Summary of the 4CO Meeting
Durango Adult Ed Center
Present: Ann Miller, Jackie Candelaria, Mark Waddell, Charlie Love and Leecy Wise

The Meeting was conducted around a discussion of the topics from the agenda, as presented through the report, "Expanding Access to Adult Literacy with Online Distance Education." We agreed that our challenge revolved around the knowledge, quoted from the report, that "Successful distance learning students are likely to be self-motivated, be comfortable working independently, and possess strong study and organizational skills. Only a subset of adult basic learners possesses these characteristics."

Recruitment and Retention Factors and Planning

This issue is central to keeping students in the program who want to learn.

It has become clear that the students we have recruited to date do not possess the characteristics of successful students. Very few have persisted. The "typical" adult education student is not likely to succeed, no matter what strategies are applied to keeping them.

Based on the report and following discussion, we agreed on the following student characteristics, which will require recruiting in new places, among them, community service organizations that haven't been previously reached, businesses, and school personnel. *(Questio for DOUG: Can AEFL programs count HS students who want to use the materials?)*

- Employed
- Has high speed connectivity at home or access to it
- Commits to going onsite for initial screening, orientation, and 12 hours of work on assignments before enrolling
- Signs a contract with specific conditions that are maintained (Leecy will draft)
- Is computer literate or willing to complete training

- Has a reading level at 9th grade or above for the McGraw Hill materials
- Has the ability to organize personal time and work independently
- Has a clear goal that the project can support

Interviewing and Screening Items

The initial screening and orientation process needs to be thorough, friendly, and clear. Initial contact must be face-to-face, followed by occasional face-to-face contact during the students' time with the program.

Mentoring and Follow Up Needs

Contact is the most important aspect of keeping students in online instructions. Students need contact with each other and with the instructor. Following are activities designed to provide needed contact with students:

- Invite students to regular activities (picnics, field trips, movies, bar-b-qs, etc…)
- Provide fast feedback to students and encourage contact. We talked about having instant

access for students statewide, with programs taking turns during working hours. A chat system, such as those now available in many online businesses would be a good idea. ($$$?)

- Send e-cards encouraging students and praising accomplishments
- Send individual, rather than group emails to students, to make the messages more personal
- E-mail encouragement to students on a regular basis
- Send e-mails that ask questions and prompted students think about their goals
- Offer assistance to students in finding information or sites the Internet that could help their studies
- Telephone students to have a synchronous conversation and learn more about the student's goals and concerns
- Telephone students who have not been active online for a period of time to encourage them to stay with the program
- Provide certificates upon completion of a predetermined unit work
- Offer drop-in times for students who want assistance from teacher in person

Content

The McGraw Hill materials are designed for very advanced, college prep students. The students we have been recruiting from adult ed don't fit the profile, so we are not able to keep them involved.

We need to add additional workplace activities online and content that goes beyond the GED prep we now have. Potential employed students, one of our new target groups, are more likely to succeed using materials that meet their interests and needs.

Programs will investigate the WorkKey program for possible implementation.

Administrative Issues

Programs need to evaluate the amount of time it takes to recruit, interview and mentor students in the project and decide if the project is cost-effective. A chart from the report shows some encouraging data: teachers progressively teach more and recruit less as the program continues.

Shift in Time Use for Recruitment & Teaching
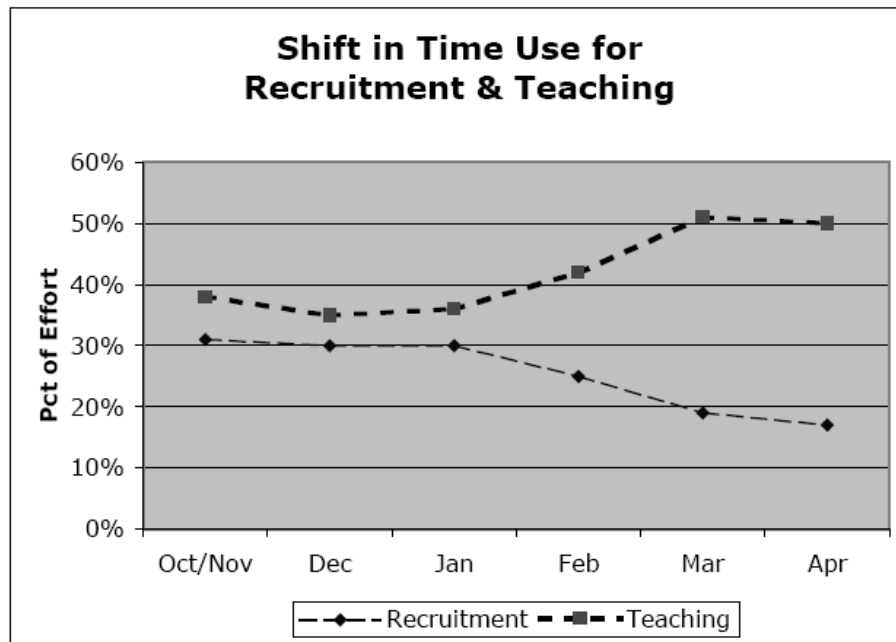
We are hopeful that the chart represents our experience this year as well. We also hope with experience and success, we can take less time screening as well (now, around 4 hours per student)

Other

We are not bound by accountability issues, as were not the pilot programs in the report. Therefore, we can try new things and design new ways to reach folks without worrying about results. Our results will be the experiences we can report from this project.

The pilot projects in the report use work-related online materials (WES) for their students. We would like to add workplace information to the options for our students who want online instructions. Leecy will compile and send programs a list of online resources.

Participants will review the 4CO site and suggest additional materials. Leecy will add content as people send it to her.

4CO goes through 2008, so we have time to test the strategies we apply.

Lunch on the program! Where should we go?

We went right next door and ate burritos in the outside patio on a beautiful fall day!

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