



adult learning

quarterly

Public Broadcasting Mission Exemplified in Louisiana COMTECH Project



MORE COMPUTER ACCESS and training could be the key to overcoming high poverty and low education in the Louisiana Delta Region. This is the theory behind Project COMTECH (Community Technology).

Owing to limited employment opportunities, many young people leave the Delta; but others do not have that option. The economy centers on agriculture, but most residents do not own enough land to earn a living in that field, and retail/manufacturing jobs are limited, according to Gary Mire, Distance Learning and Lifelong Learning Coordinator for Louisiana Public Broadcasting (LPB).

Begun in 2000 with a \$750,000 grant from the US Department of Education, LPB's Project COMTECH was designed to work with three parishes – Concordia, Franklin and Tensas – and The Macon Ridge Development Region, Inc. With the grant, project staffers identified sites in each parish – schools, libraries or other centers – where computers, satellite dishes and TV/VCRs could be provided, and facilitators trained. A primary goal was to “introduce computers and the Internet” to the Delta, says Mire, who is also Project Manager for COMTECH. Familiarity with computers can

help residents prepare resumes and seek jobs on the Internet; or, enable them to create reports, process forms and provide other high-tech business services without leaving the Delta. In addition,

access to computers can help residents who are honing their basic skills or preparing for the GED exam, with online exercises that complement classroom studies. Many Louisiana adult learners use COMTECH computers to take advantage of free online lessons on the LiteracyLink® web site, where

“A catalyst is needed to help unite the services of schools, libraries, city governments, churches and others; and public broadcasting can be that catalyst.”

they can work on job readiness skills with *Workplace Essential Skills* or GED preparation with *GED Connection™* at their own pace. In some cases, people too shy to go to a classroom might explore online activities and begin to realize the impact that education could have on their lives.

The key is working *together* – with adult education programs, local governments and other organizations – to help Delta residents grow personally and professionally. A catalyst is needed to help unite the services of schools, libraries, city governments, churches and others; and public broadcasting can be that catalyst, according to Beth Courtney, LPB President and CEO. In addition, public broadcasting can bring in outside resources – educational tools like KET's *Learn to Read*, *GED Connection™* and *Workplace Essential Skills* – telecast throughout the state. In Louisiana, state

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Waterproof COMTECH Center Shipshape Thanks to Community Support



WATERPROOF, LOUISIANA is home to 1,088 people, located 60 miles northeast of Natchez, and separated by a levee from the Mississippi River to the East. Agriculture is the main industry.

“There was nothing really to do in our town,” explains Mayor Mariah Cooper. After the Tensas Parish High School closed, the area lost “a lot of family-oriented activity,” she adds. High schoolers are bussed 12 miles to St. Joseph, and athletes are taken to games and practices; but transportation is a problem for many of the families.

A retired teacher and assistant principal, Cooper became Mayor in January 1999, and a COMTECH Coordinator shortly thereafter, overseeing the center in Waterproof and two others in Concordia Parish.

The COMTECH Center in Waterproof is a story in itself. Initially homeless, the program obtained the former Tensas High School plant, empty, vandalized and storm damaged. Joining hands, local residents and larger organizations went to work. Johns Manville in Natchez donated materials and the Episcopal Church, through Delta Ministries, paid to replace the roof over the gymnasium. Church groups from Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana cleaned floors, repaired windows and “put the library back together,” she recalls. The VFW Ladies Auxiliary donated, prepared and served food for the work crews.

“Our facilitators are patient and loving. The environment is conducive to learning.”

“It was a big undertaking, but we are determined people,” Mayor Cooper notes. “With a little effort and prayers, we can get a lot done.”

Not many area residents have computers at home, so the center is useful for both children and adults. Children come to type and print out school reports. The center is open from 12 noon to 6 p.m., but “we will stay longer if children need to finish their work,” Cooper says. “Our facilitators are patient and loving. The environment is conducive to learning.” Children also use the computers to practice for periodic statewide skills tests.

In addition to serving children, the center provides training in computer technology and other skills, Cooper says. “For those adults who can’t read, we teach them how.” Learners can also access online lessons, skill-building activities and practice tests for *Workplace Essential Skills* and *GED Connection™*. In conjunction with the Office of Family Support, the center helps benefit recipients learn filing, resume preparation, and computer, telephone and other workforce skills, as well as parenting skills.

The Police Department has its own computers,

but also use the center equipment when checking on the property. The Postmaster checks her e-mail. Elderly ladies, who began by holding the mouse in both hands, are now doing newsletters for their church.

Tapes of *GED Connection™*, *Workplace Essential Skills* and other series are furnished by Louisiana Public Broadcasting (LPB), which also supplied the computers, Internet hookup, satellite dish, digital cameras, scanners, paper, pencils, “everything we need,” Cooper says. LPB also broadcasts the two series, so learners have access to the programs through television, as well. The City of Waterproof supplies light, water, heat, gas, air conditioning, maintenance and janitorial services.

“It’s great for us,” she says. Thanks to COMTECH, “we have vast resources, compared to before.”


Because the center has an entire building at its disposal, there is also room for YO – Youth Opportunity – for ages 13 to 21; and for free medical testing, every Tuesday. Blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar screenings are done, with referrals to a physician when appropriate. There is also a room for parenting classes, and more space for adult literacy students, where they can work at their own speed, without feeling that they are being “watched.”

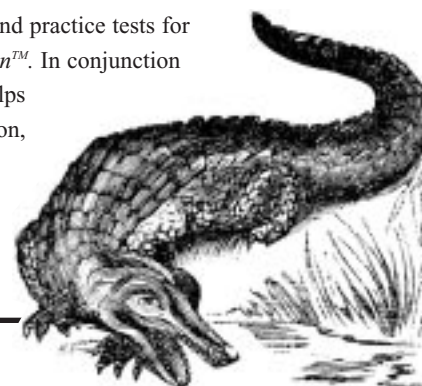
“The program really has been of value to people in this area,” says Mayor Cooper, who praises her “good group” of facilitators at all three centers: At Concordia, Mary Campbell, retired teacher and Alberta Schiele, former Delta Service Corps worker; in Tensas Parish, Billie Johnson, former Delta Service Corps volunteer, and Anna Clark, a teacher’s aide and former Delta Service Corps volunteer. “Other volunteers include my daughter, Jacqueline Mariah Cooper, now a freshman at Grambling State University and a computer whiz. She’s majoring in mass communication.”

“If it hadn’t been for these ladies and the work they did, we wouldn’t have gotten very far,” she notes.

Mayor Cooper has more dreams for the future: “We’re trying to do a lot for our children, because we have kids with talent. We have kids who are great with art. We have musically inclined children, and can have our own band. I propose to make the second floor (at the Waterproof Center) a space for art, music and dance.

“Just because we’re small doesn’t mean we have to have nothing,” she says. “We’re going to fix up the (Waterproof) school field so we can have touch football. The Cafeteria will be for receptions, the gym for recreational activities. We have an industrial park and hope to get business to locate here and jobs for our people.

“I can see so many things. Waterproof is on the map. It would be a great place to retire.” 



Rural COMTECH Center Moves Community Toward Technology



POVERTY AND ISOLATION

are the barriers to growth and development in rural areas, according to Mordessa Corbin, Coordinator for the Wisner, Louisiana COMTECH Center.

"It's difficult to get connected with the world," she explains. Historically, the area's agrarian economy was based on labor-intensive crops like cotton and sugar cane, requiring many hands but little or no education.

Today, employment on a farm does not provide sufficient support for a family, and few industrial jobs exist. "It's hard to move industry and business into our situation," she explains.

"We've got to crawl before we can walk. We've got to have education, and it's got to be top quality. We have to get decent housing, have people decently fed, decently clothed. Then build Mom and Pop operations," all of which can provide a welcoming environment for new businesses.

The Wisner COMTECH Center is introducing people to modern technology that can help facilitate the needed changes.

"Computers are here, and the more people can use the center, the better our people will be," says Corbin, a retired educator. "The center is designed to give poor people, minorities, access – access for school children, the elderly, people who need jobs. This is the kind of training in technology that could be used to improve their condition."

The center is housed in the Wisner Elementary School in Franklin Parish. Says Corbin: "It's about a mile out of Wisner on Hwy. 15, so it serves people from Wisner, Gilbert and Winnsboro. But we'll take you from anywhere."

The center and school enjoy a symbiotic relationship. Thirteen computers donated by Louisiana Public Broadcasting (LPB) were joined by ten more, purchased by the school principal who saw the opportunity to use the facility as a computer lab during

the day. The principal supplied a teacher aide as a full-time computer technician, and teachers began bringing students to the center as part of their programs. In return, the school supplies space and free utilities.

Students can come back to the center from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. six days a week to do research, write and print out papers, or go online and access practice exams for statewide "high stakes tests" given at the end of 4th, 8th, 10th and 11th grades.

Many adults who do not have computers at home come to the center to learn how to use the technology. Others, who are taking GED classes or seeking to improve job skills, may come to access online exercises for PBS LiteracyLink® *GED Connection™* or *Workplace Essential Skills*; both series are broadcast across Louisiana. The center facilitator can assist, and workbooks for the two series are available. The needs are as varied as the people: One lady wanted to learn Excel so that she could keep the books for her husband's small business. The owner of an unusual make of car came to search the Internet for information about repair.

Teachers come to the center to learn to use computers; access online lesson plans; communicate with other teachers, or do their own online course homework.

Even residents who have computers at home may not be online. "That's the kind of problem you have in a rural area: you don't have a provider," Corbin notes. "Every time you go online, it's a long distance call" and many can't afford that. At the Wisner Center, people can access the Web, e-mail friends, search for jobs and file resumes, pursue educational programs and more – all at no charge.

"You can come and leave as you wish," Corbin says. "You can work on whatever you need. You can grow personally and professionally."

Coordinators like Corbin also are trained by LPB and oversee their centers, help out


the facilitators and ensure that the public knows about the programs. The centers already are making noticeable changes in people's lives.

Corbin recalls a child for whom shyness was "a major problem." But through the center – "using the computer and doing e-mail – she has gained a lot of confidence. That shyness is now manageable. The center has helped her dramatically."

In another instance, children were chosen to introduce a program on LPB. "That was a real experience," Corbin notes. "The parents were excited. The children were excited. Things like that are really transforming for rural children and parents who have not had a lot of exposure."

These are just two examples of the changes that are coming to the Wisner area through COMTECH.

"Louisiana is a beautiful state, and the South is a beautiful part of the country," Corbin says. "But now, we have a brain drain. Young people who do well in college leave because there is nothing here for them." Louisiana, Mississippi and Arkansas form the "next logical frontier. We have the same potential manpower and natural resources (as do other parts of the nation). We need to concentrate on developing them. Business and industry need to focus on upgrading the workforce in these deep Southern states. Once we get the attention, the money, to get the improvements we need, here will be the place to go. The quicker we recognize that and stop ignoring it, the quicker the barriers are going to be removed.

"Technology is going to play a big role – when teachers are using compressed video to talk to each other; when our kids in our classrooms can visit the Smithsonian or the Louvre in Paris (via technology); when we have those experiences (things will change.) Things like COMTECH can help get us going in the right direction." 

KET Welcomes New National Sales Manager

By the time this newsletter rolls off the press, Dan Wooten will be settling in as KET Enterprise Division's new national sales manager.

"We're very fortunate to have Dan on board," says Ron Griffin, KET Director of Sales and Marketing. "Our customers, staff, sales reps and I are all going to enjoy working with him. He's a team player with an impressive record for getting results."



Wooten looks forward to working with KET, as well.

"Education has always been a passion of mine, from my father explaining the need for education in order to be successful," says Wooten. "More and more, as the world becomes technologi-

cally advanced, people have got to have a good basic foundation. I'm so excited to be able to help others as I was helped."

A graduate of Tuskegee University, Wooten holds a BS degree in Electronics and Business. His career began as an engineer with IBM and NASA/Chrysler, from which he moved to ownership and management of a printing company and later represented other printing and promotional companies. He has more than 20 years experience in sales, business ownership, engineering and management.

Wooten has been an active member of the Kentucky Attorney General's Access to Services Committee, Kentucky Health Purchasing Alliance, Lexington Fayette County JTPA, Junior Achievement, and the NAACP.

Pssst....

Can you keep a secret? We don't want to say too much, yet, but since we're getting calls about the new pre-GED level workbooks for *GED Connection™*, we thought we'd let you know they're coming.

The five books, which cover reading, writing, math, science and social studies, will go to press in September and be ready for distribution before the end of the year. Like the original version, these pre-GED level workbooks will be four-color, coordinated with the *GED Connection* videotapes, and full of opportunities for learners to practice new skills.

Watch for a story in the summer newsletter or call KET at (800) 354-9067 to find out more.

Public Broadcasting Mission Exemplified in Louisiana COMTECH Project
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agencies help out by underwriting telecasts: The Department of Education, under Superintendent Cecil J. Picard, for *GED Connection™*; and the Department of Labor, under Secretary Dawn Watson, for *Workplace Essential Skills*. Success lies in “partnering with the right people to make the most of available resources,” says Courtney.

Acting as a catalyst comes naturally to public broadcasting, an entity whose mission involves using the “power of noncommercial television, the Internet and other media to enrich the lives of all Americans through quality programs and education services,” as the PBS web site says. Cable television channels may offer programs on history and differing cultures, or dramatizations of literary master works. Public broadcasting expands on and transcends such activity in providing technological services and teacher training via satellite link, and in facilitating programs and cooperative enterprises that can make a real difference in the local community.

LPB’s COMTECH is a perfect example. Many Delta residents “don’t even have cars, but they’re learning e-mail now,” Courtney says. The existing COMTECH centers provide “a good model” which should be extended to other communities, she adds. “We’re just touching the tip of the iceberg. There is a huge appetite for more knowledge and for job skills,” an appetite that can be met by the COMTECH model and by working with the community college/technical college system in the state.

The *Adult Learning Quarterly* is taking an in-depth look at this project, first described in the Fall 2000 issue, by visiting COMTECH centers in the towns of Wisner and Waterproof. See stories on pages 2 and 3. 📖

Workplace Essential Skills, Crossroads Café Recommended for New York Programs



NEW YORK CITY’S Human Resources Administration (HRA) helps those in need to find work to support themselves and their families, and is recommending PBS LiteracyLink® *Workplace Essential Skills* and *Crossroads Café* to help with the task.

The agency’s mission is to assist clients in attaining their maximum degree of self-reliance by meeting them where they are and designing programs specific to their needs. HRA helps clients with their employability needs by short term vocational training, job search assistance, direct job placement, and basic education, including GED, ESOL, and ABE instruction. The number of individuals on public assistance has steadily decreased over the past few years in New York City, demonstrating that the existing services offered by HRA have been effective.

However, HRA also recognized that many clients remaining on public assistance had additional barriers to employment, such as substance abuse problems, physical and mental health problems, and language barriers; and required additional support and assistance. Therefore, the agency created several programs designed to provide specialized services to this population. And in keeping with its mission, HRA collaborated with the New York State Education Department (SED) Office of Workforce Preparation and Continuing Education to identify educational materials that might better assist these individuals to obtain and sustain employment and move towards self-sufficiency.

The subject may be “resumes, or getting along with supervisors, but the client is actually learning English along the way. It’s fantastic for our clients.”

Barbara Kang of the HRA Office of Health and Mental Health Services was responsible for working with SED to research and recommend educational resources to some of HRA’s specialized programs. “HRA recognized that our clients had differing learning styles and skill levels and would benefit from receiving additional educational services to address some of those differences. We were interested in providing distance learning materials to our programs because SED emphasized the effectiveness of using a variety of instructional methods, when working with adult learners. We understood that this integrated approach increased overall effectiveness of instruction. SED worked with us to identify the educational materials that would be most appropriate and beneficial for our clients.”

SED recommended the use of distance learning materials because most lessons do not require sequential instruction. This component is significant when working with HRA clients, as the number of individuals enrolled and participating in HRA programs is never static. An additional incentive to using distance learning materials was that it would allow for teacher-directed classroom instruction, as well as independent student instruction. After reviewing several materials, SED recommended PBS LiteracyLink® *Workplace Essential Skills*, from KET, along

with *Crossroads Café* and *On Common Ground*, which were all purchased by HRA for several of their specialized programs.

Receiving these materials were:

- **PRIDE** (Personal Roads for Individual Development & Employment) providers – an employment program for individuals who are employable but require special accommodations due to physical and/or mental health problems
- Certain **Refugee programs** – specializing in employment services to individuals with language barriers
- **POISED** (Perfect Opportunity for Individual Skills & Educational Development) sites – a program for women who are pregnant or have children under age three
- Certain **residential substance abuse treatment programs** that provide substance treatment for women with children, and also offer on-site educational instruction

HRA offered the distance learning materials to these programs as viable tools in carrying out their mission to assist clients’ move toward self-sufficiency. The materials were offered to the programs as additional resources to better assist HRA clients. Classroom teachers and vocational counselors at each program were using their own curricula and resources to help clients develop job-related skills. HRA saw an opportunity to enhance literacy skills through the “work language” featured in *Workplace Essential Skills*.

After purchasing the distance learning materials, HRA wanted to ensure that teachers and vocational counselors were well trained and able to fully utilize the materials. HRA introduced the new materials and the concepts of distance learning to teachers and vocational counselors through two-day training sessions provided by the Literacy Assistance Center, which receives SED funding. “We did not require providers to use the distance learning materials,” Kang notes. “We recommended that they incorporate the materials into their existing lessons. We did not want the materials to replace the services they were providing to our clients, but rather supplement and enhance services.”

The teachers and vocational counselors have a difficult task, Kang adds. “The focus for our clients is employment; yet there is an obvious benefit – both personally and professionally – to the learners who can increase general educational skill levels.

“*Workplace Essential Skills* is well-suited for our clients because it teaches basic skills through an employment context,” she says. The subject may be “resumes, or getting along with supervisors, but the client is actually learning English along the way. It’s fantastic for our clients.”

In addition, “adults learn best when they have a context and an application to what they are learning. Our clients want to increase their skills to find employment. Therefore, instruction in the classroom should pertain to employment and assist them with job search and other employment-related skills. The lessons in *Workplace Essential Skills* are excellent for our students because they are teaching skills, such as reading and writing, but only as they pertain to the world of work.” 📖



New York “POISED” Program Effects Meaningful Change in Clients’ Lives



THE CITY UNIVERSITY of New York (CUNY) and the Human Resources Administration (HRA) partner in efforts to help public assistance recipients get and keep employment.

One of their joint efforts is the Perfect Opportunity for Individual Skills and Educational Development or POISED for Success Program, designed to help women who are pregnant or have children under age three. Clients, referred through HRA, attend sessions for 35 hours a week, mirroring a “work week.” Programs like this are on the rise because of improved targeting and referral methods, and because federal legislation has imposed a five-year, lifetime limit for clients to receive public assistance.

HRA funds the program, according to Joan Delaloye, MSW, University Coordinator for POISED for Success. The goal is to serve about 1,300 people per year.

The largest urban university in the US and its third-largest public university system, CUNY has 19 campuses in all five boroughs of New York City. Sites include Bronx Community College, Medgar Evers College, and The City College, all part of the CUNY system. Staff includes teachers of basic skills, computer instructors, parenting and health teachers, job developers, counselors, support staff and a POISED director for each campus.

“This program is designed to help effect meaningful change in clients’ lives, as well as assist in job training,” Delaloye notes, so there are three POISED phases, designed to coordinate educational, job and life skills training.

HRA assigns new clients to the first phase of the program, POISED I. They attend a two-week orientation to get a better understanding of the overall program and opportunities available. “Clients lives are often difficult and complex; and they may be besieged with personal and social problems. They may have been in other programs that didn’t work for them. There can be a high level of mistrust; an attitude of, ‘I’ve been down this road before; you can’t tell me,’” Delaloye says. POISED represents a “very

supportive environment. We want the women we serve to know that there are lots of services available to help them.”

POISED I involves parenting skills, women’s health and child health. Participants learn to develop a “personal network” if they do not have a traditional family to call upon for support. Each woman creates her own development plan to improve literacy, math, language, job and parenting skills, and that plan is revisited later to assess progress.

Clients’ educational levels can range from below fourth grade to some college. After assessment tests, each is assigned to Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language, or GED preparation classes, as appropriate.

“Our *purpose* is to help clients find jobs, but one of our *goals* is to see them obtain a GED certificate,” Delaloye says. Clients study reading, writing, math, computers, parenting and health, and preparation for self-sufficiency. “Some have never worked,” she notes, “and the idea is very frightening.” Intensive group counseling focuses on balancing work and family, short and long term goals, and barriers to employment. “We also look at other city programs, including transitional benefits available after the client gets a job, and make sure they know how to apply for those.”

POISED II focuses on job search and obtaining work experience. Participants practice resume writing, interview skills, preparation for employment tests, computer skills, and searches on the Web. Clients also are advised on family/work issues. “Group counseling focuses on job retention, advancement, and help with soft skills like attitude, dependability, time management

and the ability to work well with others. These impact not only the job but also life in general.”

Work experience, for many clients, is provided on their CUNY campus through the Work Experience Program (WEP); or in various city agencies. Clients are not paid for their work, but they become acclimated to the real world of employment.

“Each woman also creates a work portfolio containing a resume, a thank you letter, interviews she might have been on and what happened, a mock job application, three references, a letter of recommendation and samples of her work on the computer,” Delaloye notes.

A third phase of the program, called POISED at Home, is a pilot project designed for women who are in a late stage of pregnancy or have a child less than nine weeks of age. These clients are temporarily exempt from pursuing classes but may, if they wish, be visited by a POISED team – one social worker/case manager and one traveling instructor.

All instruction is contextual – it must *relate* to life and work, Delaloye says. Reading assignments may involve different types of jobs, or information on parenting skills and health issues. “We instill in the mothers that they must take care of themselves as well as their families,” she notes. In computer class, learners may be doing resumes. Whatever the primary focus, the material used offers secondary reinforcement of other lessons. “We try to link everything. Everything is connected.”

After getting a job, women can continue with follow-up counseling. If the job doesn’t work out, “she can come back and we’ll help

her find another one.” Some “graduates” who get jobs “come back and speak at recognition ceremonies to the women in the classes with their heads held high. Some decide to go to college, if they already have a high school diploma or GED; some get their GED,” Delaloye says.

PBS LiteracyLink® *Workplace Essential Skills* videos and workbooks have a variety of applications in the entire process, she adds. “One instructor told me that she uses the reading, math, and communication videos, and the workbooks, as reinforcement in ESL classes. The texts are relevant; the videos are harder to follow, because of the language, so she provides careful preparation.”

A job developer notes that the actors seem “real, and deal with the same obstacles and issues confronting our POISED students. People can relate.”

Another instructor found the tapes helpful in “developing a curriculum based on role playing and group work. Students like to watch the video, then discuss and practice techniques they learn in class. They like the handouts from the workbooks because they can take them home to study or pull out in class to review.

“Ours might seem an almost impossible task,” Delaloye says, “but the campus staff is so committed. They are just *there* for the students. And things *can* be different.”

Delaloye recalls one client who had had a “painful childhood, and saw one of her parents murdered.” One day, that woman yelled at her own child, who ran to his room, crying. The woman “remembered her parenting classes, went to him and said, ‘Mommy shouldn’t have done that,’ and slapped herself on the wrist. He laughed. She laughed. That was a major change in behavior.”

Delaloye adds: “A participant said, ‘This program gave me *hope*.’ How can you measure it when people say things like that? For me, that’s the reward of the whole program.”



Read the Newspaper and Learn More Than the News

The *TV411 Read All About Kit*, scheduled for release early this summer, is a multimedia educational tool, designed to help and encourage instructors of pre-GED level adults and teens to use newspapers in their classrooms.

The *TV411 Read All About Kit* helps adult learners navigate newspapers, tackle challenging articles, and find the main idea in lengthy stories. Students will read obituaries to learn about the lives of the famous and infamous, analyze the fine print in newspaper ads, and learn how to read book reviews, Help Wanted ads, and more.

The *TV411 Read All About Kit* contains:

- A 30-minute videotape with eight TV411 vignettes related to newspapers and reading;
- Eight theme-based units with detailed instructions for newspaper-related activities;
- Reproducible activity pages guide learners to practice skills included in the lessons;
- Six Copies of TV411 In Print Volume 1, Issue 4;
- More suggestions for online lessons on newspaper use, reading, and vocabulary development are available for free at www.tv411.org.

The *TV411 Read All About Kit* works well in adult education programs, high schools, libraries and other community settings. All of the materials in the kit are accessible for English-speaking adults with low literacy levels. For more information, call KET at (800) 354-9067.



New York City PRIDE Combats Employment Barriers



LOW LITERACY, low English proficiency and/or a physical disability are among factors that can hamper people in seeking and finding employment.

PRIDE (Personal Roads for Individual Development and Employment) 2000 Work-Based Education Program is designed to assist New York City's public assistance recipients with such issues. PRIDE is one of several programs operated by F.E.G.S. Health and Human Services Systems as part of the city Human Resources Administration (HRA) outreach to New Yorkers in need. The original mission of F.E.G.S., established in 1934, was to enhance the employability and success in the labor market of new immigrants and displaced workers. Over the years, F.E.G.S. has evolved into a broad-based human services organization that addresses the employment, rehabilitation, social, developmental and health-related needs of more than 70,000 individuals annually at 350 facilities, residences and offsite program locations throughout New York City and Long Island. Since its founding, F.E.G.S. has developed expertise in vocational and educational services for adults with low literacy levels and/or limited English proficiency.

HRA refers adult clients to PRIDE. Each week, participants attend two full days of classes in basic education, GED preparation, literacy or English as a Second Language (ESL); and devote three days a week to computers, job-readiness classes, work experience and/or work education.

New clients are tested to determine current educational level and what courses they will need; and learn about PRIDE and its benefits. Distance learning products can help in this process. Emily Hacker, F.E.G.S.' Director of Learning Technologies, explains that not every client "is excited about coming to class or job seeking. For them, there are a lot of barriers to success in the workplace and in an educational environment." Clients who have experienced failure "bring a lot of baggage with them, and it's important to challenge those perceptions as early

as possible." During assessment, the teacher shows excerpts from the *Crossroads Café* and PBS LiteracyLink® *Workplace Essential Skills* video series. "I was glad the assessment teacher has started using (the tapes) in that piece of the program. It helps clients to think differently about what opportunities there are for them in our program. The learners in the videos look like them, talk like them."

After assessment, clients who need literacy, basic education, GED preparation or ESL classes are referred to the appropriate program. The goal is employment; the curriculum is workplace-oriented, and the videos again prove useful. For language students, *Crossroads Café* is a very useful tool, she says. In job-oriented coursework, *Workplace Essential Skills* combines language/literacy goals with workplace/employment goals. Teachers enjoy using the series.

"Video-based instruction adds variety to the day; fits with different learning styles; keeps people focused, and helps them think in different ways."

"Our clients are here from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.," Hacker notes. "It's a long day of instruction for those who didn't have a good experience in traditional education, and their days were not that long. Video-based instruction adds variety to the day; fits with different learning styles; keeps people focused, and helps them think in different ways."

Clients like the tapes, she says. "The format of *Crossroads* is very familiar to our Spanish-speaking clients, who like the novellas on Spanish television or the soap opera in America. They can follow characters through the episodes through time, identify with the characters and relate to them. They get invested in the story. They're left at the end of the day wanting to find out what happens next."

Since PRIDE receives new students every two weeks, "the tapes give continuity to what

could otherwise feel choppy," Hacker notes.

Clients also like seeing the real-life scenarios in the *Workplace Essential Skills* videos. "These things really can happen; the reactions of the characters are quite realistic and the students can relate," Hacker says. "It makes a huge difference in how the resource is perceived by the learners. If it's reality-based, believable, they can trust it. The videos keep the learners' attention."

The videos also help to accommodate different learning styles, Hacker notes. "We have some clients with learning disabilities, and if courses are text-based, we reach only one level. Adding sound and video helps us to reach a larger percentage of our learners."

Workplace Essential Skills and *Crossroads Café* workbooks help, too. Teachers schedule a workbook activity, then show a video segment, then schedule a related activity or discussion, then view another segment, and then hold a post-viewing discussion. "It's much more effective than just having the machine on."

"I noticed a real change in one instructor after she started using these programs," Hacker adds. "The first week, she showed the tapes and got feedback. She came to my office; she was so excited. 'They love it.' she told me. 'They want more. The lesson worked. They are so interested in the characters.' I noticed this level of excitement and hopefulness in her that had been squelched for a while. She engaged the students that day, and got something back from teaching that morning."

Adult learners also have access to the center's Internet connection. "Not all students have computers at home, but more and more do," Hacker says. "They also are encouraged to make use of the free access available at libraries, some housing authorities and community technology centers."

PRIDE students may be in classes for up to six months, depending on the educational level and "job readiness" of the individual. When clients do get a job, counselors encourage them to continue classes in other programs that fit the new schedule. "The goal is life-long learning," Hacker says. "We don't want them to lose that new enthusiasm." 📖

For more information about F.E.G.S., visit the web site at www.fegs.org.

GED Connection™ Valuable Tool for California TV Teacher



“IT’S BEGINNING to get easier,” says Beverly Ollinger, now in her the third year of TV teaching.

Ollinger, a distance learning instructor with the Sacramento Educational Cable

Consortium (SECC) outreach, had taught traditional GED classes and had worked with the SECC distance learning staff in another capacity. But when “Lynn Bartlett kept asking me if I wanted (to teach on TV), I said, ‘No.’ Being on television is intimidating. It’s live. Live TV is a scary thing.”

Eventually Ollinger was won over by Bartlett, who is Production Developer for the San Juan Adult Education Distance Learning Project in Sacramento, and by the fact that “the group here are really great to work with.”

She was assigned a live hour of TV twice a week, and given KET’s *GED Connection™* tapes. Using elements in the tapes as tools, she began designing her course and making lesson plans. “I like the tapes,” she says; “some better than others. They’re all full of good information, but they include a lot of testimonials and you can’t teach to that.” Still, “I wouldn’t change the tapes. They’re terrific.”

Students like the real-life situations they see in the tapes, she adds; that makes them relevant. “They especially like the math tapes. They are starved for math information and intimidated by math, and now they have to study it. Math is so darn necessary. These students have had some life experience. They’ve been thinking they could hide from math, but once they’ve had a couple of jobs and they try to do taxes, they realize it’s not going to happen.” Her students see learners on the tapes “who are really charged up about math, and my students think, ‘If they can do it, I can do it.’”

Regional Occupational Program (ROP) students who produce the shows have their favorite tapes, as well, Ollinger notes. “With writing or math, they mouth the answers, and I see them give the high five behind the camera when the answer comes up and they were right. They’ll come and say, ‘When are you doing percentages? I have a big test’; or, ‘Why didn’t you cover this a month ago?’ The ROP students are getting an extra benefit they never thought they would.”

“Her skills were already there; she just needed encouragement. Sometimes, we just need to give learners the confidence to know they can do it.”

The LiteracyLink® web site, at www.pbs.org/literacy, where students can work on learning modules and practice tests for *GED Connection™*, is another valuable tool. “It would be remiss of us to say ‘you are prepared for the GED’ without some life training,” Ollinger contends; and “they will need a computer. We can kind of ease them into it. I’m always saying, ‘Use the Internet (at home or go to the library).’ I’m dialing up on the program and showing web-based activities or saying, ‘Let’s do some practice questions.’ The web site comes up on their TV screen. They see everything I’m looking at.”

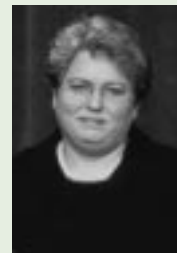
The web site’s digital classroom helps students interact. For example, an American student who had married a citizen of Iran and lived for 13 years in that country, moved back to the United States with her husband. She did not have her high school diploma, and signed up for distance learning. “Her skills were already there; she just needed encouragement. Sometimes, we just need to give learners the confidence to know they can do it,” Ollinger says. The

student did “about all the practice tests and activities using the digital classroom. I could comment (on her work) online, so when she came to the site to do the next activity, she could look at my comments on the last one.”

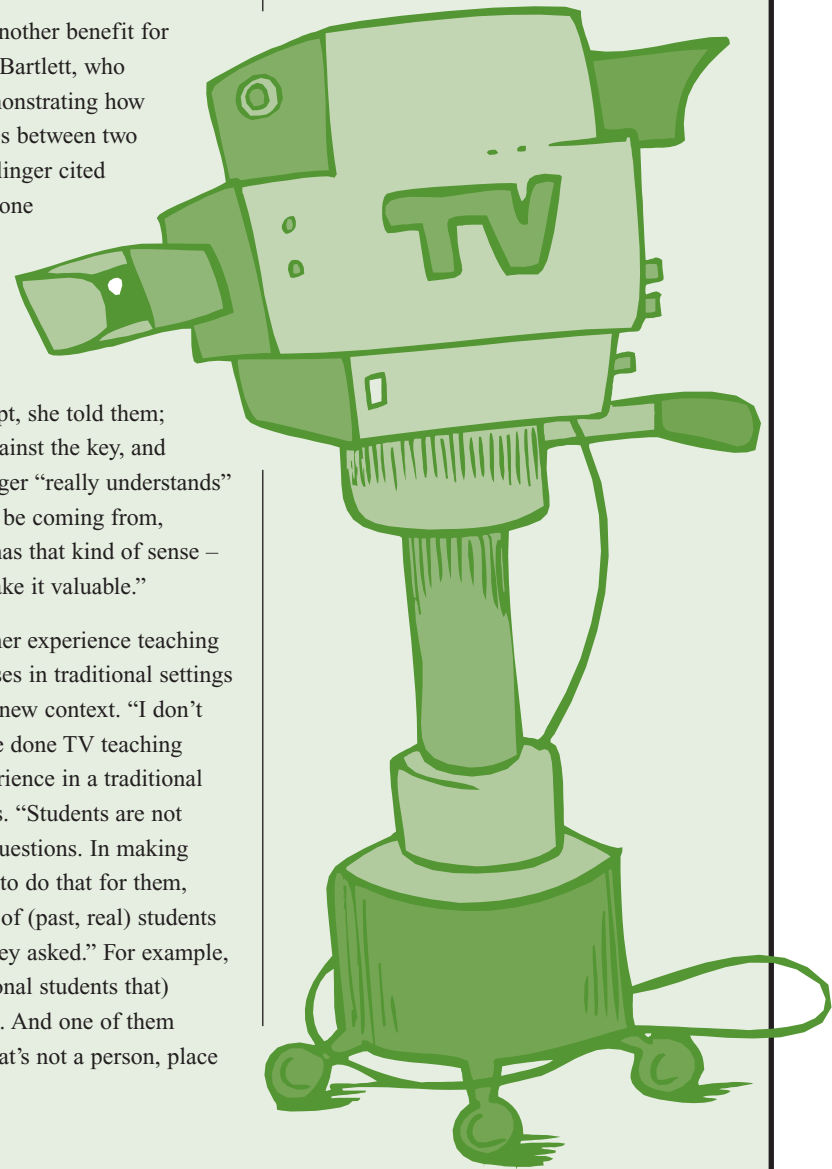
Ollinger and her students also communicate via phone, “snail mail” and e-mail, with about 30% of her students having e-mail addresses. “They get lots of feedback on their homework,” she says; “And if I get lots of questions about a particular topic or see a common error, I will go back and review that point on a later program, even if it isn’t part of the lesson for that day.”

Practical advice is another benefit for students, says Lynn Bartlett, who recalls Ollinger demonstrating how to calculate distances between two points on a map. Ollinger cited the key, stating that one inch was equal to 30 miles, and then reassured learners that they wouldn’t need a ruler. Just find a grocery receipt, she told them; notch off an inch against the key, and you’ll be fine. Ollinger “really understands” where people might be coming from, Bartlett says. “She has that kind of sense – take nothing and make it valuable.”

Ollinger finds that her experience teaching GED and ABE classes in traditional settings is invaluable in this new context. “I don’t know if I could have done TV teaching without all the experience in a traditional classroom,” she says. “Students are not there (now) to ask questions. In making lesson plans, I have to do that for them, using my memories of (past, real) students and the questions they asked.” For example, “I once told (traditional students that) Happiness is a noun. And one of them responded, ‘Well, that’s not a person, place or thing!’”



Beverly Ollinger



Online ESL Professional Development Coming Soon

Thinking about ESL professional development? Think about learning online with ESL/CivicsLink – a new online professional development service for adult education ESL teachers, coming this summer from PBS LiteracyLink® and KET. This curriculum was created with lots of input from ESL teachers!



What does ESL/CivicsLink cover? Along with an orientation, you'll find units on teaching a citizenship class, meeting learner needs and goals, building cross-cultural awareness, teaching approaches in ESL, using the Internet in the classroom, and integrating civics and English literacy.

How can you find out more? Visit the online welcome site, at www.pbs.org/literacy/esl where you can take a tour and try a sample activity. ESL/CivicsLink units will be online summer 2003. You can register at the

welcome site, or send an e-mail to us at adulsted@ket.org. We'll let you know when the site goes live, and we'll send you more information about how you can register.

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Shipping Fees Rise

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