

Smart Investment in Teachers Provides Large Returns in L.A. County!

Investing in Professional Development for Educators Makes Hacienda La Puente USD Rich in Exceptional Students Writers!

Students in Hacienda La Puente Unified School District in Industry, California, have quickly reaped the benefits of an innovative online writing program, which helps better prepare them for the California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) exam. In Spring 2007, several middle schools posted a 40 to 50 percent increase on their STAR writing scores. Teachers attributed this accomplishment to consistent use of MY Access!®, an online program which builds better writers by instantly scoring student essays and providing immediate remedial instruction that engages and motivates students.

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 scores the essay on a scale of 1 to 6 and provides immediate feedback to students, saving teachers valuable grading time so they can focus on personalized, targeted

student instruction instead.

MY Access! also contains multilingual capabilities, which help to improve the writing skills of the district's English Language Learners (ELL), who comprise nearly a third of the student population. MY Access! tutoring and editing feedback is

available in multiple languages, giving ELL teachers the ability to adapt the program based on students' English proficiency. Its unique translation feature lets ELL students write in English, but receive feedback and corrections in their native language.

"Our high school teachers were the first to measure the difference MY

Access! makes in students' writing performance and attitude," says Judy Carlton, Director of Instructional Support

Teams/Programs with Hacienda La Puente USD. "Their success led our middle school instructors to embrace the program. Now it's only natural we extend MY Access! to our fifth-grade classes, to engage and

develop their writing skills at this crucial educational stage."

Due to this overwhelming success, in Fall 2007, the district invested nearly \$500,000 in additional licenses for students, bringing the number of students using the program to just over 13,000. Funds were also allocated for a greatly expanded professional



development “coaching and mentoring” program for teachers.

“We are also very excited about the coaching/mentoring program in our schools,” Ms. Carlton continues. “The key to making the program work is teacher expertise. And we feel the best people to provide this type of instruction are our great teachers themselves. It

provides for a very collaborative atmosphere, which will enhance the sharing of ideas, program knowledge and data analysis, and which in turn will benefit our students and raise test scores even more.”

With coaching and mentoring, a Literacy Specialist/Trainer works directly with teachers and students in real time in the classroom to expand teachers’ repertoire of research-based writing strategies. Trainers provide ongoing classroom assistance and boost confidence using MY Access! as a tool to improve reading and writing skills. An example of the enhanced professional development program, which will occur over 46 days in the

2007-2008 school year, is the process of developing instructional units tied to the prompts, or essay topics, that

teachers select.

Most of this year’s agenda will center on how MY Access! supports the district’s new one-to-one laptop program and its latest adoptions of “Step Up to Writing” and “Write from the Beginning” programs, as well as

“The key to making the program work is teacher expertise.”

how MY Access! can be used to integrate prompts into the pacing guide and curricular frameworks. During the sessions, the trainer, teachers and observers work collaboratively through an initial planning session, a classroom demonstration model, and a reflective debriefing of the lesson. Additional follow-up is conducted to ensure the successful implementation of instructional strategies enhanced by using MY Access!.

Hacienda La Puente Unified School District is the largest in the San Gabriel Valley and one of the largest suburban school districts in California. The district’s K-12 enrollment is more than 22,000 students who reside within the

district’s boundaries; more than half of those students now use the MY Access! program.

According to Ms. Carlton, “The Hacienda La Puente Unified School District is dedicated to maximizing the talents, interests, and abilities of all its students, enabling them to meet the challenges and opportunities of a changing world.”

Hacienda La Puente USD is a shining example of how a “Return on Investment in Teachers” pays off for everyone. This investment will continue to make the district rich in exceptional students and tremendous writers!

Quick Facts

Who: Hacienda La Puente Unified School District

What: Urban

Where: City of Industry, CA

When: MY Access! user since 2006

Why: To provide the best coaching and mentoring to teachers, in order to fully utilize MY Access! to continue to build better writers and improve test scores.

How Many: Approximately 13,000 students district-wide