FIRST QUARTERLY REPORT
June, 2007

INTRODUCTION

The 4CO project has completed its first two phases of activities: (1) planning, training
and recruitment, and (2) initial implementation. This report summarizes the activities
and accomplishments of the project among four programs in the Four Corners region of
Colorado, during its initial implementation stage.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Four Corners Online Project (4CO) is a pilot project designed to create a web-
based classroom environment that may be eventually used by adult education,
community college, BOCES, workforce, vocational and post-secondary teachers and
their adult students. This project is designed not as a replacement for the classroom,
but rather as a supplement to it, allowing greater access, communication and sharing of
information among students and between teachers and their students.

The curriculum purchased for 4CO is McGraw Hills GED Interactive GED Integrated
Online Solution, Version 3.2, which provides online tracking and management for
students using the curriculum to pass their GEDs.

Selected for 4CO participation were four AEFLA-funded adult education programs
reaching out from Cortez, Durango, Ignacio and Pagosa to students in the Four Corners
rural, multi-cultural region.

The following activities were implemented in the first two phases designed for the
project:

PHASE I

PROPOSED	**COMPLETED**
- Established a training format and agenda, and plan trainings with the McGraw Hill trainer. - Scheduled and helped implement initial training of staff on the McGraw Hill On-line Instruction software. - Provide a laptop computer for each 4C Project adult education site. - Troubleshoot technical and program launching issues. - Meet with Arizona and 4CO for guidance and planning. - Address issues to be resolved in enrolling students. - Launch and support a project	1. Programs were contacted and faculty selected to participate in the project. 2. Training was scheduled and completed for faculty and program directors during two days in Durango, in January (23 and 25). Day one was dedicated to technical skills required to use McGraw Hill's resources; day two covered program and student issues related to administrative issues along with intake, orientation and support of participants. 3. Each program was provided a laptop and given instructions on how to use it. 4. On February 9, project faculty and staff attending the Rendezvous 07 Conference in Denver met with the Yuma, AZ project director for a question and answer session on using the system, and recruiting and retaining students in the project.

Website with project resources and information. Create a listserv to facilitate project staff communication PHASE II - Begin gathering data about student enrollments, course segments completed, lessons studied, pre- and post-testing results, and progress made by students. - Continue to oversee enrollment of students in course segments as virtual seat licenses become open. - Troubleshoot technical and program issues as they arise. - Begin compiling information to develop an on-line, Distance Education Guide for GED instructional practices. - Summarize implementation data for the first phase of the project, and include a status report about student enrollments, course segments completed, lessons studied, pre- and post-testing results, and progress made by students in quarterly progress report. Meet with project staff as needed. Submit a progress report to CDLE.	5. Programs began to recruit, orient and enroll students in February, 2007, troubleshooting problems with McGraw Hill tech support and among project personnel. A listserv, 4CO@coloradoadulted.org provided the tool for communication on different issues. The online Project Blog (http://4cornersonline.blogspot.com/) proved to be less useful that the email list as a dialoguing tool. A project site was also launched, where project resources were made available for download at http://www.coloradoadulted.org/4CO/4COhome.htm. 6. In April, programs began to track student progress and deal with issues that are typical of online learning projects. The following issues began to be addressed: ➤ Students who enrolled for study but never used the system or used it for very short times ➤ Technical problems related to different types of connectivity and browser choices ➤ Students (ABE and ESL) who wanted to enroll, but did not have the language skills to use the curriculum. ➤ Students who were ideal for the project but could not enroll due to lack of Internet access in their communities. Some of these preferred the distance learning format, but had to drive or get rides to the program centers to access the Internet connection.

4CO was allotted 50 seats to be distributed among four programs: Durango, Ignacio/Bayfield, Pagosa Springs, and Cortez/Manco/Dolores. Each program was allocated 10 initial seats, leaving 10 seats to be used by guests and additional students, at the discretion of the project, depending on need.

4CO has 62 students presently enrolled. The following sessions are currently open with 37 active student listed:

Durango GED Charles Love	9
Ignacio Bayfield Jackie Candelaria	9
Mancos/Dolores Gwynne	10

Spence	
Mill Street Luri Owen (Bayfield)	2
Pagosa GED Mark Wardell	4
PagosaGED1 Kathy Calderone	3

At the time of this writing, students are still taking their GED exams. Total GED completion will be submitted after June 30.

REPORTS

The following section summarizes the initial experience of each program in response to issues relating to implementing 4CO activities.

1. Recruitment and Orientation Approaches

DURANGO

Durango called students who seemed like strong candidates, based on reading level and subjective measures, who had not been attending regularly but were already enrolled in the program. It also approached attending students who might want to supplement what they were already doing. This strategy did not prove to be particularly successful. Although students filled the slots, a few students studied only for a small amount of time, and some that were registered and oriented never logged on once. A few students worked on the program at the school on a semi-regular basis.

Plans: Develop new marketing tools in the summer to be launched in the fall to attract a niche of students who may not enroll with for classes but are interested in distance learning.

PAGOSA

Pagosa used the newspaper, radio, and fliers as recruitment tools. Most participants had either heard about the program from a friend or someone in another GED program. The program also got some existing students that scored high enough on the TABE enrolled. The project was offered to all newcomers that scored high enough and had a computer. Often they would not use the system even after their PCs were fixed to run the program. The best tool to get them to work was to call and ask how things are going. About 1/3 of the participants used the program regularly and they did very well in the GED testing. For Orientation students were taken through the program, and shown the lessons along with the testing features and communication options, and how they connected to the BIG BOOK.

IGNACIO

Because the program wanted a quick start, it signed on students who were currently attending class and whose reading levels were 9th grade and above. Letters were sent out targeting prior students who had the reading levels required. Advertisements were placed several times in the Durango Herald, the Southern Ute Drum and the Pine River Times. Additionally, the programs followed up with phone calls to students when no response was received.

None of these techniques were really successful. Current students, even though the TABE showed their reading levels were 9th and above, complained the lessons were too hard and didn't want to continue the process.

Only one student was interested in doing the online course at home. However, she had technical problems even though her computer was brand new. The problems were solved, problems, but she finally just gave up on it.

CORTEZ/MANCOS

Cortez feels it has little to report due to a lack of original rubrics for the success of the program. However, the project has possibility since it gets people away from workbooks and paper sheets, into the mode of getting ready for a test by TAKING A TEST, which after all is the sort of state-dependent learning the project is trying to promote.

2. Support features of the project: reaching and encouraging students; MCH's response to technical and other support issues; staff sense of having been supported when needed it.

DURANGO

The tech support phone number is great. There was no response from the email tech support that is linked within GED Online program. Students were given the instructor's phone number and the number for tech support when they are sent home with the CD-ROM. It takes me about 45 minutes to introduce students to the program and explain how to get started.

PAGOSA

The tech support center offered easy solutions to all questions. E-mail tech Support was not tried. Online students were given the instructor's phone number and tech support numbers upon enrolling. Most called the instructor with problems and the instructor called tech support.

IGNACIO

Project staff felt supported when needed, but it would have been helpful for instructors to have more previous exposure to technology. The project posed more technical challenges than expected.

CORTEZ/MANCOS

It would have been helpful to have the site's email reach people outside of the environment. Also, when several students had difficulty logging they were told to use the Internet logon. However, that information was not included in the training or instruction, and it should be in the future.

3. Characteristics of students who joined and dropped as opposed to those who joined and stayed?

DURANGO

Dropped- the same students who signed up for classes and stopped coming. *Stayed*-students in youth corrections, even there they eventually fell off even though I stopped by most weeks. Also, students who are close to earning GED stayed longer.

 PAGOSA

The students that start the program and never log in are the same ones that don't show up or only come when they get some sort of external pressure. Finishers have been people that wanted to make themselves better, usually those that score higher on the TABE. Some home school kids are motivated by their need for he paperwork. One-on-one tutoring was offered, but very few have wanted it.

IGNACIO

To the surprise of the staff, none of the Ignacio students really stuck with the project or took advantage of its resources. Perhaps those students felt that the approach was so totally new that they could not cope. They had not worked on GED level materials on the computer before. Some people in the community did not regard studying at home as an advantage and may not have perceived to get a GED in the first place. Clearly, an adult has to be pretty self-motivated to study at home without the support of a classroom environment.

CORTEZ/MANCOS

Most students simply dropped the project after one hour of activity. However, the resources did serve older, at-home, independent students well. For those who are dependent on external reward, constant praise is needed for their most minimal efforts. There were students on probation who regularly misrepresented their efforts to their Probation Officers,. In the future, the project may state that students will lose the privilege of using resources unless they log in 20 hours a month.

4. Planning Ahead

DURANGO

Plan a lot of time to provide additional support. Consider seeking out a volunteer to help.

Have the project identify something that is computer based at ABE level as opposed to the high level of GED Online. Plan for what to do if the program has a number of students in the fall who are ABE level and want distance learning. -- Tell them they must attend classes until they raise their reading levels? Complete bookwork? Try a different computer program? Skills Tutor (I think that's the one Doug sent out a link to) was not very impressive. Has anyone used Rosetta Stone?

PAGOSA

It would be nice for updated program CDs. Most participants have had to download some kind of patch to be able to use program. The project also needs something online for the lower level students. The lower leveled ones seemed to be the hardest to get into the building.

IGNACIO

There are many in the community how do not have a GED, and the project must begin to identify ways to reach them. The words to use to "hook" or interest them are important! Privacy is another issue that must be addressed since students do not want to be known for their limited education.

CORTEZ/MANCOS

Perhaps Qwest would help promote the project to new DSL customers, or cable installers?

5. Ideas/Resources/Tools to improve the project

DURANGO
Most students will require regular face to face contact and textbook and worksheet assignments and maybe some sort of contract and/or deposit to increase retention and progress.

 PAGOSA

More intense advertising, along with a great deal of time on the telephone and one-on-one we will increase graduation numbers.

IGNACIO
Time is what this project needs to develop the expertise needed to serve students who are most likely to benefit from its services. Effective and focused advertising over time will attract successful students.

CORTEZ/MANCOS

It may be advantageous to contact Homefires' Homeschool Resources For You! to encourage homeschooled teens to sign up for classes.

It may be a good idea to charge students $50 for their participation.

6. Other Comments

Students spent time on the program who did not receive credit on the Student Activity Summary used to keep track of attendance hours. They apparently have had the same problem in Yuma.

Programs to address the issue of measuring success and creating timelines for this pilot project. What sort of data would deem the project successful and worth expanding? It is premature to launch this project statewide until the project has a chance to succeed in the Four Corners.

CONCLUSION

The 4CO project was successfully launched and implemented in all four programs. Every project faced technical issues relating to accessing the curriculum (using passwords and enrolling students) and troubleshooting issues with students with different computers, connectivity, and browsers. During the first two months, all issues were addressed through McGraw Hill's technical support staff and dialog among programs.

One of the initial challenges faced by all participants was a lack of documentation from programs that had been successful. Yuma evidently mailed a number of forms, promising to follow up through electronic delivery, which has not happened. The resources that were sent are posted at http://coloradoadulted.org/4CO/yuma.htm. Documents developed by 4CO programs are listed at the end of this document and posted on the project's site.

It is clear that 4CO has not had time to thoroughly pilot the many dimensions of this project and will need at least another year to set models and "best practices" for others to follow and adapt. Recommendations for strategies to increase enrollment and improve retention follow in the next session.

Overall, participating faculty report enthusiasm for continuing the project once participants have enough time to make changes and improvements during the first trial phase.

One aspect that the project team will address immediately upon resumption of classes is to establish measures for program, instructor and student progress. The project has several models from which to extract applicable guidelines, which will be drafted in September of 2007.

Specific conclusions are included in individual program reports listed above. Following are a few recommendations for the second stage of the project:

- Students who have dial-up and/or equipment that is over three years old do not qualify for access at home. Other measures must be taken if they are to participate.
- The project must identify an online curriculum that is offered for ABE and ESL students who lack the language proficiency to process the McGraw Hill content. Several options are being examined for implementation in the fall.
- The Project Coordinator and McGraw Hill staff must address the issue of students whose participation online is not reflected in the database records.
- Project staff need to examine what items to include in the initial intake process and whether or not to include incentives to encourage students to remain in the project through completion of their goals.
- There is a need to create an environment for students to participate in a community of learners in the Four Corners. Isolation is probably the greatest trigger to dropping out.
- Now that each program has a "feel" for what it takes to succeed using online resources, it must gear its advertising, recruitment, orientation, and support efforts toward a more promising group of students.
- 4CO will benefit from further training in the tools offered in Web 2.0 (wikis, logs, shared documents, etc..)so that they instructors have the skills and enthusiasm to introduce interactivity as they work with online students.
- Solutions to common technical problems need to be readily available for students and program staff.

PRODUCTS: See site (http://www.coloradoadulted.org/4CO/4COhome.htm) for sample flyers, articles and other recruitment techniques and documents developed or adopted in the project.