

## March 2008 — News

### Palm Springs USD Rolls Out Instructional Writing Program

by Dave Nagel

Southern California's Palm Springs Unified School District is rolling out an online writing program called MY Access! from Vantage Learning. The rollout will begin in elementary and middle schools in the first year and expand to high schools beginning in the second. The full deployment, expected within three years, will run \$800,000.

MY Access! uses Web-based forms that allow students to input assignments. It then checks those assignments against various writing characteristics and scores students on their writing proficiency, style, mechanics, and other factors. It also supports multilingual students and ELL students and is able to deliver feedback and tutoring in multiple languages.

Said Lori McCune, superintendent of Palm Springs Unified School District: "Writing is one of our most difficult areas to master. Oversized classes at the secondary level make it difficult for teachers to read a large volume of individual student work critically; MY Access! combined with effective professional practices is the solution. With the quick feedback it provides on a one-on-one basis, students reach a higher level of proficiency before they even turn anything into the teacher for review. This program is a natural extension of an educator's expertise."

She added, "Our teachers are looking forward to seeing not only improvement in written communication, but higher levels of achievement in all subjects they cover in their classrooms."

For the implementation, the district will initially deploy 4,000 MY Access! licenses in four middle schools and two elementary schools in the first year of the program, expanding into high schools and additional sites in the second and third years. MY Access! will be introduced into classrooms at the start of the 2008-2009 school year. Vantage will provide training to educators during the summer months.

---

#### ***About the author:***

*David Nagel is the executive editor for 1105 Media's online education technology publications, including THE Journal and Campus Technology. He can be reached at [dnagel@1105media.com](mailto:dnagel@1105media.com).*