Summary

## 2015 Adult Education Project

Working Group: Connections

**Attending**

Dr. Al Alba

Joan Ayotte

Jennifer Bryant

April Brown

Jason Colonies

Cameron Ennis

Melanie LaMountain

Jane May

Sharon Miles

*Brady Dunklee, facilitating*

*Diana Perdomo, note-taking*

**Absent**

Kristen McKenna

June 12, 2015

8:30-11:00 a.m.

The Education Exchange

Lilly Pads Complex

33 North Road C-1

Wakefield, RI

401-783-0293

At its first meeting, the Connections Working Group was asked to review and understand the scope of its task, develop a draft vision statement for Connections in Rhode Island, and brainstorm possible priority recommendations for Connections over the next 1-3 years. The group started by discussing examples of failed or inadequate connections, and possibilities for how these could be improved. The conversation then moved from the specific to the general, discussing the scope of “connections” for our purposes, and drafting a vision statement.

**Discussion of Connections:** Frustration was a theme. Participants described competition rather than collaboration among programs; programs operating in vacuums, bubbles, thinking provincially or territorially; lack of authentic or coherent representation of adult education in state level decision-making processes; lack of a unified voice or clear vision at various levels of leadership; lack of transparency about who to talk to in state government concerning adult education issues; problems with the GED as an assessment and credentialing tool; disconnects in information transfer among providers for student success; and adult education’s marginalized status in general (a “red-headed stepchild”). Participants saw a need to streamline information-sharing, to learn more about state resources and personnel, to build on career pathways work and the Resource Hub, to strengthen and innovate connections for learners’ economic success. Concretely, the brainstormed recommendations included:

* Streamlining contacts and creating seamless referrals. The need for a contact sheet and list of resources, clarified roles, especially at state agencies. Who do we call?
* Coordinated resources for students and the adult education field.
* Elevate the director position at RIDE.
* Consider adult education representatives at DLT, DHS, Corrections, etc.
* Create practitioner representation for adult education, such that people in the field with expertise are part of the decision making team.
* Create a system to influence and advocate
* Build a message that our work develops people to be productive members of the workforce.
* Look at alternatives to GED such as the NEDP, HiSET and TASC. Consider trade programs that ask students to show skills/task.

**Vision Statement Draft:** The group was asked to consider “Connections for whom and for what?” They noted that 100,000 in the state have low skills, and that adult education’s target population includes the homeless, current or former prisoners, people of limited English proficiency, a large range of educational attainment, immigrants and veterans. “Connections” for these people should include business, agencies, providers, etc. The group envisioned connections that allowed for resource sharing and advocacy to empower learners’ to achieve their goals. We discussed the various roles that adult learners play in economic productivity and society. After group discussion and editing, the Working Group drafted this vision statement: **“A strong, effective system of connections and collaborations among community providers and partners empowers all adults to participate meaningfully in the economy and society.”**