



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Diné College's Shiprock Adult Basic Education Program Named 2009 Program of the Year

SHIPROCK — Every year the Adult Basic Education (ABE) Division of the New Mexico Higher Education Department recognizes overall program excellence and innovation with the “Outstanding ABE Program of the Year” award. This year the honor went to the Adult Basic Education Program at Diné College here in Shiprock.

“To be honored as the Outstanding ABE Program of the Year was a shock to me. It took a lot of hard work and determination but in the end it was all worth it,” said Sandra Begay, ABE Data Technician.

“The program director, Thomas Bennett, has participated in the two-year Leadership Excellence Academy and continues to put practitioner action research to good use.

He and his staff restructured their program after studying their own performance and

researching best practices nationwide. With the needs of their community in mind, Bennett and his team designed and implemented an evidence-based orientation process and intensified their instruction. Their goal was to increase both student persistence and performance by helping students clarify their goals, their commitment, and their sense of being part of a learning community,” said Frances Bannowsky, JD Adult Basic Education Policy and Program Improvement Coordinator with the New Mexico Higher Education Department.

Alice Wagner, ABE Teacher said, “I agree with Mr. Bennett when he says that we are successful because we work as a team. Working as a team requires a lot of positive communication and support for one another. Our main goal is to help our students become successful beginning with receiving their GED diplomas. As a staff, we enjoy what we do; it’s the most rewarding experience to see the students achieve beyond their dreams.”

Bannowsky said Diné College’s innovative orientation practice and ongoing attention to continuous program improvement have reaped tangible rewards for the students who participate in the Diné College ABE program. They are increasing their education level gains and their GED graduation rate, while spending fewer instructional hours to achieve these goals. The program’s enrollment and retention rates have also increased significantly.

Diné College's Adult Basic Education Director Thomas Bennett attributes this success primarily to the mandatory, structured orientation, along with the staff's continuous encouragement and assertive follow-up for their students. In the spirit of collaboration, Diné College readily shares their research and practice with other programs.

"Without the ABE staff working as a team with a common goal, we would not have been successful," Bennett said. Because of the creative work and dedication of the Diné College ABE staff, their program is evolving a powerful model for the best practices in New Mexico.

Norman Phillips, ABE Teacher stated the Diné College staff's general feelings about their work, "Being a part of the ABE team at Dine College is an everyday challenge but to see students succeed and obtain their GED diplomas is the greatest reward."

There are currently 28 ABE programs in New Mexico. For more information about Diné College's Adult Basic Education Program contact Thomas Bennett at: (505) 368-3565.