

Waipahu Sees Rise In Writing Skills

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By Alana Folen



English teacher Lori Murakami looks over Marcelo Pascua's online assignment. Photo by Nathalie Walker, nwalker@midweek.com.

Waipahu High School received \$10,800 from Vantage Learning earlier this month to help its students improve their writing skills.

The donation will allow 300 students to use MY Access!, an online instructional writing program that's been shown to improve achievement across the curriculum.

"With this program students are able to go online and write to a prompt or complete an assignment given by a teacher," explained principal Keith Hayashi. "The students then get immediate feedback in terms of their writing - scores, areas that need improvement and areas in which their writing is lacking."

Hayashi implemented MY Access! at the start of the school year, initially with the English Language Learners. Seeing positive feedback, he applied for the grant so that more teachers and students could benefit.

"The tool is not meant to supplement teachers, but to instead provide that additional support, resources, assessments and evaluations," Hayashi said. "You can have a great tool, but how well it will be used and

integrated into the curriculum is up to the teacher."

He added that the main objective is to see students progress over time.

"It's tailored to the needs of the class, and students can automatically edit and resubmit their work. Our teachers look at the initial writing prior to the MY Access! scoring. Once the students get feedback from the program, we're looking at improvement."

Happy with the results so far, Hayashi hopes to see exponential gains not only in writing, but in students' critical thinking process as well.

"It's wonderful that we have support from MY Access! and Vantage Learning. We hope to set examples for other schools so that they too can benefit from this program," he said.

For more information on MY Access! Instructional Writing Program, call Hayashi at 469-1311.