

Case Study: Networking Academies at Prisons

Minnesota Correctional Facility, Stillwater

In 2015, the Minnesota Computers for Schools (MNCFS) program began to research computer training options for inmates at the Minnesota Correctional Facility in Stillwater. MNCFS was already teaching a Cisco Networking Academy course called IT Essentials (ITE) at 3 of their Workforce Development sites in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Based on the success of that course, they selected it for Stillwater.

For purposes of a correctional facility, Cisco Networking Academy courses can:

- > Be delivered in a completely secure, offline environment, including hands-on skills practice
- > Prepare inmates to earn worldwide industry-recognized certifications for their resume
- Help them obtain entry-level IT jobs after their release





A Truly Collaborative Classroom Setup

Cisco Networking Academy staff described the space and equipment needed to teach the course successfully. MNCFS located a room to convert into the new training center. Additional electric outlets were installed by inmates working in Stillwater's Building Maintenance program. Similarly, inmates offenders from the Vocational Carpentry Shop built custom technician benches for the classroom.

Computer equipment came from corporate donations, which passed through the MNCFS refurbishment program called Minnesota Computers for Schools.

Training the Trainer

In late 2015, an MNCFS staff member volunteered to become certified to teach the course. The Cisco Networking Academy program provides instructor training, certification and professional development.

Meeting the Learners

In early 2016, the first 8 inmates were selected to enroll in the ITE course. These had already completed an MNCFS basic computer training program, and met the prerequisite knowledge recommended by Cisco. They acquired and practiced new technology skills, along with career skills employers look for, such as communication, collaboration, and problem solving.

Maintaining Prison Security Protocols

Learners take the ITE course in the classroom with the aid of textbooks, videos, and an internal-only prison intranet. Quizzes are given and graded offline, and used by learners as study material for the final exam. Final exams are also taken offline, and later uploaded from an external access point to Networking Academy's learning platform for grading and record keeping.

Pathway to Success

As inmates complete the course and pass the A+ certification exam, they have earned a new career path upon release from prison: entry-level IT jobs. Employers will recognize the value of their certification, and may be more inclined to take a chance on a previous offender who can prove they now have what it takes to be successful in the workplace.

More advanced Cisco IT courses and certification preparation are available at workforce development centers and community colleges throughout the region. Continuing their IT training can lead to additional job opportunities, advancement at work, and even increased salaries, as this field continues to grow exponentially.

More Information

Learn how Cisco Networking Academy's flexible learning program can support your training goals:

www.netacad.com

MNCFS is located at 970 Picket Street North, Bayport, MN 55003-1490 - mncfs.org