



National Coalition for Literacy

Board Meeting

March 12, 2025

Attendees: Jody Angelone, Cynthia Bell, Rachel DeVaughan, Todd Evans (Treasurer), Jamie Harris (Vice President), Chrissie Klinger, Kevin Maher (Secretary), Tom Nash, Eric Nesheim (President), Christy Rhodes, Gwenn Weaver

Not attending: Randy Tillery

Ex officio: Jeff Fantine (*executive director*), Deborah Kennedy (*senior consultant*)

Guests: Lauren Osowski

Note-taker: Michele Diecuch

MINUTES

1. Meeting Business

- Approval of the minutes of the February 12 meeting – a motion to approve the minutes was made by Eric; seconded by Rachel; approved unanimously

2. Executive Director Report

- Monthly ED Report

- Issues & Policy Update

CR – hope is for it to be passed by Friday to keep the government open until the end of the year. In the CR, AEFLA is level-funded from the previous year. For the appropriations bill for next year's funding, messages circulating are that there will be significant cuts across the board for DOE. Jeff will keep an eye on it to determine next steps and call-to-action.

WIOA reauthorization – recent hearing had only witness testimony from Title I. Jeff sent questions to representatives about Title II. The hearing included adult ed, but there was little focus on it. Jeff received an email from the Senate side that they are trying to organize a similar hearing, and they have invited Jeff F. to be a panelist. They are working on scheduling it right now. It appears they will have two Title II panelists and two Title I panelists.

- Scenario Planning – Shift in Advocacy Efforts

DOE – there is a lot going on with DOE staff. Jeff has reached out to contacts to let them know that staffing actions impact others outside of the DOE. The staffing situation changes continuously – some are on administrative leave, some are taking the retirement package. As of the time of this meeting, Jeff found out there are only two OCTAE staff. There is a freeze on financial aid. They have also fired DOE lawyers. The Research and Evaluation division has been eliminated. Jeff noted that nothing official has been shared, however.

Jeff suggested calling an emergency meeting of NCL members. There are a lot of questions about what is happening during the transitions and what can be done if the DOE is eliminated.

Last week, the administration was going to put out an executive order to eliminate the DOE, but it was halted because they knew they would see legal action. The new

approach seems to be to gut the DOE to make it largely ineffective. There are no plans being shared about how AEFLA and other programs would be administered. Todd raised the point about focusing on different areas in light of the seemingly-inevitable closing of the DOE – ex., focus on state advocacy. Tom noted that state and local education departments are also struggling.

The group discussed having a webinar for NCL members to discuss what is happening, how to respond, what messaging should be, etc. It was noted that it would need to be done very carefully due to varying viewpoints. Meetings could be focused on different strands to help people decide which to attend.

- Strategic Planning – Revisioning (Team Introduction)

The team for NCL strategic planning will be Laura Wiesel (lead facilitator) and Lauren Osowski (ProLiteracy). Laura was unavailable today. A plan for moving forward will be sent in the next couple of weeks. Jeff talked through the components of the process including adapting to change, systems change, out-of-the-box ideas (Jeff asked the board to read through the info he sent). Second step will be to identify stakeholder groups, followed by info gathering, then back to board for discussion. Next will be to develop three-year goals. Last would be unveiling to all. Lauren has a tool that will help keep the process on track and collect surveys/documentation so they're in one place. Further discussion will be part of the agendas for the hybrid May and September Members' Meetings.

3. Finance and Development Report

- Review & Approve 2025 Budget, Review Monthly Financial Statements, Fund Development Discussion

Todd updated that NCL drew from the money market account to help with assistance from the senior consultant, new ED, and for bridging the gap while membership dues come in. About 25% of membership dues have been received. Todd encouraged all to submit dues for their respective organizations and for board members to give annual donations.

Expenses are on pace for this time of year. Noted that there were two lines – executive director and new executive director - this needs to be adjusted so that expenses are allocated to the proper line. The new budget reflects the addition of travel expenses, vendor materials, and graphic design for conferences. Also included is funding to support Laura Wiesel's facilitation work. The 2025 budget is about \$65,000, considerably higher than previously. Plans include significant time for fundraising. The revenue for 2025 without fundraising is about \$28,000. Todd noted that Jeff and the board need to be diligent about fundraising. Jeff mentioned soliciting funds from foundations and other philanthropic sources. Jeff is also looking at expanding membership revenue. Kevin shared a couple of foundations to consider. Jeff asked that directors send ideas and/or connections his way.

Budget does not include foundation revenue that NCL plans to pursue. It is a target of Jeff's to raise \$50,000 this year. Deborah suggested putting in \$50,000 for fundraising to balance the budget – split between corporate sponsorships and foundations. Motion to approve the modified budget based on that change was made by Todd, seconded by Kevin, budget unanimously approved.

4. Membership Committee Report

- 2025 Membership renewal update

Jamie updated that dues are starting to come in. Some organizations are not sure if they are able to renew due to changes and uncertainty at the national level. Jeff sent an updated list of orgs that have renewed and status for those who cannot renew.

- Changes to Individual Membership Considerations

Jeff mentioned that there are opportunities for growing membership – some targeted groups may be part of the strategic planning process (workforce development, state agencies, corporate groups). Jeff would like the board to consider individual membership. Would need to make some adjustments to the membership process for directly soliciting individual members. Also mentioned lowering the dues amount (currently \$75/year). This does create more administration to implement, but Jeff has seen several interested in becoming individual members. Some may be groups that are not able to join for various reasons. Could there be a category for “supporters” that are not necessarily individuals? Mentioned surveying those interested to help determine pricing. Jeff suggested \$45/50 based on looking at other orgs’ individual membership programs.

Decided to use \$50 as placeholder for purposes of voting on the budget. Jeff can gather more info to determine pricing and structure. Todd made a motion for Jeff to put together a proposal for an individual membership program; seconded by Jody; all in favor.

Todd noted that individual membership is not included in the 2025 budget. Jeff did add an estimate for the budget reflecting approximately 25 members.

5. Communications Committee Report

- Communications Planning / Committee

Jeff and Kevin met to talk about some ideas. Kevin will put together a memo to send to the full membership to ask for volunteers for a communications committee. Next step would be to develop a plan for expanding communications including social media presence and how the website is used. When the committee is convened, protocols should also be discussed so that all know how to communicate as a nonpartisan organization.

6. Other Business

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7. Upcoming Board and Member Meeting Dates

- Board Meeting - April 9 (10-11:30 a.m. EST)
- **Board Meeting – May 14 (2-4:00 p.m. EST)**
- **Member Meeting – May 15 (9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. EST)**
- Board Meeting – June 11 (10-11:30 a.m. EST)
- No Board Meeting in July
- Board Meeting – August 13 (10-11:30)
- **Board Meeting – September 17 (2-4:00 p.m. EST)**
- **Member Meeting – September 18 (9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. EST)**

8. Coming events

- TESOL International Convention, March 18-25, Long Beach, CA
- COABE National Conference, March 30-April 2, Dallas, TX
- National Skills Coalition Summit, May 5-7, Washington, DC
- ALA Annual Conference & Exhibition, June 26-30, 2025, Philadelphia, PA • **2025 AEFL Week – September 14-20. 2025**
- AAACE Conference – October 6-10, Cincinnati, OH
- National Center for Families Learning Conference – November 2-5, 2025 – Charlotte, NC