

Basic Skills Bulletin

News for and about the largest network of alternative learning centers in the nation



A Basic Skills Model CORC Job Training, Ohio

This article is part of an ongoing series about the learning centers and sponsoring organizations that make up the U.S. Basic Skills Network.

The Central Ohio Rural Consortium uses the U.S. Basic Skills Learning System to deliver basic skills instruction to residents in a five-county area.

“People need basic skills.”

“Workforce Development Through Training and Support” is the mission of CORC Job Training. The Central Ohio Rural Consortium’s job training activities began in 1974, to provide employment and training services to people in the counties of Coshocton, Delaware, Licking, Morgan, and Muskingum. CORC has five offices, one in each county it serves. Four of these have a computer-based learning center and use the U.S. BASICS Learning System. The first of these, in Muskingum County, began operating in 1985.

During its nearly quarter century of operations, CORC Job Training has responded to the changing emphases and various initiatives undertaken to fund

employment and training programs and has used these changes to develop programs that help disadvantaged residents gain the skills they needed to improve their lives.

Says Kris Chaplin, Services Coordinator at CORC, “The more you hear about different approaches, the one thing that continues is that people need basic skills.” With the current focus on quickly moving people into the workplace, CORC sees basic skills as a stepping stone for the young people, working women with families, and older and dislocated workers who come to its centers.

As a first step, the CORC centers use the U.S. BASICS Learning System to assess clients’ skill levels. Then the centers use the system to provide the needed instruction.

For adults, this often means brushing up their math, reading, or writing skills in order to enter a job training program. For both adults and youth, it may mean earning a high school equivalency diploma, the GED, needed to attend technical or vocational skill training programs. For teens, it can be an opportunity to earn credits to

graduate or to improve their academic skills during the summer. At the center in Morgan County, it also means helping young offenders by providing after-school tutoring sessions as well as classroom instruction for juveniles expelled or suspended from school.

CORC’s other services include tuition assistance scholarships, opportunities to gain work experience, and customized training programs. CORC also offers monthly, 20-hour workshops for clients who are job ready, teaching self-sufficiency along with job seeking skills. In March, the Coshocton center will begin using the Workplace BASICS curriculum in these workshops, adding afternoon sessions to the current morning program.

Multi-Source Funding, Multi-Services

All of the centers receive JTPA funds and provide assistance to eligible hard-to-serve adults and young people. Other funding sources differ somewhat for each county, and include support for dislocated workers, city and county alternative education programs,

juvenile justice programs, and welfare-to-work contracts.

The learning center in Coshocton also receives support from an Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) grant, awarded through the U.S. and Ohio Departments of Education. That funding allows the center to provide basic education and GED services to anyone coming through its doors.

Coshocton provides a good example of how the CORC centers are able to provide basic skills to a wide variety of people. In addition to instruction at the center, the Coshocton staff provided satellite services to inmates incarcerated in the county jail, establishing a site at the correctional facility. They also created the "Math and English for Credit" program for potential school drop-outs and then expanded the program to address history and health graduation requirements.

They instituted an evening program for juvenile offenders, worked with local employers to provide GED preparation for skills upgrading for employees and laid off workers, and provided academic services under JTPA and LEAP programs to welfare recipients. In 1992, when JTPA funding cutbacks dictated on-site service, the Coshocton center was given responsibility for the academic component of the Summer Youth Employment and Training Program.

Working for the same organization made communications between the center staffs fairly easy. They shared ideas about instruction, programming, and funding. For example, the other centers quickly replicated the "for credit" program for high school students, working with local school systems to serve students from both the high schools and alternative schools.

Welfare to Work

Jud Denman at Muskingum acknowledges that with the push to get people ready for the workplace, the U.S. BASICS Learning System is serving only about half the number it did in earlier years. "But who knows where we might be if we hadn't had the documentation to prove that we are running a quality program. When money is available, you can offer additional services, but when money is tight, you need to stay with the philosophy that basic skills are the priority, that what's happening here benefits society."