SHOP TALK # 47:  
LCOT CONTINUES WITH IP-AES SUCCESS STORIES

The Literacy Council of Tyler (LCOT), in partnership with Tyler Junior College, has been chosen for a second year to receive an IP-AES grant (Intensive College Readiness Program for Adult Education Students). Last summer, thirteen GED graduates completed the five-week intensive summer college readiness program, and ten enrolled at Tyler Junior College in the fall of 2009. Nine of them successfully completed the semester — many with A and B averages — and all nine are about to begin their second year of college studies.

A second cohort of students was served this last summer, with 12 of 13 completing. Post-THEA (Texas Higher Education Assessment) results indicated that several students completely tested out of developmental classes, and the others were to enter a higher level of developmental studies this fall. Eleven were expected to enter Tyler Junior College this fall semester. The Literacy Council recruited a third cohort who began studies in September. Staff is excited about the experience: “We see such growth in these students. They literally transform into college students before your eyes.”

The College and Career Readiness Standards guide instruction. Standards in reading, writing, and math form the heart of instruction, but an emphasis is also placed on development of interdisciplinary standards such as intellectual curiosity, reasoning, problem solving, and appropriate use of technology. Among the first group of students served, the most common concern when they actually began college classes was how to use the simplest technology. They found themselves unprepared to download assignments, upload homework, type and print papers, use portable storage devices, and contact instructors via e-mail. This lack of knowledge they felt placed them on the wrong side of the digital divide for both classroom and the world of work.

Students have access to the writing and math labs on the college campus as well as tutoring services, and members of the original pilot group have agreed to serve as peer advisors. Since many non-traditional college students feel marginalized to some extent, the transition advisor provides support to individuals at whatever level each requires to guarantee completion of the financial aid and admissions processes. Both the transitions advisor and instructor are instrumental in monitoring and advising students in an effort to keep them encouraged and focused on success as they juggle multiple responsibilities.

Each IP participant receives a weekly stipend of $30, based on attendance. Students also receive a complete set of the books used for instruction. Since technology is an integral part of instruction, each student receives a portable storage device to assist in saving and transferring information.

LCOT has worked hard to establish strategic points of contact at the community college. College instructors are available to answer questions and make suggestions about instruction. Resa Wingfield serves as project director for LCOT’s IP initiative and is the primary data collector for the project. For additional information, contact Resa at rewind6972@yahoo.com