger number of captured positive outcomes.

Chart 4: Core Outcome Follow-up Data: New Jersey Adult Education Participant Employment and Postsecondary Achievements

Indicator	No. of Participants Achieving Outcome PY 2013	No. of Participants Achieving Outcome PY 2014
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Enter Employment	2716	2,841
Retain Employment	5554	8,223
Entered Postsecondary Education/Training	782	900

Goal IV: To Enable Adults to Continue their Education to at least the Level of Completion of Secondary School

Educational opportunities were provided to adults via programs ranging from the ABE Beginning Literacy to the ASE High and through the provision of adult high schools in New Jersey school districts to prepare adults to:

- enroll and participate in the appropriate level of an adult education program and receive ancillary support services if necessary;
- move to the next EFL based on program performance;
- sit for the GED/HSE test and, if successful, receive a New Jersey state issued diploma; or
- graduate from an adult high school.

Chart 5: Core Follow-up Outcome Data: New Jersey Adult Education Participant Educational Achievements

Indicator	No. of Participants Achieving Outcome PY 2013	No. of Participants Achieving Outcome PY 2014
Obtained GED/Secondary School Diploma	1319	1,101

Integration with Other Programs

NJLWD made a variety of investments to help individuals obtain their high school diploma or its recognized equivalent, improve their basic math, reading and writing skills and attain basic English and computer proficiencies necessary for employment. The LWD utilizes state funding to enhance adult education alternatives directly related to welfare registrants, dislocated workers and other jobseekers.

There are 30 Workforce Learning Link (WLL) labs throughout the state. The majority of these labs are located at the One-Stop Career Centers (OSCCs). Through a combined training approach and computer-based instruction, the WLLs provide services that include basic computer literacy, financial literacy, job search and employability skills, and GED/High School Equivalency (HSE) preparation and testing. This effort has allowed New Jersey to expand its literacy services to provide interactive training services that allow participants to address individual employment-related issues at their own pace. For PY 2014, the state’s 30 WLL facilities helped approximately 3,000 individuals raise their basic skill levels, obtain employment, enter training, and obtain their HSE using computer labs in OSCCs throughout the state.

English Literacy/Civics (EL/C) Program

During the performance period, grantees were required to integrate an English language/civics education component. The goal of this program is to create voluntary partnerships among federal, state and local agencies to develop, implement and improve English literacy and civics education services. These services are intended to help immigrants and others with limited English proficiency develop the skills and knowledge necessary to become active and informed parents, workers and community members.

Types of activities supported by these funds included:

- provision of experiential learning opportunities including completing employment forms, completing the voter registration process, engaging participants in volunteer opportunities and linkages with community resources;

- provision of computers and software for instruction;
- citizen preparation including visiting of polling places and government buildings in the state capital;
- field trips to promote American cultural awareness and skills; and
- preparation of curricula focusing on issues of importance to non-citizens such as preparation for becoming a U.S. citizen, job training and placement, housing, parenting and civics preparation.

New Jersey leads the nation in the diversity of cultures; there are over 140 spoken languages and various dialects spoken in the state. The English Literacy/Civics (EL/C) programs support the immigrant community and other limited English proficient populations. During PY 2014, 3,787 participants were served through the EL/C program and 817 participants passed their citizenship exam. The ESL population represented approximately 56 percent of all the students being served in the WIA Title II program, while 42 percent of these students were assessed at the Beginning ESL Literacy Educational Functioning Level (EFL). This population has very limited reading or writing skills in any language and may function minimally or not at all in English. These limitations directly affect a participant's ability to meet the goals of entering employment in a timely manner.

The goal of this program is to ensure that new residents acquire the skills and knowledge to become active and informed parents, workers and community members. This population is targeted for the EL/C program, which emphasizes contextualized instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civic participation, and U.S. history and government, in accordance with the *National Standards for Civics and Government* and *CIVITAS: A Framework for Civic Education*; (CIVITAS sets forth in detail the civic knowledge, skills, dispositions, and commitments necessary for effective citizenship in the 21st century). This type of contextualized instruction is infused into all of our ABE/ESL and EL/C instructional programs, including those in our correctional facilities and mental health state institutions/agency programs.

Secondary School Credentials and Equivalencies

The NJ Department of Education (NJDOE) awards a State-issued high school diploma to individuals with a passing score on any of the assessment tests approved by the State Board of Education. A passing score on either the TASC, Hi-Set, or GED exam will allow an individual to qualify for a State-issued high school diploma. Statewide standard scores for passage of GED, TASC, or Hi-Set assessment tests shall be at least the minimum passing standard set by the respective test vendor and accepted by resolution of the State Board of Education. There are currently 30 GED/HSE testing centers operating in the state; these sites most often are affiliated with an adult education consortium, adult high school or OSCC. One GED/HSE testing center is offered through the New Jersey Department of Corrections (DOC).

A State-issued high school diploma may also be awarded if an individual completes a minimum of 30 general education college credits. There must be a minimum of 3 credits in each of the following subject areas: English language arts; mathematics; science; and social studies; and 6 total credits in visual and performing arts; comprehensive health and physical education; world languages; technology; and 21st century life and careers. The minimum average grade for the 30 credits must be a C or 2.0.

A school district board of education may operate adult high schools and award high school diplomas. These adult high schools offer adults opportunity, accessibility, and flexibility while maintaining high standards inherent in the awarding of a high school diploma. New Jersey currently operates 14 adult high schools that issue high school diplomas to individuals who are no longer enrolled or required to be enrolled

in secondary school under State law. Adult high schools provide the infrastructure upon which the initial WIA Title II programs were infused.

Adult Education Standards

In 2010, New Jersey voluntarily adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), along with 45 other states and Washington, D.C. The standards were developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, together with teachers, curriculum content experts and higher education faculty. The Common Core replaced the previous New Jersey standards for all students in grades K-12 in English Language Arts and Mathematics. The other seven curricular areas that comprise the NJ CCSS remain unchanged.

The Common Core offers a number of advantages over our previous standards. Most importantly, they focus heavily on critical thinking skills and students' ability to read, write, speak, listen and solve "real world" problems independently. The standards were developed with the goal of ensuring all students are college and career ready by building the skills and knowledge valued by employers and higher education. Additionally, the Common Core is internationally benchmarked to ensure students are academically competitive with their international peers.

A poll of New Jersey educators found that two-thirds of teachers are enthusiastic about the Common Core, and 69% believe the Common Core will have a positive impact on students' ability to think critically and use reasoning skills.

- The National Education Association (NEA), New Jersey's largest teachers' union, was involved in the development and implementation of the Common Core.
- The Common Core was endorsed by the College and Career Ready Task Force, which was made up of the higher education and business communities of New Jersey. The national Chamber of Commerce also supports the Common Core.

In addition to the progress made by the New Jersey Department of Education in both adopting and implementing the Common Core state standards for New Jersey the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, which has oversight of the WIA Title II program, has begun to take steps to adopt the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education in the State. With the completion of the new state WIOA plan it is anticipated that the College and Career Readiness Standards will be approved and implemented during FY 16.

In conclusion, New Jersey understands that adult literacy is a critical component to preparing our workforce for the future. We face many challenges in changing the landscape of adult literacy as well as employment opportunities. With the implementation of the College and Career Readiness Standard and a proper understanding and practice of Career Pathways it is anticipated that we will provide services that lead to a sustainable income, proper credentialing for employment opportunities and a better understanding and usage of the English language.