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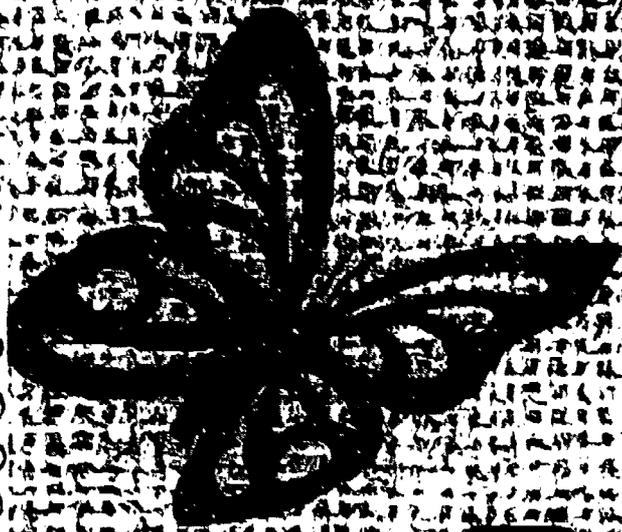
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ABSTRACT

In 1990, the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges developed a national workplace literacy demonstration project to raise awareness of the link between local economic development and basic workplace skill performance, and to stimulate a local leadership initiative around a community-wide effort to raise worker performance levels. Ten grants were awarded to the following rural colleges: (1) Columbia College (California), where students from the college and community were recruited to become literacy tutors; (2) Crowder College (Missouri), where work site adult literacy classes were implemented; (3) Enterprise State Junior College (Alabama), which coordinated an adult basic education (ABE) program with six local companies; (4) Genesee Community College (New York), which conducted seminars and workshops for more than 100 farm owners/managers and agribusiness employees; (5) Mount Wachusett Community College (Massachusetts), which developed a flexible, cost-effective tutor training program directed towards unemployed and dislocated workers; (6) New River Community College (Virginia), which provided on-site reading and math classes for workers in the local textile industry who were weak in basic skills; (7) Northeast Texas Community College, which planned and implemented a business/education partnership to enhance workplace literacy in targeted agricultural industries and occupations; (8) Roane State Community College (Tennessee), where a workplace literacy program geared toward unemployed adults and low-skilled workers was developed; (9) Salish Kootenai College (Montana), which expanded its ABE program, developed workplace-related classes, and provided transportation and child care for students on the Flathead Indian Reservation; and (10) Southwestern Oregon Community College, which conducted a workplace literacy project focused on towboat workers, fishermen, apprentices, and underemployed and unemployed adults. (JMC)

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Rural Workplace Literacy: Community College Partnerships

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Rural Workplace Literacy: Community College Partnerships

Lynn Barnett, Editor

Sponsored by the Commission on Small/Rural Community Colleges

Report of "Rural College Partnerships: A Quality Workforce Initiative," a project of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges. This pilot project was funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce (Award 99-06 07298), U.S. Department of Labor, and the Tennessee Valley Authority (Contract TV-78107A). Additional support was provided by the National Association of Broadcasters, Dallas County Community College District, Small Business Administration, and U.S. Department of Education.

A videotape based on this project is available for \$50. To order *Rural Workplace Literacy*, contact Bob Crook, Dallas County Community College District, Center for Educational Telecommunications, 9596 Walnut Street, Dallas, TX 75243 (214-952-0304).

With thanks to Andy Maurer at Columbia College for the butterfly design on the cover.

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WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT WORKPLACE LITERACY...

“Math skills . . . [are] a matter of safety or ‘life and death’”
—Oregon

“I knew I could do the job, but they wanted someone who could read.”
—Tennessee

“This was a real breakthrough . . . past attempts to interest local employers in literacy programs have not been successful.”
—Tennessee

“Solutions to workplace literacy needs can be developed at a moderate cost when partnerships are formed and resources are pooled.”
—Oregon

“When I received my diploma, a dream came true.” —Alabama

“[There is] a dire need for employees who can master new technologies and solve problems related to quality control.”
—Texas

“With so many people losing their jobs, these types of programs are needed.”
—Massachusetts

“And now I can see success.” —Montana

Rural College Partnerships: A Quality Workforce Initiative

Summary



Early in 1990, in a competitive minigrant process, the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) awarded one-year, \$10,000 grants to ten of its member colleges in rural areas who showed both solid partnerships with business and other organizations in their communities and a commitment to improving worker skills. The purpose of the grants was to stimulate grassroots solutions to workforce productivity problems related to limitations in literacy skills.

AACJC represents more than 1,200 community, technical, and junior colleges nationwide. It acted in response to several national reports on the quality of the American workforce, and in collaboration with its own Commission on Small/Rural Community Colleges. Rural communities were selected as target sites because of the perceived difficulty of such communities to marshal both significant public support and material resources. The grants were designed for use as seed money for projects that could become self-sustaining beyond the grant period.

The resulting national demonstration project on workplace literacy was called Rural College Partnerships: A Quality Workforce Initiative. The project had two main goals: (1) to raise the awareness level of the link between local economic development and local basic workplace skill performance, and (2) to stimulate a local leadership initiative around a community-wide effort to raise overall worker performance levels.

AACJC, with its national funders and supporting partners, adopted a broad definition of workplace literacy. Jointly, they identified the following components as important to occupational skill development:

- reading, writing, and computation competence;
- listening and oral communication skills;

- creative thinking and problem solving skills;
- self-esteem and motivation characteristics;
- goal-setting skills;
- personal/career development programs;
- interpersonal, negotiation, and teamwork skills; and
- organizational effectiveness and leadership.

The following institutions were selected as demonstration sites for the project:

Columbia College
Columbia, California

Crowder College
Neosho, Missouri

Enterprise State Junior College
Enterprise, Alabama

Genesee Community College
Batavia, New York

Mount Wachusett Community College
Gardner, Massachusetts

New River Community College
Dublin, Virginia

**Northeast Texas
Community College**
Mt. Pleasant, Texas

**Roane State Community
College**
Harriman, Tennessee

Salish Kootenai College
Pablo Montana

**Southwestern Oregon
Community College**
Coos Bay, Oregon

The projects involved a wide range of workers--including towboat operators, textile factory employees,



"partners were especially creative in publicizing their services: radio spots, announcements at employee meetings and Bible study groups, . . . advertisements on milk cartons, and brochures in cafeteria take-out meals."



poultry processors, farm managers—as well as unemployed workers, including adults with as little as a second grade education who had never held a job for more than a few months. The colleges and their community partners were especially creative in publicizing their services: radio spots, announcements at employee meetings and Bible study groups, discussions with women's groups, prodding by Chambers of Commerce, posters and letters, personal phone calls, referrals through local service agencies and programs for students with disabilities, advertisements on milk cartons, and brochures in cafeteria take-out meals. Participants gained skills not only in reading, but in mathematics and interpersonal communication. Instruction was given in industrial plants, on boats, in community centers, in housing developments, and in traditional educational facilities.

Activities at each site were featured in a May, 1991, teleconference broadcast from the Dallas County Community College District via AACJC's Community College Satellite Network. Video clips from each college illustrated such things as instructional techniques and student reactions, and project directors participated in a call-in portion of the teleconference. College downlink



*“Nearly all of the ten sites
have seen . . . a new awareness
of the grassroots possibilities
within a community,
[including] solid new
business partners.”*



sites hosted viewings for community leaders, and many included local business partners in their audiences. First Lady Barbara Bush provided opening remarks for the broadcast. She was followed by Jim Duffy, spokesman for Project Literacy U.S., and Bill Willis, chief executive officer of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Both spoke on the need for improved literacy skills if the nation is to remain

competitive and productive.

Nearly all of the ten sites have seen important spinoffs of their pilot projects, most reflecting a new awareness of the grassroots possibilities within a community, and some involving solid new business partners. Virtually no one has been untouched by the potential for new starts among unemployed and underemployed Americans.

This pilot project was funded by the Economic Development Administration of the Department of Commerce, Department of Labor, and Tennessee Valley Authority. Additional support was provided by the National Association of Broadcasters, Department of Education, and Small Business Administration. The project was directed by Lynn Barnett, Office of College Employer Relations, AACJC.

Alliance for Literacy: Literacy for the Workplace in Tuolumne and Calaveras Counties

Columbia College
Yosemite Community College District
P.O. Box 1849
Columbia, California 95310

Vice Chancellor: Pamila Fisher
Contact: Michele Griffith



PARTNERS: Cassina High School Adult Education Chamber of Commerce, Laubach Literacy Program, Mother Lode Job Training Agency, Tuolumne Board of Supervisors, Welfare GAIN Program

In order to serve adults needing basic literacy skills in the central part of California, Columbia College recruited students from the college and community at large to become literacy tutors. The college developed a tutor-training curriculum and offered it as a credit course. Various community and government agencies helped recruit, motivate, and train potential tutors. Individuals who participated were enthusiastic, and one commented, "It doesn't take a whole bunch to help someone learn." The college publicized the program through literacy hotlines, radio spots and talk shows, creative flyers, advertisements on milk cartons and shopping bags, and newspaper articles.

Besides training tutors and new readers, the project stimulated special library collections. More than 30 catalogs with materials for adult new readers were gathered that helped target the purchase of more than 400 books appropriate for new adult readers. Another library was established with materials for reading tutors. All of those are now part of a computerized file of library holdings.

Columbia College became the force behind a new local literacy directory that contains information on existing community literacy services that serve businesses and agencies that want to refer employees or clients to literacy services. Other



C O L U M B I A C O L L E G E
S T U D E N T C O R P S F O R
L I T E R A C Y

outreach efforts enhanced tutor training, such as techniques for creating a literacy awareness campaign, as well as a formal training seminar series conducted by adult literacy experts.

A serious initial problem stimulated action that became a strength of the Columbia project. The large geographic area served by the college, coupled with a limited transportation system, severely restricted recruitment of both tutors and students, in spite of the extensive marketing efforts. People simply could not easily get to where

services or training were provided. As a result, Columbia established a service provider network, the Literacy Coalition, to find ways to reach more people. Members were drawn from representatives of the college and local high school adult education program, as well as representatives of business and service agencies such as the Mother Lode Job Training Agency, Welfare GAIN Program, Laubach Literacy Program, and the Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce. The coalition has a renewed sense of mission in using business/education partnerships to combat illiteracy and reach more adults needing help. Its long-term goal is to establish a centralized Adult Learning and Service Center that will provide a variety of services.

Columbia's program of tutor training and one-on-one literacy instruction can be tied easily to a variety of college programs already in place, including tutorial centers, cooperative learning programs, and internships and sociology field service requirements.



*"It doesn't take
a whole bunch
to help someone learn."*



STRIDE/PAL (Partners in Adult Literacy) Work Site Adult Literacy Classes

Crowder College
601 Laclede Avenue
Neosho, Missouri 64850

President: Kent Farnsworth
Contacts: Rita Macy, Pamela R. Hudson



PARTNERS: Hudson Foods, Simmons Industries, Southwestern Bell, Talbot Industries, Tyson Foods

Crowder College has developed a basic skills curriculum for adults working in the poultry industry of the Missouri Ozarks region. The college trains volunteers from throughout the community, including college students, to serve as tutors in the STRIDE/PAL program. Workers with competency levels as low as third grade, including some non-English speakers, are developing their reading, writing, and math skills at their place of work.

The worksite-based nature of the training is a key to its success. Once employees take the step of asking for help, they can take one-on-one classes right in the plant before or after shifts. The holistic, student-centered approach to instruction incorporates whole language theory, with learners using everyday printed material such as newspapers, cookbooks, and workplace manuals in their studies. Although the demonstration project originally was planned with a Laubach literacy approach, the whole language approach was found to be more appropriate and supplemental materials were obtained. Participants feel that the whole language approach of the

training helps retain their dignity while building on experiences and knowledge they bring with them.

Quarterly newsletters reported tutor tips, original student writings, and particular success stories. One example is a plant worker, a high school dropout, who took the GED, qualified for a college scholarship, and enrolled in the college with 12 credit hours.

A spinoff has been the coordination of one college course, Problems in Education 201, with the PAL program and the opportunity for student education majors to do field study at the work sites.

The benefits of this program are undisputed, for tutors and employers as well as learners. New volunteers earn college credit for completing tutor training and Crowder students, usually education majors, are involved in the

college's tutoring-for-credit program. Some students receive tuition scholarships to participate. Pleased with the opportunity and the zeal of the tutors, the industry partners provide classroom facilities and supplies. They are seeing the real value of having employees gain self-confidence as well as improved work skills. They are helping the college make this a permanent, self-supporting program in the community.



*"[Employers] are seeing
the real value of having
employees gain
self-confidence as well as
improved work skills."*



A Rural College Workforce Literacy Project for Southeast Alabama

Enterprise State Junior College
POB 1300
Enterprise, Alabama 36331

President: Joseph D. Talmadge
Contact: Mary D. Bauer



PARTNERS: ConAgra Broiler Company, Dorsey Trailers, Dura-Cast, Inc., Reliable Products, Sessions Company, Utility Trailer Corporation

Enterprise State Junior College serves a rural area where the population density is approximately 40 people per square mile and where only 40 percent of adults over age 25 are high school graduates. Faced with high turnover rates and a need for higher productivity, a diverse group of local small industries, ranging from poultry processors to trailer and welding companies, responded to the college's outreach efforts to provide basic skills training to their workers. Enterprise's adult basic education program coordinated the efforts with six local companies, and identified more than 250 employees with skill deficiencies.

Civic clubs helped stimulate overall interest in the plan. Employers provided a variety of incentives to encourage worker participation, including release time, on-site instruction, recognition, and consideration in promotion decisions. A total of 210 workers signed on, with 50 of them receiving individual learning prescriptions for basic academic skills. Their instruction included individual tutoring and classroom

instruction in reading, language, and mathematics, using materials from the work site as well as other commercial materials. Others received training in communication, supervision, and computers. Some workers were granted tuition assistance to upgrade their skills through regular college credit courses. Job site supervisors reported unan- imously that employee participation had helped them.

In a dramatic success story, one trailer company welder with a ninth grade competency level attended classes, passed his GED, was awarded a college scholarship, and was promoted to supervisor at work. He is now enrolled in a program leading to an associate degree.

In spite of a rocky start when a major flood devastated both a key industry partner and much of the community at large, this project has had a significant effect on the population. In the end, many more employees were reached than originally targeted, including some Spanish-

speaking workers. Overall, this small project enabled the college to work more closely with its community. Every company involved opted to continue its partnership with Enterprise State, and the college successfully sought additional funding from the U.S. Department of Education for an expanded workplace literacy project.



*"Every company involved
opted to continue
its partnership with
[the college]."*



Agribusiness Workplace Literacy

Genesee Community College
One College Road
Batavia, New York 14020

President: Stuart Steiner
Contact: Lisa Giallella



PARTNERS: *Byron Enterprises, New York State Public Service Commission, Niagara Mohawk Power Company*

Genesee provided seminars and workshops to more than 100 farm owners/managers and agribusiness employees in this upstate New York community, where nearly two-thirds of the workforce are employed on farms. The success of this training was particularly rewarding because it followed a variety of unanticipated difficulties that caused substantial changes from the original project plan.

The challenges of this project offer lessons as important as its successes. They represent real-life situations and attitudes that affect rural workforce development, including territoriality and time limitations. In spite of earlier promises of cooperation and participation, when the time came to implement a tutorial program for migrant workers, farm owners and managers were resistant to releasing workers for the training. Employers didn't feel they could give up the work time, and also were fearful about workers getting "too much" training and then leaving for higher level employment. In addition, the culture was such that skill development from outside groups was seen as an "intrusion." This reluctance to participate resulted in a shift of the project away



from the original target group of workers altogether.

Adjusting creatively to a complicated and difficult situation, Genesee redirected its efforts to the farm owners and managers themselves, who were receptive to upgrading their own skills. A workshop on agricultural computing (farm accounting, payroll systems, etc.) was heavily publicized, but a low response forced its cancellation. However, the "Time of Use Rate Seminar," a day-long workshop on reducing electrical

expenses and conserving energy drew a record number of farmers and herd managers. It was offered in cooperation with the New York State Public Service Commission.

A successful training/retraining program was also initiated for workers at Byron Enterprises, a manufacturer of harvesters and other agricultural tools. Byron equipment is used to harvest 85 percent of the sweet corn processed in the United States and Canada. Training focused on new

production and inventory control systems, as the company resolved to become more competitive. Management personnel from Byron's Wisconsin plant were included in the training group.

The project stands as an example of how a local community college can act responsively to its area's rapidly changing needs.



"Training focused on new production and inventory control systems, as the company resolved to become more competitive."



Workplace Partners in Literacy

Mount Wachusett Community College
444 Green Street
Gardner, Massachusetts 01440

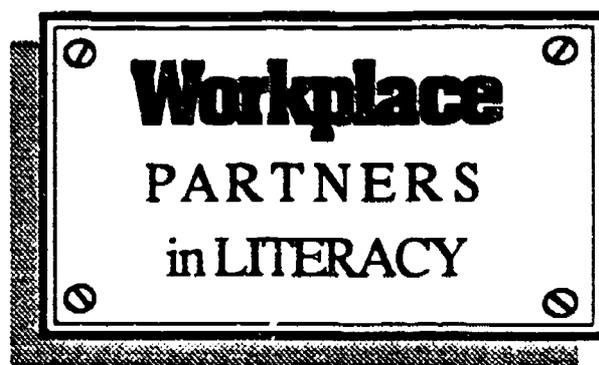
President: Daniel M. Asquino
Contact: Judi Pregot



PARTNERS: community organizations, Dennison Manufacturing Company, government agencies, Leominster High School

Confronted with an unemployment rate of more than 14 percent, this community college in western Massachusetts directed its workforce literacy development efforts toward unemployed and dislocated workers. It developed a flexible, cost-effective tutor training program that also raised local agencies' awareness of linkage possibilities with the college—an important outcome in an area where enrollment in literacy programs has grown daily due to rising unemployment.

A wide range of local marketing efforts publicized the college's activities and services. One result was a three-day volunteer tutor training workshop held at a local high school. Participants there learned about the characteristics of adult learners and other background knowledge useful for effective tutoring. Armed with a theoretical basis, the volunteers then focused on such instructional topics as whole language/whole word and phonics approaches, as well as thinking and writing skills and goal



setting. The tutor training program included an internship in a structured adult education classroom.

Mount Wachusett also used its grant funding to extend an English as a Second Language class offered to employees at Dennison Manufacturing Company. The 10-week class was so successful in improving language skills that the company chose to offer a class to a second group of Hispanic employees, for an expanded 15-week period. Segments of this class were highlighted in the AACJC tele-

conference broadcast over the Community College Satellite Network.

By increasing its outreach efforts, the college found new ways to reach people in need of skills. A literacy workshop was held at the Grange, and a workplace education conference focused on "family literacy." Some individuals in a Bible study class were motivated to take their GED as a result of literacy training. The college is also developing a three-credit, general elective course on "Workplace Education" for literacy providers and employers interested in providing worksite training or peer tutoring.



"enrollment in literacy programs has grown daily due to rising unemployment."



Project BOLD: A Cooperative Plan for Literacy Development

New River Community College
P.O. Drawer 1127
Dublin, Virginia 24084

President: Floyd M. Hogue
Contact: Marfesa Clark

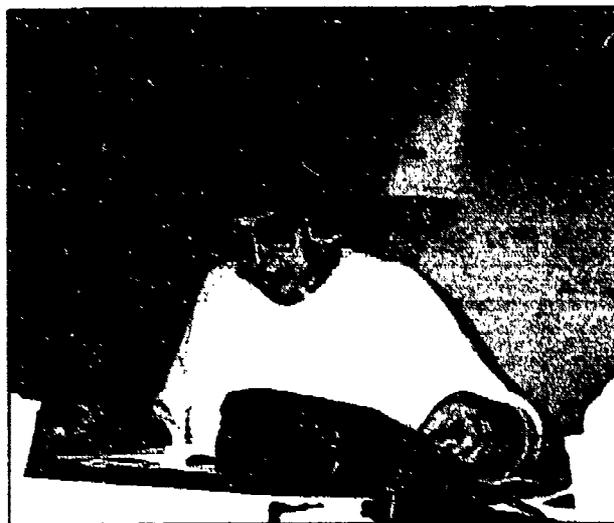


PARTNERS: *Hoechst-Celanese, Literacy Volunteers of America, New River Valley Center for Training and Development, New River Valley Economic Development Commission*

New River Community College targeted its Project BOLD to workers in the local textile industry who were weak in basic skills. The college's program provided on-site reading and math classes, with the enthusiastic support of the plant management of Hoechst-Celanese, a major employer in this southwestern Virginia community.

The community public awareness efforts were wide-ranging: brochures, posters, radio spots, local and regional newspaper articles. A promotional video was shown at plant Safety Meetings. Hoechst-Celanese management encouraged workers to enroll, a message that was reinforced with personal phone calls. Although average reading skill levels were found to be higher than expected, most employees who enrolled needed and requested basic math skills improvement.

Project BOLD appears to have made a lasting impact on this community. The college/business collaboration was so successful that New River's partner, Hoechst-Celanese, won the prestigious "Exemplary Employer-Sponsored Adult and Continuing Education Award" for 1991. The award was sponsored by the Virginia Association for Adult and Continuing Education (VAACE) to recognize an employer in the state that has made a significant commitment to the educational advancement of its employees. The company has a solid determination to continue supporting workplace



literacy efforts in the future.

On a more personal level, four employees received their GED, and one worker learned to read to his child for the first time. The average mathematics skill level increased two grade levels in twelve weeks. Two employees earned promotions from the company that may not have been possible without the training provided through this partnership project. Several students from Project BOLD are now enrolling in college classes.

In an effort to promote intergenerational literacy, each student received a "Home Library" to complement in-plant reading classes, and small children of participants were given preschool reading packages.

Spinoff effects have been significant. Using Project BOLD as a model workplace literacy program for the New River Valley, two more local industries have begun similar programs. Approximately 80 employees are currently enrolled in basic skills classes at their own plant sites, and two additional industries are contracting with the college to provide on-site basic skills instruction.

By showing a strong commitment to adult literacy problems in rural southwest Virginia, New River Community College was able to obtain state funding for a full-time position for an Adult Basic Education Regional Specialist, which previously had been a part-time position. Similarly, New River's demonstrated dedication to adult education has led it to become one of only five community colleges in Virginia designated to house an Employee Development Director to set up literacy workplace programs in the New River Valley.



"Using Project BOLD as a model . . . , two more local industries have begun similar programs."



Agriculture and Literacy Network (A-Lit-Net)

Northeast Texas Community College
P.O. Box 1307
Mt. Pleasant, Texas 75455

President: Mike Bruner
Contact: John Cames



PARTNERS: *Northeast Texas Quality Work Force Planning Committee (Vision-NeT), Pilgrims Pride Corporation, Tyson Food, Inc.*

The nine-county region of the northeast corner of Texas has been severely affected by the ripple effect of the steady downturn of the steel, oil, and gas industries. After the long-term economic depression of the 1980s, pockets of unemployment had reached 13.6 percent by 1990. Agribusiness industries of this rural region have been experiencing qualified workforce shortages. There is a surplus of low-skill workers, but a shortage of literate, and therefore trainable, workers in the area. Consequently, local businesses and industries have expressed a dire need for employees who can master new technologies and solve problems related to quality control.

As a result of this economic situation, Northeast Texas Community College planned and implemented a business/education partnership to enhance workplace literacy in targeted agricultural industries and occupations. To this end, the college founded the A-Lit-Net partnership, whose Literacy Task Force includes representatives of the private sector and state agencies. By developing a careful plan for examining specific, on-the-job literacy requirements, A-Lit-Net was able to show employers just how a proposed literacy education program can pay off at some point in the future.

The A-Lit-Net project met its four stated goals:

- to identify industries and occupations in targeted businesses with high employment demand;

- to conduct a literacy audit at selected businesses to determine the relationship between workplace literacy and productivity, and to identify critical job literacy requirements;

- to integrate the results of the literacy audit into the college's existing Agriculture 2+2 and literacy programs; and

- to disseminate findings of the literacy audit to stimulate private sector leadership.

Poultry production and processing industries and the occupations of firstline supervisor and assistant manager were targeted, and the comprehensive literacy audit was conducted at Pilgrims Pride Corporation and Tyson Food. The college sponsored a workshop, attended by members of six community colleges in the region, that used the A-Lit-Net procedures as a model of how to integrate occupational and academic skills.

The procedures for conducting a successful literacy audit, including a workable taxonomy of skill requirements, are documented in the college's *Handbook for Customizing Workplace Literacy to Employer Training Needs*, which is now publicly available.

An important spinoff of the A-Lit-Net project is the implementation of a workplace literacy program at Lonestar Steel, Inc. After the Lonestar Steel training director attended a Vision-NeT symposium, a partnership was formed with Northeast, Lonestar Steel, and the United Steel Workers Local to provide workplace literacy classes. The company provides instructional equipment and supplies, the union provides facilities, and the college provides instructional staff.



"The company provides instructional equipment and supplies, the union provides facilities, and the college provides instructional staff."



Workplace Literacy—Roane State

Roane State Community College
Patton Lane
Harriman, Tennessee 37748

President: Sherry Hoppe
Contact: Carol Hollar



PARTNERS: Chamber of Commerce, Chase Instruments, Departments of Employment Security and Human Services, Job Service, Kayser Roth Corporation, Roane County Adult Learning Center, Roane County Community Development Council, Roane County High School, Wal-Mart

Unemployed adults and low-skilled workers in local industries were targeted in this Tennessee region, where more than 40 percent of the adult population do not have a high school diploma and where recent plant closings resulted in the loss of more than 1,300 jobs—one-fifth of the jobs in one county. The region's decline in its textile and wood products industrial base highlights the problems faced by a workforce that is not technologically literate. Employers find that their present employees are unable to be trained in new methods and processes because of the lack of reading, writing, and computational ability. Many people are unable to get a job if it requires more than simple repetitive tasks.

It is in this context that the Adult Learning Center of Roane State developed its workplace literacy plan. In spite of difficulties in obtaining concrete involvement from some businesses even after their earlier commitment, seven employers formally collaborated with the college. Community volunteers were recruited and trained to provide tutoring services, and group tutoring and computer-assisted instruction supplemented on-site instruction. State legislators helped secure funds for additional computers, and a local

high school provided computer lab space.

A variety of approaches influenced service delivery, including employer surveys and newspaper articles that publicized the program. Wal-Mart employees were awarded release time for on-site instruction, and Kayser Roth employees were offered monetary incentives to participate. At Chase Instruments, nearly 180 employees in three shifts were paid overtime to be assessed, and a class was held at the worksite. Classes were also offered in ten locations across the county, including churches, schools, and housing developments. Some of them implemented a "One Room Drop-In School" concept, which featured child participation.

A total of 641 students were enrolled in Roane State's adult basic education program, and of the other 40 who studied at the worksite, five received their GED. One student who read at below a fifth-grade level has improved enough to be promoted and now works with computers at his job with the road department. A disabled student with no reading skills gained a reading vocabulary of 25 words in one month using computer assisted instruction.

As a result of this project, local employers have a heightened awareness of their employees' need for basic skills training and of the college's programs to meet those needs. The Chamber of Commerce and Community Development Council are committed to continuing to stimulate the business community's enthusiasm. Roane State is using the project's computer hardware and software with additional groups to increase literacy.



*"... employees were offered
monetary incentives to
participate."*



Workplace Success Enhancement Project

Salish Kootenai College
Box 117
Pablo, Montana 59855

President: Joseph F. McDonald
Contact: Robert Fouty



PARTNERS: Lake County Job Service, Northwest Human Resource Council, Tribal Family Assistance Division, Tribal JTPA Program, Tribal JOBS Program, Tribal Personnel Office

Salish Kootenai College is located on the Flathead Indian Reservation in the mountains of western Montana, an area of more than one million acres and a population of about 22,000. Non-Indians make up approximately 80 percent of the reservation population. With an unemployment rate of 48-56 percent, the need for personal and job-related skills is critical.

Community agencies joined the college as partners in this project to serve the chronically unemployed. One agency manager noted having more than 25 clients in their early 30s who have never held a job. The partners identified 350 individuals at-risk due to limitations related to education, employment, self-esteem and identity, and substance abuse.

The Rural College Partnership grant allowed Salish Kootenai to work closely with its community partners, local government and tribal agencies. The college expanded its adult basic education program and provided a variety of courses, marketing them as "a new look at life". Besides basic reading



and English, participants took advantage of other workplace-related classes such as job interviewing, career exploration, chemical awareness, computer skills, and communication skills in the workplace. Human potential seminars and self-esteem workshops were also offered. More than 300 adults were served in 24 classes, with Indians making up two-thirds of the classes. Some students took more than one course. A total of 199 took GED classes—particularly significant in an area where some citizens have only a second grade education and have never held a job for more than a few months.

Key features of this project were transportation and child care. A college van picked up students who otherwise would have been unable to attend classes, and stipends were given to students to cover child care expenses.



"With an unemployment rate of 48-56 percent, the need for personal and job-related skills is critical."



The college continues to work closely with tribal literacy advisors to reach more people, and to get more job referrals in the local seasonal industries—timbering and small farms. In spite of the challenge of motivating people to participate, the grant quadrupled the number of people previously reached. Their enthusiasm was clearly visible in the AACJC teleconference.

Workforce Development in Southwestern Oregon

Southwestern Oregon Community College
1988 Newmark
Coos Bay, Oregon 97420

President: Stephen J. Kridelbaugh
Contact: Veneita Stender



PARTNERS: Bureau of Labor and Industries, Coos Bay Educational Service District, electrician apprentices, Fishermen's Marketing Association, Gender Equity in Construction, Hardin Optical Manufacturing, independent troll fishermen, International Paper Company, ocean towing industry, plumbing apprentices, South Coast Business Employment Corporation (JTPA)



Towboat workers, fishermen, apprentices, underemployed and unemployed adults were the focus of this workplace literacy project on the Oregon coast, an area in transition from a timber industry economy to a diversified economy demanding higher skills of most workers. The area has an unemployment rate of 10.2 percent. Workers with 20 and 30 years of experience who lost their jobs when a local sawmill closed are still unemployed due to lack of computer skills or recent basic skill training.

Other challenges face the maritime industry, including fishing, where tougher regulations demand higher skills. Fishermen must conduct accurate cost-benefit analyses before venturing from port because the fishing season is now extremely limited due to severe declines in fish. Ocean towing and shipbuilding and repair industries must cope with new federal navigation regulations that involve higher math and reading levels. Skill upgrading is difficult since workers in these industries may be at sea for up to three months at a time.

Given these circumstances, Southwestern Oregon approached local industry to determine what skills were most needed and what techniques would work best to provide them. Based on job/task analysis and interviews of supervisors

and workers in fishing, construction, manufacturing, ocean towing, plumbing, and electrical industries, the college identified a serious need for improved math skills.

A workplace literacy audit matched skill and training needs, and identified math remediation needs. On the basis of those needs, a math curriculum was developed that featured a "Portable Math Kit," which became instrumental in reaching workers whose job sites and work schedules prevented them from attending more traditional

training sessions at the college or other community sites. It also supplements training at a downtown community-based learning center that uses computer-assisted instruction. The college has found that workers at the "teachable moment"—a time when they need to increase skills or get out—are highly motivated and make time to do the self-paced math modules.

The project has increased the visibility of Southwestern Oregon's programs and has stimulated interest in workplace literacy at other worksites. A recent business partner, International Paper, is working with the college to develop a new technology degree program, and it also will use the core math component developed for the towboat industry. The Portable Math Kit has become institutionalized at the Workforce 2000 Skills Center, has been

adopted by the area's association of women working in construction, and is to be followed by Coos Bay's fishing industry. Area apprentice programs intend to continue using the Portable Math Kit to strengthen the math skills of apprentices in plumbing, construction, and electrical work.



"The Portable Math Kit has become institutionalized . . . and has been adopted [by other groups]."



FINDINGS

- Rural communities are in serious need of a variety of workplace literacy skills.
- Community and junior colleges in rural areas are the focal point for helping to identify needs, rally local groups, and provide training to the employed and un-employed.
- Adults already employed as well as those looking for work benefit from training programs co-sponsored by local business/industry and community colleges.
- Even a small amount of seed money can mobilize people to make effective use of existing, though scarce, rural resources.
- Math skills are desperately needed for jobs in many industries.
- The loss of a major employer is devastating to a rural community and can greatly increase the need for displaced workers to upgrade their skills.
- Communities without large corporate employers can work successfully in consortium-type approaches to problem solving.
- Employers are finding creative ways to motivate employees to participate in workplace literacy programs, including release time, financial incentives, and support services.
- Once involved, most local employers are enthusiastic about institutionalizing workplace literacy programs that make their employees more productive, and many employers are willing to assume more of the financial responsibility for providing that training.
- Worksite-based programs can stimulate literacy initiatives off the job, including family literacy efforts.
- Community volunteers can be crucial to the long-term success of a workplace literacy program.
- Distance can significantly affect the success of service delivery in rural areas. Finding solutions to transportation and child care problems can increase individual participation.
- Chambers of Commerce can play pivotal roles in stimulating partnerships.
- Time is an important planning factor. Because of distance, limited financial and organizational resources, and the traditional independent nature of many residents, careful planning is needed for rural America to nurture and fully develop community partnerships that will sustain cooperative training programs.
- Most partnership projects have unanticipated spinoff benefits. Once a single company discovers the value of workplace literacy efforts, others follow suit.

Rural College Partnerships: A Quality Workforce Initiative

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