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Student Achievement in Reading (STAR) www.startoolkit.org

NATIONAL STAR TRAINER CERTIFICATION IS LAUNCHED

The New Year started with a flurry of activity for the National STAR Training Network (NSTN) and its partner states with the launching of National STAR Trainer Certification. The purpose of trainer certification is to support the long-term sustainability of STAR implementation within STAR partner states. The first cohort of states involved in supporting trainer certification candidates includes California, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Maine, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, and South Dakota. Nineteen trainer candidates were nominated by their state leadership and accepted based on a set of prerequisites demonstrated through an application process.

The first cohort of trainer candidates attended a three day Training of Trainers (TOT) event held on January 13-15 in Washington, DC. The TOT was kicked off by Cheryl Keenan, Director of the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) at the U.S. Department of Education. Ms. Keenan welcomed candidates and then provided a look at STAR and its evolution through the years. Ms. Keenan illuminated how STAR connects to other national efforts to improve adult literacy. Reading is a gateway skill that supports adult learners' success in attaining entry into post-secondary education or securing a job. Trainer certification candidates spent three days meeting with fellow candidates from other states, our team of adult literacy experts, and members of the National STAR Training Cadre. Trainer candidates pursuing certification will be supported by expert coaches and their state leadership. Working with their coaches, candidates prepared for the process of acquiring the requisite knowledge and skills to successfully pass certification and further rollout STAR within their state.

We are pleased to announce that recruitment efforts for the second cohort of STAR trainer nominees have commenced. States that have completed a full cycle of STAR training will be eligible to begin the process of nominating trainer candidates in May 2009. These states are Florida, Minnesota, North Carolina, New York, Rhode Island, Texas, and Wisconsin. The second TOT is being held in August 2009 in Charlotte, NC. For more information on STAR Trainer Certification, please contact projectstar@dtihq.com or visit www.startoolkit.org.

Welcome to the first issue of *The STAR Gazer*, an electronic newsletter developed by the National STAR Training Network (NSTN) to provide resources, tips, success stories, and news for those implementing STAR in their state as well as educators providing evidence-based reading instruction to adult learners. *The STAR Gazer* will be issued on a quarterly basis.

Congratulations to the following individuals for being nominated and accepted into STAR Trainer Certification!



Vickie Barksdale, Mississippi

Lisa Blanchette, Maine

Priscilla Burns, Mississippi

Linda Cox, Illinois

Jennifer Davis, Ohio

Aileen Halloran, Connecticut

Cindy Heimbach, Mississippi

Tina Liston, Missouri

Sara Reynolds, Delaware

Debbie Rigney-Hays, Illinois

Stephenie Rittberger, South Dakota

Cindy Ross, Georgia

Amy Savage, Mississippi

Maggie Scholl, Maine

Jana Groner Skopec, Missouri

Kim Tanner, Georgia

Chris Todd, Missouri



SHINING STARS

The *STAR Gazer's* Shining STARS column showcases different states and programs implementing STAR successfully.

Missouri, a partner state since October 2007, recently reported success in STAR implementation across their participating programs. In 2008, Missouri Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) piloted STAR in eight programs for one year. Programs established a managed enrollment system of class sessions ranging from four to eight weeks and had a total enrollment of 318 students. Data collected from the pilot programs indicated that 81% of the students completed a STAR class session; 65% of students demonstrated progress as determined by their post test (TABE) results; and 46% of students progressed to the next level. Encouraged by the success of the pilot programs, Missouri AEL has recruited 26 additional local programs and has supported three candidates to participate in the National STAR Trainer Certification process. The following Missouri programs shared their STAR successes with us.

The North Kansas City School District Adult Education and Literacy embarked upon STAR training in February of 2008. After piloting two STAR classes and seeing success, they expanded the program. Starting July 1, 2008, STAR as well as managed enrollment was implemented at their main site. Students attended six week sessions where they were assigned to a reading and a math class. All intermediate-level readers were assigned to STAR classes. The program's director, Karen Crowover said the following about their transition to implementing STAR on a larger level:

Even though there had been apprehension on the part of the students and the teachers, the completion of the first session met with overwhelming response in favor of the new setup. Teachers were finally getting to "teach" again, and students were making connections with other students and feeling good about what they were learning. Several students are now reading books for the first time in years and taking their children to the library.

The North Kansas School District Adult Education and Literacy program reported that their retention rate increased from 54% to 80% and, for the first time, they were meeting their federal targets. Also, 46% of the STAR readers moved up an NRS level and 59% showed grade level progression. They have successfully enrolled 106 students and completed their fourth session of STAR classes. Karen stated that "STAR was the best thing that could have happened to our program, as it not only provided a successful way to teach reading (an area we felt lacking in), but [it was] also an impetus to make changes that have benefited the entire program."



STAR SPOTLIGHT

The President Used Our Words

A few minutes before 9:00 a.m. in Los Angeles on January 20, 2009, ABE teacher Guillermo Verdin and his students interrupted their vocabulary practice to tune in to the broadcast of the inauguration of Barack Obama in Washington, D.C. This was a historic event, and Verdin and his students, largely Spanish-speaking immigrants, were interested in the new president's message to the nation. They expected to hear President Obama talk about many things, including the economy, jobs and healthcare, but no one in the class expected to hear the president use six of the vocabulary words they had learned. Verdin recalls that a minute or so into the speech Obama used the word *challenge*. By the end of his speech, Obama had also used *endure*, *pursue*, *restore*, *transform*, and *inhabit*.

"My students practically jumped out of their chairs," says Verdin, recalling the moment. "They all looked at me totally surprised and said, 'Did you hear that? The President is using our words.'"



For a full transcript of President Obama's Inaugural Address click here:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/20/us/politics/20text-obama.html>

Western Region Treatment Center in St. Joseph began implementing STAR with a pilot group of 10 students who they worked with on assessment and instruction throughout the duration of their STAR training. After they completed the institutes they expanded into two classes with 19 students. Currently, they have at least one STAR reading group within each of their five regular GED classes. STAR is implemented for 1.5 hours of the three-hour class session.

One of their biggest challenges, being in a correctional facility, has been establishing a process of continuing assessment, as they receive new students arriving at the prison weekly. They overcame this challenge by utilizing Microsoft Access as a way to track test scores, making the process of identifying potential STAR students easier.

Chris Todd, Director, noted, "The biggest change for our students is that they are getting the attention they need in a subject that was formally neglected. Not only this, but they are seeing and hearing a difference in their reading skills. We don't need to credit STAR for this, our students are crediting STAR for the improvement." Chris shared that students have expressed that they did not receive this type of instruction at other prisons and one student was quoted as saying, "You guys are actually teaching us." Looking at three groups with a total of 72 students, between 70 and 81% of students scored higher on the TABE, with 81% scoring an average of 2.2 grade levels. Chris noted that as they improve their instruction, students are making more progress within less class time.



OVAE UPDATE

Cheryl Keenan, Director, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE),

U.S. Department of Education, welcomed STAR trainer certification candidates to the Training of Trainers event on January 13-14 and shared a vision for STAR trainers at both the state and national levels:

Be a voice in your state. The state cannot accomplish the larger objectives of moving people into work without sound, high-quality instruction occurring particularly in the areas of reading, math, and writing and you are the future—in my opinion—of where we are going in reading instruction...We are actually at a place where all the federal agencies are in agreement as to what constitutes the evidence base in reading for adult learners.

UPCOMING LITERACY EVENTS

2009 National Meeting for Adult Education State Directors

<http://conference.novaresearch.com/AESD/index.cfm>

March 17-19, 2009

Washington, D.C.

COABE Annual Conference 2009

<http://www.coabe2009.org/>

April 17-22, 2009

Louisville, KY

IRA Annual Convention North Central

http://www.reading.org/association/meetings/annual_mn.html

Reading, Writing, and Conversations

May 3-7, 2009

Minneapolis, MN

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ASK OUR EXPERTS

In future issues of *The STAR Gazer*, implementers will have the opportunity to submit questions to our experts. If you have a question that you would like clarified, please submit it to projectstar@dtihq.com.