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It is with great pleasure that the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning presents the **2024 Barry Semple Lifelong Learning Leadership Award to Dr. Alisa Belzer.**

Dr. Belzer has made significant contributions to the adult literacy field as a researcher, professor, and advocate. Alisa is a professor in the department of Learning and Teaching at Rutgers University Graduate School of Education. Her research focuses on policy, professional development, and adult learner experience. Alisa's research has informed our understanding of effective professional development, high quality instruction and the needs of adult learners. She has helped us learn about student retention, assessment, reading instruction, and so much more. Those of us who work with volunteers have improved our programs based on her research on volunteerism and volunteer training, an important but typically overlooked aspect of our work among researchers.

Alisa is committed to the development of practitioner-leaders in the adult education sector. She understands the need for mentorship and collective reflection around problems of practice and the development of sustainable interventions. Programs and practitioners in NJ have benefitted from her commitment. In 2017, Alisa ran a PD Initiative in partnership with the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development to support WIOA Title II practitioners through a year long project on student retention. She continues to advocate for the development of a professional development system for adult literacy programs in NJ. As one colleague who has had the chance to work with Alisa told us, "I deeply admire her drive to ensure that the world of adult education continues to be led by reflective, responsible, and intentional practitioners - practitioners to whom she has contributed scholarship, professorship, and mentorship throughout her career."

Alisa also created a partnership between Rutgers and the Department of Labor to provide a graduate certificate program in adult education that WIOA Title II instructors can attend tuition-free. Through this effort, Alisa is helping to professionalize our field and also to sustain it, ensuring that our small field continues to grow. To that end, Alisa has been developing a network of graduated certificate students to help us build leadership in the field in NJ.