TedWeb

Inner City Internet-based Life Long Learning

A Concept Paper for

TedWeb: Toledo Education Web

The Genesis of TedWeb

The University of Toledo Africana Studies Program and the Information Technologies group at UT's Community and Technical College decided to apply for federal dollars to advance a campus-community education project already underway, known as the Community Math Academy. The money is available annually for creative projects that bring telecommunications or information infrastructure to low-income communities. Information technology could help solve the problem of poverty, and at the same time the University would better serve its local community. A new UT College of Health and Human Services was also in formation to expand education for health careers. Toledo Public Schools was interested, as was the W. J. Murchison Community Center. A proposal was drafted and submitted in March 1999. It served as the outline for this concept paper.

The Concept:
Inner City Internet-based Life-Long Learning

The overall concept is to better connect families and schools, using the latest tools--to reinvent education so that inner city African Americans are not left behind. This requires new working relationships between low-income families and schools and universities. The Internet allows us to build and strengthen thousands of these relationships at very low cost. The concept is a model to build here in Toledo and to share with other communities.

There are three parts to this concept: *One*, to get K-12 teachers together to find and develop exciting math content for the web and put TPS's new Internet connections to good use, with support from UT math faculty and student help. (Other subject areas will follow.) *Two*, to provide several hundred WebTV units for home use by students and their families. This will bring families (who have TVs but not PCs) into both the learning and the planning. This will bring the classroom to the living room. *Three*, to provide parents with scholarships for certification programs in the health professions so that their children's learning can be founded on greater economic security. For a detailed timeline, see page 5.

History

In fall 1997 the UT Africana Studies program initiated a seminar on poverty, which addressed the question, "How can we end poverty for once and for all?" with readings and discussions with community leaders. This led to a Day of Dialogue on Ending Welfare vs. Ending Poverty on March 5, 1998, which drew 500 people to three sites across Toledo: UT's Doermann Theatre, Kitchen for the Poor on Indiana Avenue, and the Sophia Quintero Cultural Center on Broadway.

One of the themes of the seminar was using technology to end poverty. Seminar participants proposed voice mail for the phoneless to FOCUS Homeless Services, which is now implementing the service in Toledo. Web sites were published for Kitchen for the Poor and homeless veterans in Toledo. We were joined in the seminar by staff from the W. J. Murchison Community Center, a community computing facility just steps from ongoing street drug activity and an elementary school. In addition, student participants were able to use the seminar to help them move out of poverty.

The next step was clearly to tie into a community that was fighting poverty day after day. Students, faculty, and others began to volunteer at the Murchison Center and to research the specifics of poverty in the area, census tracts 25 and 26 (northeast of Dorr and Collingwood). Data highlighted (among other things) the high failure rates on math proficiency tests and the many active networks and groups, such as churches, throughout the community. As the data gathering ended and the write-up for the community began, the seminar determined to dig in with the community towards ending poverty once and for all. In fall 1998, math tutoring became the focus. A UT course, Community Math Academy (AFST 4980), allowed students to tutor for credit. Tutor training and parent

outreach began in earnest. A web site (www.murchisoncenter.org), was launched, along with one for the Community Math Academy.

By January 1999 discussions with teachers, administrators, and parents at nearby King School enabled the tutoring to move into larger space at King School after hours and on weekends. UT began to provide a student teacher and a student tech to the Murchison computer lab, which beefed up its math software and games. School administrators and a UT representative joined the community-based board of directors of Murchison.

By March 1999, more than half of the 550 students at King had participated in tutoring. Thirty-five parents had joined in planning sessions and a governing board was formed. Saturday morning practice proficiency tests drew more than 80 students and close to 20 parents. Grandmothers, fathers, mothers, older brothers and sisters became tutors. A parent joined the computer teaching project at Murchison. A campaign had begun, and more tools were needed to reach more people, especially in the community.

What is WebTV?

WebTV is a wireless keyboard, a remote control, some wires, and a controller box like a cable box. It travels in a padded briefcase. Hooked up to your TV and phone line, it puts you on the World Wide Web. You can visit sites you choose. You can send and get email. It's the size of a laptop computer at one-tenth the price. And it doesn't interfere with cable or antenna reception. In one Florida experiment, migrant children take them along as they change schools when their parents migrate to jobs. At a grade school in Atlanta, students check them out from the school library. Put together with computers in schools and community sites, WebTV units in family living rooms allow for a complete virtual community.

Next steps

Once this plan was drafted as a proposal for funding, we saw the chance to start making it happen by taking it to people and institutions across Toledo. UT continues to support low-income community computing. The Community Math Academy is ongoing. What is your experience in this area? What can you do? Contact:

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UT Department of Mathematics, Professor Lamar Bentley, Chairs
Richard Brunt, Executive Director of Instructional Technology, Toledo Public Schools

Resources

Black Data Processing Associates and the Frederick Douglass Community Center computer lab
Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School
Robinson Junior High School
Scott High School
Toledo Lucas County Public Library, Mott and Kent Branches
University of Toledo:
- Africana Studies program, College of Arts and Sciences
- College Information Technologies at the Community and Technical College
- Department of Mathematics

W. J. Murchison Community Center

The Community Math Academy

Organizations:
UT Africana Studies Program
W. J. Murchison Community Center
Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School (TPS)

Individuals:
Khadija Ahmed, Mathematics Instructor, Monroe County Community College
Abdul Alkalimat, Professor of Sociology and Director, UT Africana Studies
Michaela Brennan, community and health activist
Debbie Hamilton, Executive Director, W. J. Murchison Community Center
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Denise Sturdivant, President, King School Parent-Teacher Organization
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Kate Williams, Interim Director, UT College Information Technologies, Community and Technical College
Brian Zelip, UT undergraduate
Anna Boxdoerffer, UT undergraduate
Risako Kuraso, UT graduate student
And members of the staff at King School

Inner City Internet-based Life Long Learning

	Year One	First Summer	Year Two	Second Summer	Year Three	Third Summer	Ongoing
Learning and Planning	UT support staff gathers input, assembles regular progress reports for the Internet and for a variety of school/community meetings.	Teachers, parents, community partners and UT support staff sum up and adjust plans at a summer workshop.	UT support staff gathers input, assembles regular progress reports for the Internet and for a variety of school/community meetings.	Teachers, parents, community partners and UT support staff sum up and adjust plans at a summer workshop.	UT support staff gathers input, assembles regular progress reports for the Internet and for a variety of school/community meetings.	Teachers, parents, community partners and UT support staff sum up and adjust plans at a summer workshop.	Other subject areas follow math onto the Web and WebTV. UT technical and in-school support is institutionalized with UT funding. New structure for living room-classroom connection is established, including widespread use of WebTV.
K-12 Learning	Math tutoring continues at King School (K-6)	Summer tutoring program K-6	Math tutoring continues at King and begins at Robinson and Scott (7-12)	Summer tutoring program K-12	Math tutoring continues at King, Robinson, Scott (K-12)	Summer tutoring program K-12	
Adult Learning	K-12 teachers start weekly sessions to find and develop math content for the web.		K-12 teachers continue weekly sessions to develop and adjust math content for the web.		Interested parents enroll in health certificate program at UT towards better employment.		
Family Learning	75 students at King, Robinson and Scott take WebTV units home for daily use.		75 more students at King, Robinson and Scott take WebTV units home for daily use.		75 more students at King, Robinson and Scott take WebTV units home for daily use.		
College Student Learning	UT students support math and other web development and assist teachers in learning and using software and Internet resources.						
	UT students serve as technicians for community computer facilities.						
	Community workers and UT students install and support WebTV and families..						
Community Learning	Murchison and Frederick Douglass computer labs focus on computer training, math skill development, and community web site building.						
Pre-School Learning	Black Data Processing Associates/Frederick Douglass continues computer sessions for Head Start children		BPDA/Frederick Douglass launches Murchison as second Head Start computing site.		BDPA/Frederick Douglass and Murchison continue as Head Start computing sites		
Library Learning	Mott and Kent branch libraries continue reading tutoring and free Internet access.						