

## Adobe Certified Associate Provides Gateway to First-Time Employment

**Students, educators and employers can now prepare with a certification to verify digital communication skills.**

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Adobe® and Certiport recently introduced a new line of certifications for Adobe software that prepares students with essential digital communication skills to succeed in 21st-century careers. With these credentials, students prove they have the skills necessary to enter the workforce, educators enhance their teaching credentials with an industry-recognized certification, academic institutions close the gap between student preparation and employer expectations and employers validate the skills of prospective employees against a standard.

### Adobe Certified Associate:

An individual with validated entry-level skills required to plan, design, build and maintain information using different forms of digital media

### A NEED FOR DIGITAL MEDIA SKILLS

A recent study\* found digital media tasks are required more and more across all industries than they were five years ago. More than 50 percent of survey respondents indicated they perform tasks such as presentations and newsletters at least once a month, although more advanced digital communications skills like video, animation, audio and websites are fast becoming mainstream job activities. John Avakian, statewide director of the California Community Colleges Multimedia & Entertainment Initiative, said that if current trends continue, employees in any industry will be expected to have a higher level of digital media skills and will have to use them routinely.

"The implication is that these digital skills are being used by teachers, administrative assistants, assembly-line workers and others, even though they were not identified when these individuals were hired," Avakian said. "These individuals often have very little formal background training to perform digital tasks. If they had formal training, they would be more productive."

In fact, study respondents said they learned nearly 80 percent of the digital tasks they perform on their own or from colleagues. "The large percentage of employees using digital skills without formal instruction surprised me," Avakian said. "So many use digital media, but it's not in their job descriptions. Certification would help demonstrate a level of proficiency that at least implies they will be more productive."

### SPRINGFIELD CLARK COUNTY JOINT VOCATIONAL SCHOOL – SPRINGFIELD, OHIO

Springfield-Clark County Joint Vocational School's College Tech Prep (CTP) Interactive Media program prepares students to develop advanced technical skills, earn college credit while still in high school, easily transition into higher education and qualify for future careers in information technology. In the program, students learn web development and digital media skills, specifically focusing on Dreamweaver® and Flash®. Upon graduation, students are eligible to earn up to 27 college credits and scholarship opportunities at Clark State Community College as well as other academic institutions.

Industry certifications are included in the CTP program to benefit students as they pursue higher education and career goals. Interactive media instructor Mary Leonard teaches Dreamweaver and Flash and offered Adobe Certified Associate certification to 16 students in two classes this semester.

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Leonard said the CTP program focuses on standards like Adobe Certified Associate certification. "These standards connect students with colleges and can result in earning college credit," she said. "Certification can be taken anywhere—two-year colleges, four-year colleges, out of state and into the workplace. We will definitely have our students try to get certified."

#### **REGION 4 EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER – HOUSTON, TEXAS**

Texas education service centers provide professional development training and technical assistance to area school districts. The Region 4 Education Service Center has the largest student population of the state's 20 centers, servicing 54 school districts in seven counties with more than 1 million students.

The service center's educational technology services department supports teachers of technology application courses. Educational specialist Marcy Kay Harris said Adobe Certified Associate certification will be included in the department's curriculum for teachers in the region.

"Teachers are required to complete professional development hours to ensure they are qualified to teach courses," Harris said. "We will provide training and the Adobe Certified Associate certification exams to serve as markers that ensure teachers are up-to-date and highly qualified."

#### **TEMPLE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT – TEMPLE, TEXAS**

In an effort to provide real-world skills that will result in job opportunities for graduates, instructional technologists at Temple Independent School District (ISD) are redesigning their high school web mastery courses to include Adobe Certified Associate certification. As district webmaster Terry Gibbons and video conferencing coordinator Paula Yezak plan the sixth – 12th-grade technology application courses for the district, they are looking to the new certifications for Dreamweaver and Flash to validate student software and communication skills.

"At the end of our basic course, students actually get out into the community to create websites for non-profit organizations," Gibbons said. "They are getting real-world authoring experience. The Adobe Certified Associate exams will be the perfect closure for our web mastery class."

Gibbons and Yezak are also hoping to establish an advanced course for students who want involvement in the management side of digital communications. Students who wish to move on to the advanced course will be required to earn Adobe Certified Associate certification first. "Ultimately, they will walk out of high school with a diploma and certifications and into a job," Gibbons said. "They will have a way to prove to a prospective employer that their skills are valid."

"Students today are a lot more tech-savvy," Yezak said. "They have become more aware of the importance and value of examinations. Adding certification to our program will help to build it. Students encourage and motivate each other to participate."

In addition, Temple ISD is coordinating with campus webmasters to ensure they are proficient in the skills they need to do their jobs. "Our web authors are mostly classroom teachers who volunteer and maintain school websites in exchange for a stipend, use of a laptop and software benefits," Gibbons said. "They are intrigued with the job and enjoy developing websites."

Gibbons is strongly recommending these teachers earn Adobe Certified Associate certification. "It's a great opportunity for them to come in at the ground level and get experience, plus it gives us a feel for what they know," she said. "The Dreamweaver exam

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is ideal because it is a basic test for demonstrating the skills necessary for managing campus websites. We recommend it because Adobe is an industry standard; it's something important web authors can put on their resumé to demonstrate career growth."

#### **ROCKFORD BUSINESS COLLEGE – ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS**

With job placement results exceeding 86 percent, Rockford Business College offers a fast-track, two-year program designed to provide relevant education that prepares students to enter the workforce quickly. Lead instructor Scott Blanchard invites students to earn Adobe Certified Associate certification so they can prove they have the technology skills needed to enter the workforce.

"I plan on dangling the carrot," Blanchard said. "At the beginning of the course, I'll tell students that by the end of the quarter, they will have a portion of the knowledge they need to earn this certification. Our course provides basic product knowledge. If they keep learning, they can eventually get certified."

Blanchard said certification is one way students can prove their skills and get a job. "It gives you the edge," he said. "I always tell my students to 'think outside the grade.' Certification can be the difference between getting hired and not getting hired."

As students attempt to enter the workforce with little or no experience, they may have a difficult time convincing employers they are capable of doing the job. "When businesses know a certification exists and understand what it means, they can see what it can do for them and how it will save them money," Blanchard said. "Certification is tangible, and it matters."

#### **ADOBE CERTIFIED ASSOCIATE**

An Adobe Certified Associate credential certifies individuals have the entry-level skills to plan, design, build and maintain effective communications using different forms of digital media. Adobe provides learning solutions and certifications that prepare individuals to specialize in one or more areas: Web Communication, Rich Media Communication or Visual Communication.

To learn more about the Adobe Certified Associate program, go to [www.certiport.com/adobe](http://www.certiport.com/adobe).

\*Source: "Digital Media Skills," California Community Colleges Media & Entertainment Initiative (MEI), January 2006.

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