Summary

## 2015 Adult Education Project

Working Group: Access

**Absent**

Edmund Ferszt

Kristen McKenna

Bernice Morris

Jamie Scurry

**Attending**

Susan Corte

Gayle Dzekevich

Heather Gaydos

Tyla McCaffrey-Pimentel

Michelle Novello

Karisa Tashjian

*Brady Dunklee, facilitating*

*Elana Rosenberg, note-taking*

June 10, 2015

2:30-5:00 p.m.

The Genesis Center

620 Potters Avenue

Providence, RI

401 781-6110

At its first meeting, the Access Group was asked to review and understand the scope of its task, develop a draft vision statement for Access in Rhode Island, and brainstorm possible priority recommendations for Access over the next 1-3 years. The group also identified the need to define the term “Access,” and began developing a series of Guiding Principles or “Access is” statements to accompany the vision and recommendations.

**Access Defined:** The Working Group noted that there are many dimensions of Access for Adult Education, and discussed a number of them, including:

* Accessible scheduling (including a discussion of managed enrollment and how to engage learners between program cycles).
* Accessible environments (including for those previously unsuccessful in school)
* Geographic accessibility, including transportation and local programs
* Accessible information about services and opportunities
* “Access to resources when and where they want,” including opportunities outside the traditional classroom.
* Access to technology
* Access as the absence/reduction of barriers
* Access including policy, funding, outcome measure dimensions, a public system of support for access
* Access as a noun and a verb.

**Vision Statement Draft:** The Working Group wanted to maintain a broad definition of access to adult education, taking care to include more than classroom-based education, and therefore using the terms “All RI Adults” instead of “students,” and “opportunities” or “resources” instead of “classes.” They also wished to ground the vision in learner outcomes, stating that the purpose of access was to help adults achieve their goals. After discussion noting that learners often need expert help in goal-setting, the group moved to the phrasing “articulate and achieve their goals.” Quality, support and student-centered orientation were important to committee members, and these terms were included in the draft vision statement: **“All RI adults have ongoing access to high quality, student centered learning opportunities, and support to help them articulate and achieve their goals.”**

**Brainstorm on Priority Recommendations:** The Working Group worked from the discussion question “How could access be better coordinated and promoted at the state level?” A number of examples of leadership and advocacy were discussed.

* In Rhode Island, the Children and Youth Cabinet takes a collective impact, rather than a competitive approach—could there be an “adult cabinet?”
* The issue of the reduced status of the RIDE Adult Education Director position was an item of concern, with a recommendation that the position be elevated again.
* The Rhode Island Resource Hub provides information about services. What is its role in our recommendations?
* Examples from Minnesota, Philadelphia and Tennessee were discussed, each with a focused effort on adult education agenda-setting and leadership, including marketing efforts. How can adult education be elevated, people of good will and clout involved, and an access agenda created and enacted?
* What is role of the one-stop centers, and how is it changing with WIOA?

Brady will research state leadership and WIOA takeaways for next time.

**Also discussed:** What evidence is there that these recommendations will be adopted? We mentioned a few supporting factors, including the precedent of *Building the Critical Links*, verbal commitments and participation from RIDE, opportunities presented by a new Commissioner, United Way’s brand and level of respect—but we’re looking to the participants for ideas and strategy on how to push for implementation. Who is the target audience of these recommendations, and who are the stakeholders?