

\$300K gift aims to boost writing scores

Donated software demonstrated at Legacy High in Broomfield on Tuesday

Broomfield Enterprise

Enterprise staff

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USING A NEW LEARNING TOOL: Sara Varra and her Legacy High School 10th-grade world studies classmates work on an essays Tuesday using MY Access!. (David Jennings)



THE WRITE STUFF: Judy Kurtz gives instructions to Lori Thayer during a demonstration of MY Access! software in Kurtz s 10th-grade world studies class at Legacy High School on Tuesday. Software maker Vantage Learning granted Adams 12 school district free access to the program that compares students writing to a database of graded and evaluated writing. The gift is valued at \$300,000. (David Jennings)

Students at Legacy High School and Westlake Middle School received a \$300,000 gift Tuesday; one teachers hope will result in higher tests scores.

Middle and high school students in Adams 12 school district will be able to use the software program, MY Access!, to help improve their writing skills. Vantage Learning, the software's inventor, will allow the students to use the software free of charge, waiving more than \$300,000 in software license fees.

Adams 12 staff and employees of Vantage Learning showed off the technology Tuesday afternoon at Legacy High School.

The program relies on a large database of essays that have been graded and evaluated for various writing qualities. The program draws on the database and compares it to essays written by students. It can give immediate feedback, allowing students to make revisions.

The software can help students with technical aspects of writing.

"Students get rapid response about the quality of their writing and they learn quickly what kinds of things they need to improve and how they can improve in those areas," said Dawn Schafer, a language arts teacher at Horizon High School, who used the software as part of a pilot program.

"Teachers can make more effective use of their time with students to focus on the content of students' writing and individualize their attention for each student," she said.