



PBS TeacherLine®

Florida Educators Master Instructional Technology With Help From PBS TeacherLine®, Florida Digital Educator Program and Florida Department of Education

ARLINGTON, Va. (Jan. 23, 2008) – Several of Florida’s elite educators earned the opportunity this school year to participate in PBS TeacherLine’s online courses in instructional technology to meet their professional development goals. Through their online learning experience, these Master Digital Educators gained new skills and knowledge that they are using to enhance the learning experience for students and to train teachers in technology integration.

PBS TeacherLine, the Florida Digital Educator Program, and the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Instruction and Innovation, partnered in early 2007 to provide online professional development to a cohort of Master Digital Educators. This joint effort is part of an ongoing statewide initiative to help teachers use instructional technology in ways that support project-based learning and require students to use higher-order thinking skills.

Master Digital Educators Janann Nicholson and Ana McMoran noted that the PBS TeacherLine courses use the same approach to learning and technology integration that is recommended to teachers by the Florida Digital Educator Program. “I’ve taken more than 30 hours of online professional development courses, and PBS TeacherLine was the only one to incorporate project-based learning,” said Nicholson, the technology instructor at Pahokee Middle-Senior High School in Pahokee, Fla. “We were apprehensive when we were assigned a group project, but through the facilitators’ guidance and course design we used wikis and online forums to collaborate and complete our assignment. We were using higher-order thinking skills—a great example in action of the instructional strategies we need to use in our classrooms. It was one of the most rewarding professional development experiences for me.”

With funding from the Florida Department of Education, the partnership has been able to provide online courses to 23 educators free-of-charge during the first phase of implementation. Several more educators will be given the same opportunity through the allotted course seats for the PBS TeacherLine spring term.

For Nicholson and McMoran, PBS TeacherLine enabled them to stay abreast of new technologies and build their comfort level in using these technologies with other educators and their students, particularly as they strive to reach their professional goal of teaching online. “I developed a deeper understanding of how to develop meaningful online discussion and build a collaborative learning environment.” Nicholson said.

“Because of my work with the Florida Center for Instructional Technology helping educators understand the need for technology integration and use various technology tools, I need to stay current with the latest technologies and continually enhance my skill set,” McMoran explained. “The PBS TeacherLine course showed me how to host a collaborative online learning community, which has helped me in my work with educators face-to-face and in the Center’s blended professional development offerings. I will also be able to use these skills in the future as I realize my goal of online teaching.”

Adam Wolford, an eighth-grade science teacher at John D. Floyd Elementary School in Spring Hill, Fla., also found that the PBS TeacherLine course enhanced his teaching, particularly in his position as a trainer working with other teachers in his district. Using the skills he gained from the course, he created a video tutorial to demonstrate to his peers how to use one of the online curriculum offerings that is available to the district.”

Additionally, the educators learned instructional strategies that they now use in the classroom with students. “I’m using the same rubric with my senior high students that my facilitator used in the PBS TeacherLine course,” Nicholson said. “It has made a significant difference in their learning and academic progress.”

“I was able to immediately apply the strategies that I learned in the course to my classroom, and it has been a valuable experience for my students,” Wolford said. “My students are using Skype to talk to graduate students around the world to learn about their research, and how it could impact people’s lives.” Skype is a software program that allows users to make phone calls over the Internet to other Skype users for free.

The teachers emphasized that one of the most critical factors of their successful online learning experiences with PBS TeacherLine was the quality of the course facilitator. “My facilitator took away the lonely feeling that I had associated with online learning and created a warm and friendly learning environment,” McMoran said. “She always let us know that she was there for us and allowed me to build on my knowledge and to be creative by developing and posting my own multimedia content.”

“The other teachers in the course and I were sharing and discussing ideas in a way we never had before, even commenting on what was happening in our classrooms with students that day,” Nicholson explained. “In the beginning of the class, our facilitator used a fun, creative way for us to introduce ourselves and break the ice. Rather than posting dry resumes or vitae, we posted information about ourselves as if our pets were introducing us.”

“Our facilitator was instrumental in encouraging course participation and deepening the online discussion,” Wolford added. “Being able to discuss educational challenges and ideas with brilliant teachers from different areas of the country was priceless.”

The PBS TeacherLine courses that are available to the Florida Master Digital Educators are *Online Facilitator Training I – Mastering the Skills of Online Teaching* and the *International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Capstone Certificate Program*. The *Online Facilitator Training* course is designed to help teachers become effective instructional leaders in a web-based learning environment. The *ISTE Capstone Certificate Program* is a series of research-based courses that enable teachers to demonstrate their mastery of ISTE’s National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers (NETS•T).

PBS TeacherLine provides high-quality, facilitated, online professional development courses to Florida educators in cooperation with its local distribution partners WLRN in Miami, WEDU in Tampa and WSRE in Pensacola. For more information about PBS TeacherLine, visit www.pbs.org/teacherline.

About Florida Digital Educator Program

The Florida Digital Educator (FDE) Program supports integration of technology across the K-12 curricula through collaborative experiences with new technologies and digital tools. The program helps build a common vocabulary across the state of Florida among educators regarding technology integration and digital tools. Included in the program model is an action research and mentoring aspect to increase data-driven research from the classroom and educator perspective. The FDE program is a Florida Department of Education initiative administered by the Florida Center for Instructional Technology (FCIT). Based on professional development and instructional technology integration research, the FDE program was piloted in 2005 and field-tested in 2006. Ongoing research is used to examine and improve the Florida Digital Educator model. Visit <http://etc.usf.edu/fde> for more information.

About PBS TeacherLine

PBS TeacherLine is committed to helping teachers acquire the skills they need to prepare students for a successful future. PBS TeacherLine provides high-quality, affordable professional development through facilitated, online courses, collaborative learning communities, and exemplary Internet-based resources. Currently, more than 90 courses across multiple subject areas are offered. Teachers can earn continuing education units, professional development points and graduate credits for course completion. The courses have been developed in conjunction with leading education organizations, including Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL), Education Development Center (EDC), Concord Consortium, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and International Society for Technology Education. Created in 2000, PBS TeacherLine is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education for \$6,046,811. This represents approximately 85 percent of the total program funding. The remaining 15 percent is funded through in-kind support from PBS and through program income. For more information, visit www.pbs.org/teacherline.

About PBS

PBS is a media enterprise that serves 354 public noncommercial television stations and reaches almost 90 million people each week through on-air and online content. Bringing diverse viewpoints to television and the Internet, PBS provides high-quality documentary and dramatic entertainment, and consistently dominates the most prestigious award competitions. PBS is a leading provider of educational materials for K-12 teachers, and offers a broad array of other educational services. PBS' premier kids' TV programming and Web site, PBS KIDS Online (www.pbskids.org), continue to be parents' and teachers' most trusted learning environments for children. More information about PBS is available at www.pbs.org, one of the leading dot-org Web sites on the Internet.

###

Media contacts:

--Kevin Dando, PBS, 703-739-5073, kdando@pbs.org

--Tim Lum, PBS TeacherLine, 703-739-5252, tdlum@pbs.org

--Charlene Blohm, C. Blohm & Associates, Inc., 608-839-9800, charlene@cblohm.com