

Kan-ed Funds Lead to Better Quality of Service for Disadvantaged Children

Kansas Kids @ GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) is a program funded by the U.S. Department of Education that provides services to children in foster care, children in families with low-income, and children in adoptive care. The goal is to increase the number of these students who graduate from high school prepared to enroll in further education.

Kansas Kids @ GEAR UP (KKGU) uses videoconferencing equipment purchased with Kan-ed's Enhancing Technology Grant Program funds to provide training to their staff in remote locations to better help them work with students. Corrine Nilsen, State Director of KKGU, described the benefits of having the equipment, "It has saved us quite a bit of money. We have fourteen offices across the state of Kansas with the main office at Wichita State University. So, rather than having to travel to each of those offices to get training to update the staff on our services, we've been able to do that using the videoconferencing equipment." With these training opportunities being readily available, the result, according to Nilsen, is a "more well-trained staff that's able to help, both with the program and the interaction we have with the community."

Nilsen appreciates the options that are available over videoconference, which continue to save valuable time. Particularly helpful is the option to display the contents of her computer screen to others through the monitor at the push of a button. She described, "That has been the most helpful because when you're trying to explain to one of the staff members a new form or a new procedure, for them to visually see it, pop it up on the screen and say 'oh, I see how you want me to fill out this form,' is so handy. You can also use the mouse to point out specific areas of a document. Sometimes when you're talking to someone on the telephone, even if they have that form in front of them, you're saying 'okay under this box'; they may be looking at a totally different box. Through the use of videoconference, you're able to visually see you're both on the same page, and that is so important when you're trying to explain something. You reduce the lack of understanding."



Nilsen shared her appreciation of the funding by remarking, "I think if the grant funds were not available, we would not have had the opportunity to use videoconferencing. This has really opened our eyes to new technology and some new and innovative ways of doing things." Further, every little thing that can save money and time has a trickle-down benefit to the children served. "Just in the cost saving from the reduction in travel, that money can be used in other services for children in foster care who we serve. Also, the time saved. Being able to train our staff within one day, with no travel time and no expense has been wonderful!"

Kansas Kids @ GEAR UP
 Serves: 2,500+ students, 50+ staff
 KKGU is a program housed under
 Wichita State University, which has been
 a member since September 18, 2002.

Kan-ed -- Where Kansans Access the Information Age



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