



# Strategies • Opportunities • Services for Out-of-School Youth

SOSOSY Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 1

## SOSOSY Consortium Incentive Grant

### Participating States

Alabama  
Colorado  
Florida  
Idaho  
Illinois  
Kansas  
Kentucky  
Massachusetts  
Minnesota  
Mississippi  
Nebraska  
New Hampshire  
New Jersey  
New York  
North Carolina  
Pennsylvania  
South Carolina  
Tennessee  
Vermont  
Wisconsin

### Partner States

Alaska  
Arkansas  
Georgia  
Maryland  
Missouri  
Montana  
Washington

## Director's Note

Welcome to the Summer SOSOSY Newsletter. I hope that your summer programs are seeing great success. As we plan for our exciting Dissemination Event this fall, please take some time to find out the latest news about some of our innovations and tools, specifically in the area of Instructional Technology. One of our strengths is collaboration so we are pleased to begin a new feature highlighting one state's MEP story. This edition features Massachusetts. Your pro-program might be next. Speaking of collaboration, we always welcome submissions for the news-letter. Don't hesitate to send an idea to me at [tkalic@embarqmail.com](mailto:tkalic@embarqmail.com). In the meantime, I look forward to seeing everyone in November...

*Tracie Kalic, Director, SOSOSY*

## The Best First Step is Screening - OSY Language Screener

Teachers know that every student is different. It is important to find out as much as possible about OSY's needs before focused instruction begins. To help, SOSOSY offers an invaluable tool in the OSY Language Screener, being piloted currently in member states.

Step one for the instructor is to view the instructional video, produced by the Adult Learning Resource Center. Watch in real time as the host explains the hows and whys of the Language Screener while testing actual students.

The simple, effective test process focuses on OSY's English proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, literacy and writing. Using the supplied scoring rubric helps an instructor know where to start in language instruction and how best to help OSY reach their goals.

Parts 1, 2 and 4 of the test screen for beginning listening, speaking and literacy skills. Students who do well then take parts 3 and 5, which screen for higher levels of language proficiency. Initial questions include asking the student to find the picture of the word spoken (like truck or hand), identifying letters and numbers, and answering simple questions such as, "What is your job?"

Part 6 screens for writing skills in English or Spanish. This part is optional for students wishing to pursue GED prep in either language or who are seeking additional writing practice overall. Students are asked to spend 15 minutes writing about either family or employment.

*(continued on page 4)*

## State Spotlight: Massachusetts

### Emily Hoffman

DCO/Massachusetts Migrant Education Program State Director, EDCO/MMEP State Director

**DEMOGRAPHICS** - In Massachusetts, the MEP has been run solely by the non-profit EDCO Collaborative for 30 years. EDCO Collaborative oversees all aspects of the MEP including ID&R, service delivery, parent involvement, and collaboration with school districts and other community organizations. Our state averages around 500 students annually and our student numbers have increased each year for the past three years. The top four ethnic groups we see are Guatemalan, Mexican, El Salvadoran, and Honduran. However, other ethnicities continue to increase and we have found our predominately Spanish program needing to expand with Haitian and Cape Verdean Creole.

**UNIQUENESS** - An interesting feature of Massachusetts is that we have an agricultural farming part of the state, but we also have large ports that bring in fish and produce from other areas into New England. This means we have lots of initial processing and production along our coast. We are a small state, but we have a very diverse collection of qualifying work activities. We have a significant OSY population but also a large pre-school population and a significant K-12 as well. Having the whole program function holistically within EDCO allows us to efficiently hone in on the individual academic needs of each student.

**ID&R** - We have a statewide coordinator and five staff members who work year round recruiting throughout the entire state. In the past three years we have become more data driven and are pushing to be more strategic by collaborating with community-based organizations that are serving our same population. We refer migrant youth to appropriate service organizations and vice versa. We recently moved our offices into the communities where we are working and have been participating in more community activities and fairs in order to increase our presence. We have also concentrated on our branding, making sure that our logo is used consistently across the state throughout all of our materials.

**STATE SUPPORT** - In the past we concentrated solely on ESL for OSY, but by using the results of the OSY profiles and working specifically with ways to integrate their interests and goals, we now integrate ESL curriculum that is geared for interest levels, life skills, taking feedback, and providing more opportunities for the youth to be social with each other. We are able to establish relationships so that students can ask for more specific help - completing high school, health care, social needs. Massachusetts has had universal healthcare for years so we are easily able to leverage resources for both medical and dental needs and we regularly sign up OSY for healthcare.

**STRENGTHS** - We do a very nice job at retention. If we have OSY who quit a program, we follow up and address the reasons. We will adjust services to meet their schedules and remove as many barriers as we can. We have done a good job of using curriculum that meets the level of academic skill of the student and allows the student to accomplish specific academic goals.

**IMPROVEMENTS** - Because of immigration changes, many of our migrant OSY are re-enrolling in schools so we need to adjust how we are serving these students who are no longer categorized as OSY. They still have the same needs as other OSY and are supporting themselves, and often sending money back home, without a family structure to help with schoolwork. We know that the majority of our OSY left school at a 6th grade level. As they are enrolled in 9th or 10th grade here, we are looking at how best to work with them and their schools to leverage the resources available so that they can be successful.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** - We have ongoing training through our ID&R Coordinator to address the needs and specific issues of our ID&R staff. There are two statewide training workshops each year, always with an OSY component, and we are hoping to expand to three. Our upper management attends a yearly conference to network with other states and learn about different programs. We also have opportunities for our teaching staff to attend training in the curriculum and to discuss their potential student population. We are always looking for ways to collaborate with other organizations. If staff can connect an OSY with a valuable resource or class in their community, we work to help take the best advantage of those resources for our students.

**COLLABORATION** - In the western part of Massachusetts, there is a health clinic operated with migrant health funding. We also work with the Springfield Jewish Community Center, linking opportunities between our OSY population and their high school program. We work with Centro Latino in Chelsea as well as the Community Economic Development Center in New Bedford. We make every effort to work closely with the high schools enrolling our OSY students. Some districts are more prepared than others to work with this particular population, but almost all are focused on working together to help.

**SUCCESS STORY** - Last year we had a student from El Salvador who was with us for around 18 months. In the beginning it was a struggle to get him to English classes, but before long he was learning at a high level. He had been in high school before leaving El Salvador and he wanted to go back to school. We connected him with an organization that offered GED prep in Spanish and we helped with tutoring. He also took classes on computer repair with our assistance. By the time he left us, he had not only completed his GED but was able to enter a computer repair-training program. It's a rare story, but one of those nice moments.



In order to find the best educational solutions for OSY, their challenges must be well identified. Interviews with OSY of different ages and backgrounds show that many of their challenges are held in common.

The most oft-stated challenges are encompassed in the following:

- classes taught almost exclusively in English
- lack of understanding of the school systems and expectations
- prior education history of interrupted schooling
- real or perceived lack of empathy from school personnel
- mid-year mobility and resulting absences
- attendance issues due to work, family and/or health
- consistent testing below basic standards on state assessment tests
- real or perceived lack of assistance from school systems
- financial need to remain employed
- having children to support
- lost hope

Fortunately, most of these challenges have a simple and viable solution — on-line instruction. As digital access increases and more school systems offer virtual high school as a solid alternative to traditional classrooms, more and more OSY are taking advantage of a convenient and supportive way to earn their high school diploma.

These same OSY who list similar challenges also list similar benefits to utilizing on-line school:

- flexibility in class/homework hours
- credits based on work submitted, not hours attended
- options for testing out of subjects
- shorter reporting periods (quarters versus semesters)
- easy access to on-line educators for tutoring and homework assistance

When helping OSY determine how to access the education they deserve, on-line schooling should be explained and explored. The virtual experience may be the best solution of all to the challenges they face.

*Information courtesy of A Qualitative Study Exploring the Use of Online Education to Overcome the Educational Challenges Faced by Out-of-School Youth (2013).*

## The Best First Step is Screening - OSY Language Screener (continued from page 1)

The how-to video referenced above puts instructors at ease with simple instructions including:

1. Speak English naturally to your student when testing.
2. Repeat the questions only one time and do not rephrase.
3. Do not use the student's native language during the test. (However, a script is provided to use before testing begins in order to fully explain the process in the student's native language.)

Scores are easy to calculate and will indicate the level of each student's need. More complex scores will indicate exactly where subjects need more work. Detailed information is found on page 4 of the screener on the OSY Educational Outcomes Table.

If a student tests above a certain score (38) further testing is advisable with a comprehensive standardized assessment instrument (like CASAS or TABE) to provide more detailed information about academic skills and needs. Instructors can learn more about those options by choosing the Standardized Assessment Options for OSY on the OSY website.

The screening test, which opens as a printable PDF file, is adapted from tools developed by the Migrant Education Programs in both Vermont and New York.

- For Your Health/Para/Tu Salud
- Legal Rights/Derechos Legales
- Parenting/Ser Padres
- A Healthy House/Un Hogar Sano
- Finanza (financial literacy)
- Vermont Lessons (life skills)
- Math for Living/Matemáticas para la Vida

## SOSOSY Dissemination Event 2014 Aiming For Success: OSY Strategies and Resources for your State

Conference availability is limited!

On-line registration will close on October 20, 2014 at 4:00 p.m.

Please complete the on-line Registration Form to register for the Dissemination Event and/or the Preconference.

Preconference: November 19, 2014 (limited to 60 participants)

Dissemination Event: November 20-21, 2014

Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort  
400 Mandalay Avenue  
Clearwater Beach, FL 33767

### QUESTIONS

Email Jennifer Quick, SOSOSY Fiscal Agent, FSCC or call at (620) 768-2908 ext. 21

Email Tracie Kalic, SOSOSY Director, FSCC, or call at (785) 249-9219

Instructional technology (IT) is one of the most important tools for educators working with youth today. No matter a student's socio-economic status, chances are good that he or she has a smart phone, iPod, or other access to technology. Using that interest and ability to enhance the opportunities for OSY only makes sense.

That's why SOSOSY created the ACREs (Academic & Career Readiness Skills) Online course. A collection of six units with seven lessons each, the curriculum can be used digitally via [schoolology.com](http://schoolology.com) or traditionally as a paper and pencil tool.

Kelsey Williams, an online educator based in Idaho responsible for developing the online piece for ACREs, says, "The purpose of ACREs is to give students a wide exposure without going overwhelmingly deep."

ACReS focuses on intro-level skills including reading, writing, math, vocational readiness and life skills. Each lesson stands alone so that the program may be used as a whole or in parts, which makes it ideal for both short-term students as well as those looking to complete an entire program.

"It's set at a level at which they can access," explains Williams, "the readability level is set lower (about 5th or 6th grade) but has high age-appropriate interest. The whole purpose is to reach more of our OSY?"

The hope for going broad but not deep, Williams continues, is to help students gain confidence. Completing the units should give them the impetus to take more courses and advanced school work.

ACReS was initially presented to SOSOSY members in April. States can now determine

who will facilitate the online portion and how to train staff in its use.

Having online access adds a new layer to the way SOSOSY operates. Most students, even OSY, have technology know-how and it is up to providers to get trained and tap into this interest.

"One form is not better than the other," says Williams. "I think accessing the online course is a little more engaging to OSY. Give them a laptop to check out for two weeks and they are more engaged."

Another advantage for OSY using computer resources is keeping them current with the way many of their same-age peers are accessing school work. ACREs adds the layer of 21st century skills that their peers perform fluently. Everyone needs to have those skills in order to be competitive, points out Williams.

Along with the added interest and resources, IT also brings added responsibilities for staff. Students must be trained in safe internet use. Outlining expectations, monitoring, and insuring proper use must be addressed.

Maximizing ACREs and other digital learning tools will mean expanding the world of learning for OSY. States will do well to embrace IT and determine how to get devices into the hands of their students. In Idaho, for instance, the state has purchased Chrome Books for the MEP to use with OSY.

As with every new technological tool, support is key. Staff with questions about IT in general and ACREs specifically can contact Kelsey Williams at [kwilliams@anotherchoicecharter.org](mailto:kwilliams@anotherchoicecharter.org).

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