



## Advisory Committee Telephone Conference Minutes March 25, 2009

**Present:** LaToya Cole – Cedar Hill HS; Jackie Fagan, Cedar Hill HS;  
Dale Gideon, Willis HS; Tim Holt, El Paso ISD; Shon Joseph, Palestine HS;  
Karen Kahan, TEA; Deborah Littrell, Texas State Library and Archives Commission;  
Susanne Watson, TEA; Susanna Garza, ESC-20; Richard Loeffler, ESC-20

### 1) Introductions

#### 2) Summary of ESC-20's efforts and implementation so far

Richard and Susanna summarized the progress of the pilot. The online tutoring service became available to participating schools in mid-November. A conversion from generic campus logins to individual student logins took place in early January 2009. Campuses were visited in the fall and spring semesters, followed by frequent phone calls and emails to provide support and ensure usage. Weekly reports on student usage have been submitted to all campuses that are using the resource.

Student usage has shown growth since the launching of the pilot, with 964 students served in January and 1,845 in February of 2009. March usage has been low due to TAKS and two weeks of spring break.

The pilot began with 36 participating campuses. Subsequently, two campuses have dropped (due to administrative changes) and seven campuses have been added. The current total is 41 campuses. The additional campuses are located in Regions 1, 4, 7, 11, 19 and 20.

### 3) Student usage

Efforts to encourage and increase student usage at participating campuses has been ongoing and intense. After analyzing patterns of usage during the first months of the pilot, an adjustment of the number of student logins was needed. As a result, the number of logins was reduced at some campuses thus enabling the inclusion of additional campuses from the waiting list.

#### a) What has worked well at some campuses?

Palestine High School is doing a major push with Science, Social Studies and Math due to the upcoming TAKS. Two mobile labs are available to students Monday through Thursday from 4 to 8 PM. Transportation home afterward is provided.

Willis High School is targeting dual credit students who need additional help with essays. Students have been given laminated key fobs with the login information that are used as library passes when they need help from an online tutor. By using these as library passes, teachers have saved time and effort.

Cedar Hill High School reported that once the students use the online tutor, they like it and realize the benefits. The credit recovery lab teacher to provide individualized instruction uses the online tutor service.



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### b) How can we continue promoting usage?

Ideas to promote Just in Time Online tutor and improve student buy-in were discussed.

- Create a video commercial. This would be short and available on the website, wiki and possibly also YouTube and TeacherTube. The video could be produced by ESC-20, or by the campus or district video technology classes. It could also be a compilation of short video testimonials submitted by students. The goal is to capture the interest of new users and reluctant students.
- Short reminders of the availability of Just in Time Online Tutor can be included in the morning announcements.
- Several schools, including Cedar Hill, have sent lists of participating students to all teachers so there is awareness of who has access to the online tutor service. By meeting with department chairs, promotion has included all content areas.
- Willis High School has done drawings for students to receive bags of popcorn (i.e., the most minutes, the most sessions). Canyon Lake High School has used prizes from book fairs for drawings.
- Susanna shared an idea used in Region 13 with the K-12 Databases. Students store their login information on their cell phones.
- At some schools, a limited number of logins have been assigned to the library for any student to use.

### 4) New Campuses: Tips and strategies for success

All participants in the phone conference agreed that if we had to start this pilot all over again, there are a few things that we would do differently. This is part of the learning process that we are all experiencing.

- It was suggested that a video would help teachers and administrators understand how the program works and ways to use it.
- At several campuses bookmarks are taped to the computer monitors at the library as an advertisement and reminder.
- It was also mentioned that less time should be spent on identifying students and assigning logins. Rather, consider a first come-first strategy to assign the usernames. It was also suggested to allow counselors to refer students.
- The online tutor could be mentioned in ARD meetings as an additional resource for students who need extra help.
- Participating in the online tutor should be presented to students not as something they *must use* but rather something that they *can use* to help them with their grades.

### 5) Online Tutor wiki

The new wiki was briefly mentioned with some suggestions of this being a good place to post videos, mainly testimonials featuring students. A blog will be included so students and educators can post ideas and comments.

### 6) Ambassador program – Can we fit it into Just in Time Online Tutor?

It was reported by several that the best success to get students using the online tutor service, especially reluctant ones, is for energetic students to communicate their



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success. We need to look at ways to adapt the ambassador program for this pilot. Students who use the online tutor and have positive experiences are the best advocates.

### 7) Other items?

- Cedar Hill High School is launching a TAKS Academy and Palestine High School is planning to integrate Just in Time Online Tutor into their summer school program. User names will be reassigned for summer school use.
- Willis High School has found that their ESL students are highly motivated to use the online tutor while the opposite has been the experience at Cedar Hill.
- It seems that some students have seen enough of computers and programs to get the extra help they need.
- Weekly usage reports would help each campus to monitor their progress, regardless of whether there was usage or not (Note: Currently weekly reports are sent to schools only when there is usage).
- Cautioning statement – Be aware of how this opportunity is presented to students so there is no stigma attached. This is critical. Willis High School experienced success by presenting the information directly to whole classes rather than having teachers assign the logins to certain students.
- Roadblocks to usage often are teachers and parents. In some instances too much time is spent on discussing what students should be assigned a login.
- Communication with parents is important. If appropriate, a letter could be included with the report card. The challenge in this case is the potential high volume of requests from parents. In schools where this strategy was successful, the letter was clear about the limited number of student logins and the availability on a first-come, first-served basis.

Regarding a final evaluation of the pilot, a reporting instrument to collect a variety of data will be submitted to participating campuses. This data may include impact on grades, TAKS results, attendance, discipline referrals, attitude toward learning, dropout and graduation rates. Impact on TAKS results and grades may be difficult to document since logins may be used by multiple students at each campus. Reports may also include success stories and other anecdotal information. All available quantitative and qualitative data will be used to measure the success of the pilot.

### 8) Next Conference: May 20, 2009