

Bolivar County Community Action Agency, Inc.
810 E. Sunflower Rd. Ste. 120
Cleveland, MS 38732

Elnora Littleton, Executive Director

Head Start Program News Article for SEACAA

The Bolivar County Community Action Agency (BCCAA) Head Start Program recently launched an innovative program using technology to improve student achievement by engaging parents in their children's education. The Head Start Centers under the BCCAA umbrella are primarily located in seven small, rural communities throughout Bolivar County. Bolivar County is seated in the heart of the well-known Mississippi Delta region, where economic, social, and educational needs are great and poverty is widespread. Consequently, many of our students enter school behind with limited vocabularies, use of language, and numeracy skills.

While students were being provided opportunities to use computers and other technologies to expand and enhance the early childhood curriculum during the school day, more needed to be done to bridge critical gaps in achievement that would certainly stifle future growth. Thus, we were challenged to explore opportunities to expand learning beyond the regular school day.

Through a partnership with the Waterford Foundation, the BCCAA Head Start Program creatively engaged parents by providing computers and Internet access free of charge to families enrolled in the program. Students used the computers and online software at home to complete developmentally appropriate, interactive learning activities that addressed each child's unique learning needs. Parents were trained to work with their children on the activities at home as students were required to spend a

minimum amount of time weekly on the assignments. Assessments were used to chart the students' progress and guide ongoing improvement.

Through this program, students have demonstrated substantial increases in achievement in literacy and mathematics and parents are empowered to help their children academically, socially, and emotionally. In addition, the students have developed a love for learning, often far exceeding the minimum usage requirements of the program.

Through this initiative, the BCCAA is making a difference in the lives of families and the community at large. According to Elnora Littleton, Executive Director of the BCCAA, "this program is just one of the many ways in which the agency is networking with other organizations, parents, and students to make Bolivar County and the world a better place".