

From 22% to 70% Passing in One Year: Welcome to MY Access! California.

Alhambra Unified School
District Raises 7th Grade
California Standards Test
Scores with Vantage
Learning's MY Access!®

Teachers and 7th grade students in the Alhambra Unified School District are celebrating a dramatic increase in test scores on the California Standards Test (CST) writing assessment, thanks to the district's recent implementation of the MY Access!® online instructional writing program. This award-winning, Web-based program from Vantage Learning builds better writers by instantly scoring class essays and providing immediate remedial instruction that engages and motivates students. Case in point: the scores of Alhambra's seventh graders skyrocketed from 22% scoring proficient or above in the 2005—2006 school year to 70% in 2006—2007. This increase

occurred after only one year of using MY Access! in classrooms.

“As a former English teacher, I've spent many nights and weekends grading essays, so the ability of MY Access! to give students immediate feedback on their writing assignments is nothing short of miraculous,” says Linda Benafel, Coordinator of Instructional Technology with the Alhambra Unified School District. “It enabled teachers to devote more personal attention to the kids and helped everyone focus their efforts on truly mastering our English curriculum.

This year's 70% passing rate is an incredible testament to our students' desire to learn and succeed, and to the safe, engaging

learning environment MY Access! creates.”

The California Standards Test is given to 4th and 7th graders throughout the state to measure writing proficiency. Test scores range from 2 through 8; anything below a 6

is considered below proficient. In 2006, only 22% of the students at Alhambra scored at the proficient or advanced proficient level. After implementing MY Access! and consistently using the program for a year, student scores soared, with 70% of students attaining levels at or above proficiency.

To use MY Access!, students write an essay based on a teacher's assignment, and submit it to the Web-based system. The program instantly analyzes over 350 semantic, syntactic, and discourse characteristics, and scores the students on a scale of 1 to 6 on

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focus and meaning, organization, content and development, language use and style, mechanics and conventions, and overall writing proficiency. MY Access! provides immediate feedback to students and saves teachers valuable time to focus on personalized, targeted student instruction instead.

As part of its efforts to incorporate technology into the classroom, the district implemented MY Access! through an Enhancing Education Through

Technology—Competitive (EETT-C) grant. With this funding, the district also created a coach/mentor program for teachers and purchased an Apple Mobile Learning Lab; 20 Apple laptop computers with Internet access that rolls into the classroom on carts. This increased the student/computer ratio from 42 to 1, to 4 to 1. In addition, Linda Benafel created COW2 (Community of Writers/Computers on Wheels) to fulfill the school-community connection requirement of the grant, and ensure that writing became a priority for all students district-wide. The coach/mentor program provides staff development to educators through the use of cognitive coaching techniques, as mentors work with teachers onsite.

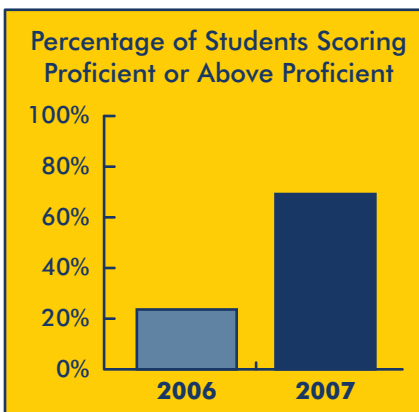
MY Access! also supports multiple languages to boost the writing scores of the district's English Language Learners (ELL), who account for 33 percent of Alhambra's student population. The program's multilingual tutoring and editing feedback helped the district's ELL

teachers adapt the program based on students' English proficiency. In addition, its unique translation feature lets ELL students write in English, but receive feedback and corrections in their native language.

"When I was talking to one of the coach mentors during the school year, she had a beginning English language learner in her class who wasn't able to write at all," Ms. Benafel relates. "But by the end of the school year—in only eight months—this student went from having essays that were non-scoreable to scoring 3's with MY Access!, which I thought was pretty phenomenal."

Just like the Hotel California: You can check out, but you can never leave. In Alhambra, students will move on from school, but will never lose the tremendous writing skills and knowledge gained in the classroom and with MY Access!.

7th Grade California Standards Test Scores 2006 vs. 2007



Quick Facts

Who: Alhambra Unified School District

What: Mid-size city

Where: The City of Alhambra, CA

When: 2006—2007

Why: To improve student writing proficiency in the classroom and on the California Standards Test

How Many: Approximately 3,071 students district-wide