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Workplace Spanish program wins state award

(May 7, 2004 – Lake Worth, FL) Palm Beach County's only customized Spanish program for the workplace has won a best practices award from the Florida Department of Education. Palm Beach Community College, the licensed official registered provider of "Command Spanish" in the county, is one of 18 programs to receive "Florida's Best – Business and Education Partnerships." The business partnership award is given by the state's DOE, Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Education.

Since 2001, PBCC's Customized Business and Industry Program partnered with Command Spanish, Inc. to teach job-specific Spanish to over 250 students, including teachers, library workers, nurses, physicians, lawyers, administrative staff, school administrators, hotel employees, insurance agents, emergency medical personnel, cable company executives and more.

The curriculum is customized for each workplace situation by teaching phrases most often used on a particular job. Not only that, Command Spanish includes instruction in linking body language to spoken words, breaking down Spanish words phonetically and other techniques unique to the Command Spanish Program. With a 12.4 percent Hispanic population, Palm Beach County needs to overcome language barriers that affect workplace performance. Training usually takes place at the work site during times most convenient for employees. PBCC has six Command Spanish instructors.

"At the workplace a simple greeting in Spanish can make a huge difference in providing quality customer service," said Deb Arndt, coordinator for PBCC's Customized Business and Industry Program. "For a firefighter, it might even mean saving a life by calling out, '¡Salgan todos!' meaning 'everybody out!' This award tells me that Florida's educational system recognizes the diverse issues and language barriers that we all need to work together to overcome. It has been a pleasure to partner with Command Spanish, Inc. in order to address the need in Palm Beach County."

The awards will be given in Lake Buena Vista on June 18 and include monetary compensation. For more information, contact Deb Arndt at (561) 207-5713.

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