



**Newsletter April 2012**

**Bridge to Success (B2S) offers open, free content to help students cross the barrier to gaining the skills to learn, providing "bridging" content in mathematics and learning to learn. Thanks to a Next Generation Learning Challenges grant, the project began in April 2011 and has now successfully published all its content online as free Open Educational Resources (OER):**  
<http://labspace.open.ac.uk/b2s>

**Good Morning, Baltimore!**

UK Research team members packed their bags and headed Stateside to Maryland in a fantastic opportunity to visit some of the institutions piloting B2S courses. The week long trip during March focused specifically on some of the exciting, but unexpected, developments and successes of the project: the wide appeal and different uses of the Learning to Learn (L2L) and Succeed with Math (SWiM) courses.

Focusing on the Baltimore area, researchers primarily spent time at two institutions: the headquarters of Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake and Waverly Family Support Centre in Northeast Baltimore. Team members Beck Pitt and Tim Coughlan also spoke with SWiM community college students, educators using both courses and conducted a series of content and curriculum focused interviews at Anne Arundel Community College (AACC) on the final day of their visit.

Waverly Family Support Centre works with over 25 partner organisations to offer tailor-made development programmes to referred participants and their children. Situated in an area where "85% of the families are headed by a single female parent" and "90% have not completed high school" (All statistics from *Waverly... leaflet, 2012*) the centre specifically targets parents with children under 4.

Waverly provide crèche facilities so that participants can attend a range of sessions to develop their parenting skills, gain qualifications and plan for their futures. The centre is making use of both B2S courses as part of their GED (the north American high-school test that's usually taken at 18) examination preparation.

Waverly is supported by Goodwill, a workforce development agency whose Chesapeake branch has been supporting people across Maryland for over 90 years. Goodwill is utilising specific units of the SWiM course to help students prepare for their entrance exams for the 'weatherization' training programme. The programme, which trains students to redevelop houses, is of strategic importance: over 15,000 homes across Baltimore are currently empty and in need of renovation.

The flexibility of OER and the B2S course format is also proving popular with educators. Plans to integrate units and activities from both L2L and SWiM into existing college courses is a frequent outcome from the current pilots. As part of the project's continuing efforts to scale up and reach a wider audience, a DVD version of SWiM has been developed. This will enable the course to be used in



Research Team members Beck Pitt (left) and Tim Coughlan (right) with Waverly Family Support Centre Director Sharon Thomas (centre right) and centre participants

non-internet accessible locations such as prisons. The project also hopes to develop a Spanish language version of both courses.

**Pilot news!**

AACC have completed their first, eight week, hybrid format pilot of SWiM material. Positive feedback regarding the course's ability to engage students who have previously felt anxious about mathematics has been received from both students and the course facilitator. Elsewhere at Prince Georges Community College Team Builder's Academy, students pursuing vocational certification in construction and construction management are using both B2S courses to improve their job readiness.

"It was real informative, I may even work with my 4<sup>th</sup> grader 'cos she's doing fractions and things now ... but it's real informative, and it helps..."

**What do our students think of...**

"I plan to successfully take college level Math classes, and this class is the beginning of my attempt to break the cycle of hopelessness around Math ... the structure of the software that we use in this class has helped me tremendously..."



"It takes you through the whole process... easy to learn... so it's a good format, I like it."

"Definitely a good little course, I like the check part 'cos... you don't have to go all the way to the answers ... I hate tests! That's why the "check" button is for me... definitely!"



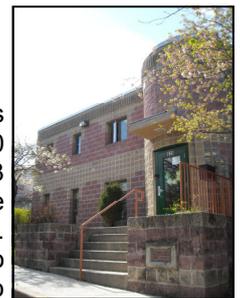
The Goodwill mission (right). Weatherization programme students at Goodwill, Baltimore using the B2S SWiM course (above)



Goodwill Industries of the Chesapeake, Inc. prepares people to secure and retain employment and build successful independent lives.

**User numbers continue to grow**

The number of users of B2S materials continues to rise rapidly. A total of 1170 unique users had viewed and 263 registered, to use the B2S maths course *Succeed with Math* by early April. Registered user numbers increased to 456 for the B2S course Learning to Learn, whilst 1609 unique users have looked at the course materials.



Waverly Family Support Centre, Baltimore

**Looking Forward: Scaling Up!**

During April team members presented and participated in the Open Courseware Consortium 2012 conference in Cambridge, UK and the American Association of Community Colleges annual convention.

Based on the findings of the research team, feedback from students and educators and course reviews conducted by learning design experts, improvements to the current content and expansion of the curriculum are currently being considered. The release of further Wave I funding also means that the project team will be kept busy preparing an application for the project's extension.

**E-mail: [bridge2success@aacc.edu](mailto:bridge2success@aacc.edu)**

**Web: <http://b2s.aacc.edu>**

