

Georgia Students have (Great) Writing “On Their Minds.”

Austin Road Middle School
Increases Already Stellar
Performance on Georgia
Middle Grades Writing
Assessment Thanks to
MY Access!®

Austin Road Middle School Principal Karen Waldron has nothing but praise for the teachers and students at her school. “We are excited about the exceptional performance of our students and the unmatched commitment of our teaching and support staff,” Ms. Waldron declared. “At Austin Road Middle, we are dedicated to high expectations in academics and in student conduct. We believe that every student, without exception, can and will consistently perform at high levels.”

Ms. Waldron has every reason to be proud of her students’ and teachers’ accomplishments and to be confident about continued success in the future. Since Austin Road opened in 1996, in Stockbridge, Georgia, it has consistently met or surpassed standards in all academic subject areas, including writing. The school’s writing scores have always been high; but in a decision which is clearly indicative of Austin Road’s commitment to excellence, educators felt there was still room for improvement in students’ writing.

With this in mind, in 2005, Rosetta Riddle, the Instructional Technology Coordinator for Henry County School District, began searching for the ideal writing improvement program. After

much research and comparison of products and competitors, Riddle recommended the MY Access!® online instructional writing program. She was particularly impressed with the immediate, detailed feedback that students receive on their essays, and how the program helps teachers target instruction to areas where students need additional assistance.

The District decided to first implement MY Access! in Austin Road. Austin Road, one of six middle schools in the Henry County school system, boasts a strong commitment to diversity, both in regard to ethnicity and economic background, including an 80% African American population, a 40% free and reduced lunch population, and a 10% Special Education student population.

In fact, it was the Special Education population that prompted the District to purchase MY Access!. “We realized our first challenge was with our Special Education population; therefore they

were our initial focus when we purchased MY Access! in the 2005-2006 school year,” Ms. Riddle notes.

That year, Austin Road took part in a pilot program of MY Access! with 50 students. The results were immediate and powerful – and provided an answer to the school’s ongoing question, “How can we do even better?”

Cheryl Harmon, the Instructional Technology Specialist and “MY Access! champion” at Austin

Road, was instantly impressed and intrigued by the program’s features and the possibilities it presents her students and teachers. “We were especially struck by the instant and extensive feedback the program offered,” she explains. “Not only does the program tell the student what he has done wrong, but what he needs to do to improve. This feedback is essential to not only improved test scores, but student academic confidence.”

In just one year of MY Access! use,

**In just one year of MY
Access! use, Austin
Road’s scores in the
Georgia Middle Grades
Writing Assessment went
from 90% to 95% in the
2005-2006 school year**

Austin Road’s scores on the Georgia Middle Grades Writing Assessment went from 90% to 95% in the 2005-2006 school year. The District directly attributes the significant increase in test results to the implementation of MY Access!.

In addition to improving test scores, MY Access! makes teachers more versatile, as they have more time to focus on areas of student improvement and on teaching – time that was previously spent grading essays by hand. Both students and teachers receive an overview of the student’s overall progress, as well as more specific feedback on how the student is

doing in five areas of writing: focus & meaning; content & development; organization; language use & style; and mechanics & conventions.

“The program is also teacher-friendly,” continued Ms. Harmon. “While students are engaged in the actual writing assignment, teachers are able to offer more one-on-one support to students. Additionally, by providing instant feedback, teachers are able to offer more writing opportunities to students. The way to become a better writer is to write more. MY Access! provides this key opportunity, so crucial to overall student success.”

In addition to the great teacher

experience, MY Access! gives each student a unique and fun experience. The program contains interactive pre-writing exercises and other

resources such as a thesaurus, editor and tutor that help prepare students for their writing assignment. “The program is so student-friendly, in that students often view the program in the same mindset as they would a video game. Students often say, ‘I got a 3 in mechanics, but I bet I make a 4 next time,’” beamed a proud Ms. Harmon.

Due to the awesome benefits of the program, and the overwhelming

positive results that teacher and students alike enjoyed, the school decided to purchase 300 additional licenses in the 2006-2007 school year. Plus, MY Access! was adopted in Luella Middle School and Eagle’s Landing Middle School within the District, bringing the total amount of MY Access! users to more than 1,000 during the current school year.

Two key principles of MY Access! use in particular have impressed the Henry County School District. The first is that MY Access! not only improves test scores, writing skills and the confidence of struggling students, but it is just as useful in assisting already seasoned student writers become even

better. Implementing MY Access! is truly reflective of the District’s philosophy that, “We can always reach higher – we can always do even better.”

The second principle, confirmed by the first-hand experience of teachers at Austin Road, is that by improving students’ writing, it helps them become better students in all subject areas.

“Better writers make better students, employees and overall communicators. We believe in building great writers, who will no doubt be the legacy of Austin Road. We salute programs like MY Access! for helping us make this possible,” Principal Waldron concluded.

“The way to become a better writer is to write more. MY Access! provides this key opportunity.”

GA Middle Grades Writing Assessment

2003 - 2004:	89%
2004 - 2005:	90%
2005 - 2006:	95%

Quick Facts

Who: Austin Road Middle School

What: Rural

Where: Henry County School District, GA

When: MY Access! user since 2005

Why: To advance the school’s belief that even good writers can become better writers

How Many: Approximately 1,000 students in 3 middle schools throughout the district