

RI Core Skills Partnership to cover full cost of English-literacy program

By **Susan Shalhoub**

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EMPLOYEES AT AMERISEWN celebrate wrapping up a Rhode Island Core Skills Partnership training program. Customizable for industries, the instruction can include English literacy, customer service, basic computers, shop math and more. / COURTESY AMERISEWN

WARWICK – The Rhode Island Core Skills Partnership will now cover 100 percent of the cost to train employers' incumbent workers in English-language literacy, CSP announced. The goal behind the partnership is to strengthen Rhode Island's incumbent workforce by collaborating with adult-education providers and employers to build up core skills. Instructors do on-site workplace education and training customized to employer needs in manufacturing and other fields, CSP said.

Limited English-language skills have been the result of growing Latino and immigrant populations along with a low unemployment rate, producing this workplace barrier and need for training, the organization said.

A Governor's Workforce Board Real Pathways 2017 grant recipient, CSP originally was able to cover 75 percent of training costs for employers. After CSP met its first-year goals, GWB extended the grant time frame and raised the funding, which has enabled CSP to cover 100 percent of the training costs, based on an industry standard of \$45 an hour for instruction.

"In this day and age, when customer service is at its thinnest level, when the senses of entitlement and negative attitudes are everywhere, we have the Core Skills Partnership and its employer liaison Kathy Gray," said Lisa Laprade, human resources and office manager for Desmark Industries in Cranston. "Our employees now tell me HR issues themselves, in English, without a translator."

Employer participants report seeing better communication, less mistakes, more productivity, and increased safety and enhanced skills after the training. Trainings in shop math and computer skills are also offered. For smaller companies with less than five people to train, teaming up with another company is recommended by CSP. CSP employer liaison Kathy Gray can be reached at kgray@riadulted.org.

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