

# Nebraska eLearning Pilot Project

## ESEA Title II Part D

### **Educational Needs and Area of Focus:**

During the last five years, higher education throughout the United States and Nebraska have adopted eLearning technology to adjust to overburdened faculty demands and limited faculty resources, to the change of instructional delivery through internet and distance education mediums, to changing student expectations, and to increased government regulations,

The trend to implement eLearning software is now trickling down to K-12 education. As curriculums continue to migrate to a technology based level at the K-12 level, the educational needs that eLearning management software can meet include:

- creation of a digital curriculum base.
- time efficiencies in support of teacher resources.
- improvement of teacher-student communication.
- improvement of parent-teacher communication.
- improvement in tracking student performance.

The Nebraska eLearning Pilot Project looks to implement an eLearning solution through the combined efforts of the P-16 educational community. The focus for the P-16 initiative is to create innovative eLearning environments in partnership with institutions of higher education and a limited number of K-12 educational entities to

- evaluate the feasibility of the use of course management technology at the K-12 grade levels
- foster the development of collaborative partnerships between higher education/community college faculty, ESU staff, and K-12 instructors.

### **Technology Needs:**

The course management software programs that will be supported in this project are Blackboard and WebCt. Through an agreement with participating higher education institutions, teachers who are involved in the pilot projects will have access to develop a course(s) in order to reach their educational needs.

All participating schools have an adequate operating network with sufficient bandwidth to support the course management software. Participating schools will provide accessibility for students to computers through static or portable labs.

### **Qualifications as High Poverty/High Technology Need:**

Several of the participating schools within the project satisfy the high needs definition. Participating schools who qualify within the 15% formula or have a student population of at least 1,000 low-income students include Franklin Public Schools (19.94%), Elwood Public Schools (15%), Hildreth Public Schools (19.57%), Palmer Public Schools (22.3%), Creighton Public Schools (28.15%), Wakefield Public Schools (19.66%), Wausa (21.57%), Pawnee City (27.22%), and Lincoln Public Schools (3,965) and Omaha Public Schools (9,743) with student low-income population exceeding 1,000.

Palmer Public Schools will be sending foreign language classes to students at five area schools via distance learning network. All five schools meet the 15% rule. They include Greeley Public Schools (22.84%), Wolbach Public Schools (19.38%), Spalding Public Schools (25.79%), North Loup Scotia Public Schools (24.01%), and Elba Public Schools (27.31%).

### **Expected Student Learning Outcomes and/or Staff Development Outcomes:**

The primary purpose of this research initiative is to measure in a formal manner the effectiveness of the use of various course management features and functionality for a variety of student populations and to use a number of presentation modes and formats.

As the pilot project is limited to the 2003-04 school year, the ongoing benefits for student learning will only continue if the research supports the importance for student learning.

For students who are involved in the pilot project, some anticipated outcomes include:

- improved communication from the instructor. This will be in the form of an online gradebook, syllabus, assignments, discussion boards, etc.
- increased technology use because of the program.
- introduction to eLearning which most post-secondary institutions are using.

Anticipated outcomes for instructors involved in the project include:

- improvement in technology skills.
- new instructional strategies as a result of using the software and working with partnering institutions.
- improved communication with students.
- improved course continuity as daily routines may not be slowed due to teacher or student absences.
- creation of a digital based curriculum.

## **Implementation and Management:**

This application is being put forth to provide the necessary financial support for carrying out the eLearning Pilot Project.

Phase I (pre-project preparation activities): The initiation of this project began in August of 2002. At that time, the University of Nebraska - Lincoln hosted an eLearning forum for over forty P-16 educators to demonstrate what they were doing with their course management program, Blackboard.

During 2002-03, Jean Jones, PT3 Catalyst director and James Zemke, University of Nebraska - Lincoln, initiated additional meetings with community colleges, Blackboard Corporation, the University systems, and regional technology directors to determine interest in eLearning.

In January, 2003, three pilot teams were identified and through the cooperation of the University system, software training took place. During the second semester of 2003, the teachers (30) who received the training have the opportunity to become acquainted with the software, begin the process of building their course online, and use the software on a limited basis with their classes. During the remainder of the second semester, additional teachers will be added from the Wayne State and Peru State areas.

In March, 2003, a coordinating team met to discuss the training and support for the pilot project. The planning team consisted of Jean Jones, NDE; James Zemke, UNL; John Fiene, UNO; Melodee Landis, UNO; Bob Goeman, UNO; Dr. Jim King, UNL; Collette deFrey, Westside Public Schools; Shelley Schafer, UNO; and John Stritt of Tri-Valley Distance Education Consortium.

Omaha Westside shared how eLearning software has been implemented throughout the Westside curriculum. Collette deFrey has agreed to provide insight and support to the project.

At the conclusion of the second semester in May of 2003, phase I of the project will be completed. As a result of this pre-planning, this initiative has a great base of support to carry out the project.

Phase II: In the summer of 2003, the Pilot team will have both formal training time and personal time to prepare their eLearning course site for the 2003-04 school term. Two

formal training opportunities will be made available to pilot team members. The purpose for these trainings will be to provide strategies for designing their course pages. Pilot team members will use the summer months to prepare their eLearning site for full implementation during the upcoming school term.

A project manager will be identified to provide technical support for the project. The project manager will design an eLearning Pilot Project web site to provide both technical and course design strategies for training team and pilot teachers. In addition, the project manager will create, coordinate, and moderate a discussion board to correspond with the eLearning implementation.

Four additional mini-trainings will be designed and presented by ESU regional trainers. These trainings will be conducted over the eLearning system, a staff inservice, or over distance education.

During the 2003-04 year, information to support research will be requested from pilot team teachers. A final report with results and recommendations will be prepared and released to the P-16 community.

### **Evaluation Plan:**

The evaluation for the project will be led by an Project Evaluator that will be hired by the project to provide an objectivity to evaluation activities. The Project Evaluator will be responsible for the following duties:

- Planning and scheduling all evaluation activities for the project.
- Creation of project questionnaires/surveys.
- Advising project staff on best practices for administering assessment activities and data gathering.
- Analysis of project data.
- Reporting evaluation data to project management and granting agency.

The Project Evaluator will be a qualified educational evaluator, probably a faculty member of one of the participating post-secondary institutions. As the above activities indicate, the Project Evaluator, Project Staff and project instructors will work together to plan and report evaluation activities to the Project Management Team and grant providers. All project activities and data-gathering will comply with the highest ethical standards ( those of

the Institution Review Board) and identities of participating instructors and students will be protected.

The Project Evaluator will meet at least three times with Project staff to plan, monitor and report evaluation activities.

The evaluation activities will be conducted to assess the specified outcomes for both project students and project instructors, as reflected in the following tables:

<b>Student Outcomes</b>	<b>Pre-assessment</b>	<b>Formative Assessment</b>	<b>Summative Assessment</b>
	Project Evaluator will design assessment instruments.	Project staff and instructors will gather data.	Project evaluator will analyze and report questionnaire or survey data. Project staff will document and report other project evaluation data
Improved communication from instructor	Identification of pre-project communication methods through questionnaire or interview.	Checklist will document project teacher's traditional communication activities and those that use course management software.	Pre-assessment, formative and summative data on communication activities will be analyzed and reported.
Increased technology used.	A pre-project questionnaire will be administered that assesses level of technology use before project activities.	Project staff will implement activities and support.	A post-project questionnaire will be administered and analyzed against pre-project data to discern whether technology use has increased.
Introduction to eLearning which most post-secondary institutions are using.	Project staff will plan informational meetings or training sessions and/or Web sites for sharing post-secondary activities to K-12 participants.	Project staff will document the meetings/training sessions/Web sites.	Project meetings/training sessions/Web sites documentation will be reported with evaluation data.

<b>Instructor Outcomes</b>	<b>Pre-Assessment</b>	<b>Formative Assessment</b>	<b>Summative Assessment</b>
	Project Evaluator will design assessment instruments.	Project staff and instructors will gather data.	Project Evaluator will analyze and report questionnaire or survey data. Project Staff will document and report other project evaluation data
Improvement in technology skills.	A pre-project survey will be administered that assesses level of technology skills before project activities.	Project staff will implement project activities and support.	A post-project survey will be administered and analyzed against pre-project data to discern whether technology use has increased.
New instructional strategies.	A pre-project inventory will be taken to document instructional strategies used before project activities.	Project staff will implement project activities and support.	A post-project inventory of instructional strategies will be taken and analyzed against pre-project data to discern whether technology use has increased.
Improved communication with students	Identification of pre-project communication methods through questionnaire or interview.	Project staff will implement activities and support.	Pre-assessment, formative and summative data on communication activities will be analyzed and reported.
Improved course continuity.	Documentation practices will be defined that assist project instructors in recording when/how absent students use online materials to make up missed work.	Project instructors will record relevant data.	Instructor data will be compiled and reported. Student reports on course continuity will be gathered on questionnaires.
A digital-based curriculum.	Plans for curriculum documentation will be made	Project instructors will record relevant data. Curricular changes will be recorded by project instructors and/or staff.	Data on curricular changes will be compiled and reported.

### **Dissemination Plan:**

As the intent of the Nebraska eLearning Pilot project is to research the effectiveness of the use of various course management features and functionality for a variety of student populations through the use of a number of presentation modes and formats, the sharing of the results will be accomplished in several ways.

The Nebraska eLearning Pilot program is scheduled to be announced at the 2003 Midwest Internet Conference. This announcement will coincide with an eLearning training that will be open to teachers in the project. The purpose for this announcement is to inform those in attendance of the upcoming project and its purpose and potential impact to K-12 education.

During the 2003-04 school year, ESU technology coordinators who provide support of their area pilot teams will provide updates about the project to other ESU technology coordinators at their regular TAG meetings.

Two teams of four teachers will be asked to share their project at the annual NETA Conference and MII Conference in 2004. A final report will be posted and shared within the P-16 educational community.

### **Partnership Plan:**

As higher education has experience in design and implementation of eLearning technology and the Educational Service Units provide the personnel needed to support the training and design phases of technology use, their partnerships strengthen the project.

Benefits that will come from the partnership will include:

- teachers that are part of the pilot project will have access to course management software through a partnership with a university or college.
- teachers that are part of the pilot project will be provided training by a partner university or college on how the course management program works.
- mentors from partnering colleges or universities or K-12 institutions will provide support for pilot teachers.
- pre-service teachers at partnering colleges and universities can observe how pilot teachers are integrating course management software into their K-12 courses.
- ESU technology support personnel will witness the implementation process and share in the results from the project.

**Budget Explanation (see attached budget):**

Request Explanation	Amount Requested
Teacher Pilot Team (50 teachers) will receive \$100 per teacher to attend and participate in one of the following eLearning trainings: NDLA Conference 2003, Midwest Internet Institute 2003, or ESU sponsored trainings 2003-04. These funds will pay for conference and workshop registration.	\$5,000
Honorariums will be paid for an inservice presenter at MII (\$1,000) and ESU sponsored trainings (\$300 * 5 ESUs = \$1,250). The honorarium will include any expenses incurred by the presenter for attending MII.	\$2,500
Regional coordinators (5 participating ESUs) for the pilot teams will receive \$500 each to develop and present 4 one hour trainings to pilot team.	\$2,500
Teacher pilot team (50 teachers) will be provided a \$300 stipend to design, implement, and provide evaluation information for an eLearning course to be presented during the 2003-04 school year.	\$15,000
A teacher panel (5) will be provided \$100 to present at the annual NETA conference 2004. This amount is take care of registration expenses.	\$500
A teacher panel (5) will be provided \$100 to present at the annual MII conference 2004. This amount is take care of registration expenses.	\$500
Project manager will be responsible to create and update web pilot project support page and sponsor discussion group activities. This will be a contracted fee.	\$1,000
Project evaluator will receive 10% of budget request. See evaluation for evaluator responsibilities.	\$3,000
The fiscal agent for the project will receive a 5% administrative fee.	\$1,500
<b>Total Grant Request</b>	<b>\$31,500</b>