



Business Access Community Update

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Her Plan for Success. Not Ours

Linda, a Dallas Achiever, recently had this to say to our Online Greeter Cyndi Schoenhals, "My game plan is to get the basic computer skills done this week. My daily routine will be to get on at least three times a week. The morning hours are better for me. I am still learning how to get around the site"

It's important to us that Linda knows she has lots of choices when it comes to her training. That's the foundation of our success. While it runs contrary to our skill and drill beliefs about education, a myriad of psychological studies suggests that learner's internal motivation to achieve external goals increases when they are given opportunities to make choices about the process.

Psychologist Edward L. Deci makes the point in his book *Why We Do What We Do*. He suggests that if we want children or adults to become life-long learners, we have to create learning environments that encourage and help people to explore, question, discover, and grow.

It seems to be working for Linda. Three weeks after making that comment to Cyndi, Linda has completed 12 courses and has been online for 18 hours.

No Way He's Gonna Lose It

Kenneth, a Brazos Valley youth, recently told our online greeter, "I'm supposed to be finishing up a few chores and yard work right now, then get ready for work. But there is *no way* I'm gonna wanna lose this laptop!" (He was, of course, online when he made the comment.)

Now there's nothing in our **Personal Responsibility Agreement** (PRA) that gives Ken permission to disregard his mom's to do list or be late for work, though we understand his sentiment.

We strive to create conditions where our Achievers are excited and internally motivated to learn. In reality, like many of us, their motivation may also be driven by a desire to avoid the potential negative consequences of not following through. Either way, the end result is knowledge, technical skills, and a sense of accomplishment.

Domestic Violence; Knowledge is a Good Place to Start

Many of our clients are at high risk for being victims of domestic violence. We have a series of 8 articles about domestic violence that our Achievers can review to familiarize themselves with the signs and symptoms of domestic violence and learn ways to get help. They can even take a quiz and earn credit for demonstrating their knowledge. A little knowledge can help them take steps towards being safe.

Also visit our web site to read an upcoming story about Sabrina, a West Central Texas Achiever who was able to escape from a violent relationship and restart her life. The National Domestic Hotline is 1-800-799-SAFE.

What's a PRA?

It stands for **Personal Responsibility Agreement**. It's the contract between Business Access and our clients that defines the program requirements clients are expected to follow. Clients *must* accept the terms of their PRA in order to enter the program, part of which is a *behavioral contract* defining specific participation time and graduation requirements. The PRA is used to hold clients accountable for their commitment to complete the program.

Discounted Phone Rates for Low Income Families

Most telephone companies have a discounted or greatly reduced pricing plan for individuals with incomes at or below the poverty line. In some cases, the despite can be waived for local service, and toll blocking is also available. To learn more, contact or search the Internet for your state's **Public Utility Commission**.

A new Study by the Kaiser Family Foundation, [Parents, Children and Media](#), explored parental attitudes about their children's exposure to content from television, movies, music, video games, and the Internet.

The most talked about finding is that the number of parents who are "very" concerned about their children's exposure to inappropriate content has *steadily decreased*, and is significantly less than it was nine years ago. It's also heartening to note that the study found that most parents don't believe the media has more influence than they do as parents.

Findings related to Internet usage by their children included:

- After television, Internet exposure was the media source that parents had the most concern about.
- 73% of parents say they know a lot about what their kids are doing online.
- A majority of parents (59%) see the Internet as a positive rather than negative source of content for their children.

One mother is quoted saying, "I think computers are a fantastic learning tool. It teaches them a lot—they are going to be using it because our world is so into technology now. It's for their future. I think that's a great thing. As far as the negative stuff, what are you going to do?"

Communities of Practice in the Workplace

Communities of Practice is a learning theory emphasizing the social aspect of learning. The term was coined in the early 1990's and is widely used today amongst educators. It's workplace implications were reviewed by two Xerox scientists, John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid, in a 1991 paper, "[Organizational Learning and Communities of Practice: Toward A Unified View of Working](#)".

Several points they discuss include:

- Learning occurs in a social context and is achieved through actual practice (situated learning) as opposed to the conveyance of knowledge from an expert to a novice.
- How companies envisioned their employees learning to do their jobs and how employees actually learn to do their jobs varied significantly.
- How employees actually completed job tasks also often varied considerably from how corporate policies envisioned they would.

The authors suggest that , "Workplace learning is best understood, then, in terms of the communities being formed or joined and personal identities being changed. The central issue in learning is becoming a practitioner, not learning about practice."

For a list of articles about the concept of Communities of Practice, click [here](#).

Business Access Welcomes

Business Access welcomes the following new or renewed communities, **Kern County California**, **Rural Capitol Texas** (Austin area), and **Texas West Central** . We're also excited about a pilot program beginning in **Chicago** this summer funded through a grant from the Chicago Community Trust and leveraged with funds from CDW Inc. This is a program for low income working mothers with a goal to increase job retention and wages.

New Mentor Program

We are changing the name of our Advocacy Department. It is now our Mentoring Department. Our Advocates will now be called Mentors. The title more accurately identifies the role we want them to assume in relationships with our Achievers. Mentors share, model, guide, advise, and provide support, as well as hold those they mentor accountable.

Stand Alone ...Business Access

While we are committed to bringing the vast resources of the Internet and Distance Learning to disadvantaged populations, we have recently begun development on a "standalone" version of our web site that will be implemented in several New Jersey State Prisons. Clients will have access to training and content and other tools, but will not be able to access the World Wide Web.

Course Catalog Expanded

Our online course catalog has recently expanded and now contains over 950 courses! These courses are available to Achievers and Case Managers who have a login to the Business Access web site.

Learn more about how Business Access has helped Workforce:

[TANF Clients](#)

[WIA Adults](#)

[WIA Youth](#)

[Hurricane Evacuees](#)

[Incumbent Workers](#)

[FSE&T Clients](#)

[Dislocated Workers](#)

[Trade Affected Workers](#)

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