

## **WEBMASTERS TRAINING: VIRTUAL TEAMS TO MAXIMIZE COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS BETWEEN COUNTIES AND THE STATE DOE VIA CYBERSPACE**

The Florida Department of Education Region V Professional Development Council (PDC) established in 1999 is comprised of and represents all adult education providers, school districts, community colleges, and community-based organizations in the Florida Department of Education's Region V (counties of Broward, Miami-Dade, Monroe and Palm Beach). Region V is comprised of the four most populated, culturally diverse, and complex educationally systems in Florida. The focus of the Region V PDC is to provide the following:

- ◆ Professional Development.
- ◆ Technical Assistance and Technology Assistance.
- ◆ Monitoring and Evaluation.
- ◆ Curriculum Development and Dissemination.
- ◆ Linkages with postsecondary educational institutions for consultation and support in adult education and family literacy.

Twenty-five percent of adults in Florida function at the lowest level of literacy. Approximately 13% of Florida's population is foreign-born. Twelve per cent of the state's population are adults of Spanish origin, making Florida the fourth largest Hispanic-populated state in the United States. The counties of Dade and Broward, both in Region V, have 67% of Florida's total Hispanic population.

Florida has the highest dropout rate in the nation. Approximately 41% of students quit before high school graduation. Nearly 85% of Florida's juvenile delinquents are illiterate. Half of the unemployed adults in Florida cannot read or write. The state of Florida has the fourth largest prison population in the nation. Approximately 76% of the inmates test below the ninth grade level. Almost 85% had not completed high school (Directory an Resource Guide, Florida Literacy Coalition, 1997). All of the above statistics suggest a high need for education and literacy services and a trained workforce to offer those services. Due to the complexity of the systems and the geographic nature of the state, special needs also exist for collaboration. This project fulfilled the developing relationship of the five regional professional development councils to provide region-wide continuous professional development that attempt to address the needs of 1,465,000 adults residing in Region V functioning at the lowest level of literacy.

The Region V PDC is comprised of a diverse categories of stakeholders including: Adult education teachers, adult education administrators, students, school districts, Indian tribes, community-based organizations, literacy groups, libraries, workforce development boards, migrant communities, businesses, homeless, community colleges, correctional institutions, adult basic education programs, GED programs, adult secondary programs, family literacy programs, and ESOL programs. The sheer exchange of information between these entities is monumental.

## **Project for 2000**

The purpose of this project was to develop, deliver, and coordinate the educational and communication network for the PDC of Region V for the state of Florida. The project addressed the primary goal of Florida's Adult Education Program, "to promote literacy and reduce under-education among adults in Florida " through the continuous development of competent, qualified teachers and administrators.

The target populations of the project were the local education agencies (LEA) and community based organizations (CBO), and their administrators and staff members responsible for the training and development of teachers and administrators.

The following objectives were established for the Region V PDC to be carried out in cooperation with the two cooperating Support Institutes (Florida Atlantic and Florida International) and the various members and allied members of the PDC.

### **Measurable Objectives for Project**

#### **Work Plan # 1.**

1. Create an online platform for training for webmasters using WebCT and its various online tools including the following: Bulletin board; Chat room; Online calendar; Private mail; Presentation tool with web-enhanced PowerPoint; Series of webpages of technical support information.
2. Design tutorial manuals to complement "hands on" instruction for the team of webmasters.
3. Provide comprehensive training for 20 people (webmasters) from Region V in the counties of Miami-Dade, Monroe, Broward, and Palm Beach presently responsible for computer labs or instruction in: Basic web/internet technology skills; Skills for developing and delivering video conferencing; Skills for integrating curriculum (instructional content) within web/internet systems. Create pre- and post-assessments of the technological competencies learned and use of practices learned.
4. Challenge the development of webpages and/or sites by the trained webmasters for their individual counties, LEAs or CBOs. Expand the impact of the training provided by inviting trained webmasters to in turn train five other persons at the local level.

#### **Work Plan # 3.**

1. Develop a website for Region V to provide ongoing technical and administrative service for Region V that provides the following:
  - a. Overview of purpose of Region V PDC, some of its accomplishments, and the stakeholders involved in the project;
  - b. Linkages to Division of Workforce Development at state level, to current retention website at state level, to other new regional PDC sites, and to newly created GED webpages as well as numerous other state, national and international resources that can aid South Florida;

- c. Collaborative linkages to LEAs, CBOs and universities and colleges in Region V;
  - d. Interactive forms for ongoing needs assessment and strategic planning for Region V were placed on site;
  - e. Collaborative calendar of professional development events for Region V was created.
2. Schedule telephone conferences and onsite meetings to further aid the administrative and collaborative workings of the Council and to enhance the training of how to use the webpages.

### **Accomplishments of the Virtual Teams through the Webmaster Training**

WebCt was used to create a site to offer distance learning for the webmasters to augment the onsite training and to encourage more collaboration among the webmasters trained between training sessions. An online bulletin board with threaded discussion was used with online chats, a calendar tool, quizzing tools and a place to showcase virtual presentation. The WebCt accountability tools were used to ascertain webmaster involvement and collaboration throughout the process.

Four workshops were held addressing all of the following:

**Workshop I:** Creation of a basic web page, an email distribution list, internal and external links, tables and storyboards. HTML, Notepad, Netscape Composer and Microsoft FrontPage, and Inspiration were used primarily to aid the lessons for the 20 webmasters. The 20 webmasters were then provided the tools to in turn train three(3) webmasters each in their own counties.

**Workshop II:** Scanning of photos, scanning of documents using OCR software, using search engines to locate images and media on the Internet, import media and sound files to Microsoft FrontPage, scaling photos for ease of load, publishing of webs , and transferring of files to website. All webmasters had access to the Region V PDC website to load their own pages. This was done to increase the contributions from the local county, reduce the time to get pages up, and to increase the buy-in with the webmasters for the project.

**Workshop III:** Conversion of PowerPoint and Word documents to webpages and transfer of files, creation of portable document files (PDF), creation of hover buttons, forms, counters and marquees.

**Workshop IV:** Creation of Image Maps, simple videos, adding video to FrontPage, adding background sounds, and loading of Excel and Access documents to the web.

All webmasters created the assigned pages and created individual portfolios as demonstration of their learning and the products developed. WebCt statistics demonstrated acceptable learning levels for all participants. The number of individuals trained were reached. The Region V PDC website was enhanced and continues to serve as a training site and an information site for Region V at URL: <http://www.adulteducation.fau.edu/regionv>.