SHOP TALK # 41:  
What Local Programs Have to Say About TISESL

Local adult education programs implementing the Texas Industry Specific English as a Second Language (TISESL) curricula were recently asked to complete a users’ survey. The electronic survey was distributed to adult education practitioners who had completed professional development activities in preparation for implementation of one or more components of the TISESL curricula.

The survey, constructed with input from programs engaged in implementation, TISESL trainers, GREAT Center representatives, and representatives of the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), was designed to help identify what has worked well in TISESL professional development activities and what is still needed in terms of training and technical assistance. This approach helps to ensure that professional development is planned in response to practitioners’ needs, and that experience and feedback guide the design and planning of subsequent activities.

A small focus group of local program directors implementing TISESL provided the following responses to questions about TISESL and the accompanying professional development:

- Adequate teacher preparation is essential; programs need assistance in providing this in-house and on an on-going basis.
- Administrators need to have a comprehensive understanding of what it takes to implement the curricula successfully.
- Adapting the curricula to the proficiency level of learners is a challenge and can be very time consuming.
- The shorter number of hours needed to implement the employability stand alone component makes it attractive and easier to deliver.
- Follow up to initial training, with more hands on activities, would be helpful to instructors.
- Programs are particularly interested in gaining access to the web-based employability activities and the communication scenarios on CD.

The survey itself was distributed through the GREAT Centers who maintain sign-in sheets for all professional development activities. Participants who provided centers with their email addresses were contacted and asked to complete the survey electronically. Responses yielded the following information:

32% of the respondents completed only three hours of TISESL-related professional development; 36% completed six hours of TISESL training; and 28% completed nine or more hours.

40% indicated that they were implementing the employability stand alone curriculum; 29% were using the communication scenarios; 21% were implementing the healthcare
curriculum; 18% had implemented sales and service; and 7% had implemented manufacturing.

55% reported that students liked the real life applications; 46% reported observable changes in student attitudes, self-confidence, and ability to communicate; and 14% reported changes in students’ employability status.

30% reported printing costs as a continued obstacle to implementation; 26% identified instructor preparation time as an obstacle; and 19% indicated that the length of the industry-specific curricula (200 hours) was an obstacle to successful implementation.

44% indicated an interest in additional, on-going professional development and support; 41% requested additional strategies for adapting the curricula; and 33% indicated a need for assistance in offering the curricula in increments versus 200 hours.

33% requested additional assistance with the employability stand alone curriculum and the accompanying website and its applications as well as the communication scenarios.

37% indicated that local TISESL implementation has helped expand services to adult learners; 33% felt that TISESL filled a critical need for workforce-related literacy; 26% saw TISESL as a next step in the continuum from basic skills to post secondary education and training.

The findings of the survey suggest several next steps in TISESL implementation:

1. Because sound professional development is not a “one –shot” activity, offer future training opportunities in a modular format so that local programs can commit to a series of professional development opportunities that total a minimum of 9 hours.
2. TISESL professional development opportunities must continue to be offered and expanded if each adult education program in the state is to have the opportunity to implement a minimum of one curricular component locally.
3. In order to build consistency in the quality of professional development delivered, provide train-the-trainer opportunities and increase the number of TISESL trainers.
4. There should be focused efforts on helping local programs adapt the 200 hour curricula for incremental implementation.
5. Continue to work with GREAT Centers to promote and track TISESL training and implementation.
6. Make access to the web-based employability activities easy for programs wishing to use these to accompany the employability component.

Programs interested in learning more about TISESL implementation are encouraged to contact their regional GREAT Centers, and to complete the Request for Professional Development for TISESL, available on the TISESL web page. (See link under State Initiatives on Texas LEARNS home page: http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/texaslearns/ The GREAT Center will arrange for the training and contact the TISESL trainer. Authorized users (license-holders) can request electronic versions of TISESL materials via a secure transmission process by contacting Harriet Smith at TCALL. (email hsmith@tamu.edu).

For additional information about TISESL, contact Barbara Tondre-El Zorkani at btondre@earthlink.net. Also, look for TISESL presentations at the 2010 Texas Association for Literacy and Adult Education (TALAE) Conference in February.