

The Challenge

The Carbon Lehigh Intermediate Unit #21 (CLIU) is a regional Educational Service Agency that supports 14 school districts and two vocational technical schools in Carbon and Lehigh Counties in northeastern Pennsylvania. The role of this agency is to equalize educational opportunities for all students by encouraging collaboration among diverse community groups and facilitating inter-district cooperation, while functioning as a link between the local school districts and the Pennsylvania Department of Education. CLIU was looking for ways that schools in their region could improve the writing scores of students on the annual high stakes examination, the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA).

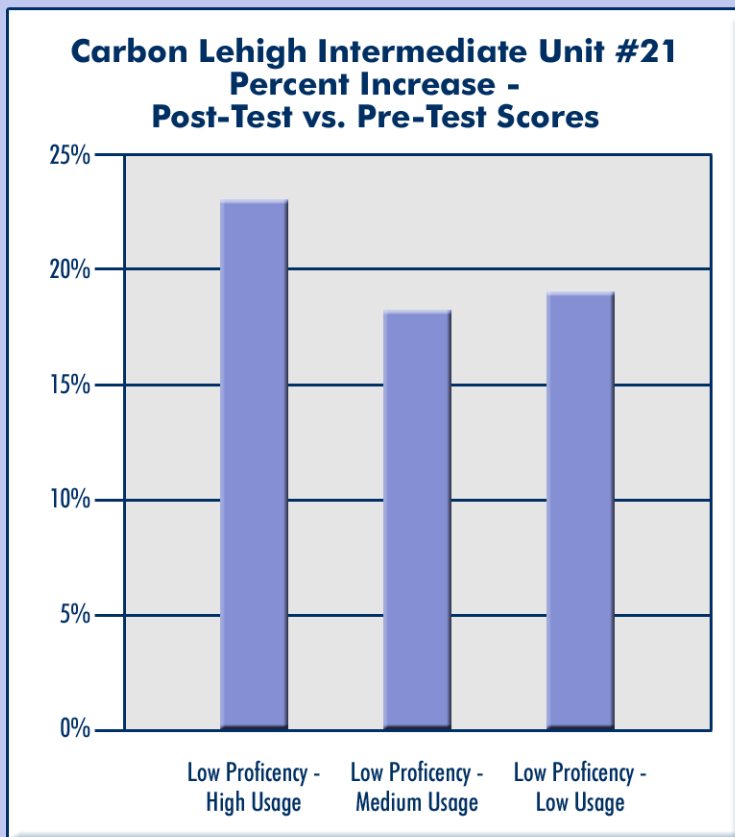
The Solution

In an effort to incorporate technology into the classroom to help students improve their writing scores, a subset of the school districts supported by CLIU completed a comprehensive assessment of the MY Access! online writing program. Along with PSSA-like pre- and post-tests scored by a writing committee comprised of expert scorers, half the students used MY Access! over the course of four months beginning in mid-January 2004, while the other half received traditional instruction.

MY Access! is a web-based writing environment that scores student essays instantly and provides individualized instruction to engage and motivate students to continually improve their writing skills. The robust reporting feature within the program provides up-to-the-minute information about student performance, enabling teachers to make timely, data-driven decisions for successful, differentiated instruction.

The Results

“The educators really embedded MY Access! into their instructional process. Their improved scores reflect the schools’ hard work and the power of MY Access! to motivate students,” notes Scott Kinney, Director of Educational Technologies at the CLIU. The research study conducted by the agency focused on the improvement of students that were not proficient on the pretest.



1) Low proficiency study participants showed marked improvement in only four months time.

- Of the 9th graders that were not proficient on the pre-test and used MY Access!, 40% improved to proficient by the end of the study. Of those who did not have the benefit of using MY Access!, only 22% improved to proficient.
- One school in the study saw over 75% of below proficient students increase to proficient when using MY Access!.

2) The majority of study participants who used MY Access! had higher post-test writing scores compared to their pre-test scores, whether they were low or high proficiency. However, low proficiency students who used MY Access! had the greatest gains. The study also showed that levels of proficiency increased the more students used MY Access!.

- On average, low proficiency students with high MY Access! usage levels improved their post-test scores by 23%.
- On average, low proficiency students with medium usage levels improved their post-test scores by nearly 18%.
- On average, low proficiency students with low usage levels improved their post-test scores by 19%.