Email and Technology

Program Puzzler

Your Aspire program wants to improve communication between all levels of staff. Staff members are spread out in different sites and work at different times. Additionally, more and more professional development, program supports, and even student resources are offered via the Internet. These often ask for an e-mail address to log in. How can you encourage staff to create and actively use an e-mail account?

Peer Perspective

- Set a deadline for all staff to have an e-mail account to send and receive work-related correspondence. If possible, this account can be maintained through a program server. If not, investigate Internet-based accounts that can be accessed from any Internet-capable device including computers, laptops, PDAs (personal digital assistants) and cell phones.
- Establish a routine for e-mail. This will help staff get used to regularly checking for new messages.
- Offer professional development to staff including:
  o Managing e-mails (sorting, saving)
  o E-mail etiquette (replies, capital letters)
  o Using distribution lists (staff, students)
- Provide support as staff use these skills.
- Establish program guidelines for using e-mail. This is especially important on work-sponsored accounts. For example:
  o Do not open attachments unless they are from a known sender.
  o Do not use work e-mail for personal correspondence or shopping.

Timely Tips

Google (http://www.google.com) and Yahoo (http://www.yahoo.com) are two commonly used sites that offer free, Internet-based e-mail accounts.

If e-mails are managed on a work server, have a back-up plan for lost or forgotten passwords. Maintain this list in a secure location.

Learn to use the subject line as a quick means to sort e-mails.

Many work-sponsored e-mail providers have limits on storage capacity. Deleting or archiving e-mails (both sent and received) will help keep your inbox from getting full and preventing new incoming e-mails.

Added Insights

Internet use is increasingly becoming an intrinsic part of individuals' work and home life. (See, for example, *Generations Online in 2009,* published by Pew Internet and American Life Project and available at https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2009/01/28/generations-online-in-2009/) It is essential that all Aspire staff be proficient in basic online activities such as e-mailing, downloading files, and web searching. Such skills are needed not only for communicating with colleagues and obtaining professional development information but also for instructional purposes. Increasing emphasis will be placed on Aspire programs helping students acquire at least a basic familiarity with computers and their use, including online applications. Unless Aspire staff are comfortable themselves with online applications, they will be unable to assist students in this important aspect of their academic development.

Luckily, numerous resources are available to assist individuals in acquiring basic Internet and computer skills. Libraries and book stores usually offer an array of easy to understand books on topics such as e-mail use, web searching, and other Internet applications. The Dummies, Idiot, and Teach Yourself Visually book series are some of the more popular and readily available books, but there are many others.

<u>Online Tutorials</u>

For hands-on instruction, several free online tutorials are available:

- Goodwill Community Foundation at http://www.gcflearnfree.org
- Cambridge Online at https://cambridgeonline.org.uk/about-2/

Tutorials are also available for Microsoft Outlook:

- Microsoft Office Online at http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/training/default.aspx
- Learning Express Library at http://www.learnatest.com/LEL/index.cfm/