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Web-based program helps students improve writing skills, expression

Students in Clarendon School District 1 are getting a little help with their writing, not in an old-fashioned pen-and-paper sort of way but rather by way of a more modern method, a Web tutorial program.

For the second year, Clarendon 1 has implemented MY Access! by Vantage Learning, a Web-based writing program aimed at helping get students over their writing hurdles.

Assistant Superintendent Barbara Ragin said programs like this one are helping the district in its efforts to move academic achievement to the next level.

The idea is "actually to improve the writing, enhance the students' writing expression, their writing skills," she said.

When signed in, the program provides students with writing prompts for essays. After students write something, the program gives them immediate feedback, with suggestions for how they can better their writing.

Katie Nicolai, with Gregory/FCA Communications, said the instantaneous feedback is something that sets this program apart. Students can immediately go back and revise what they've been writing.

Nicolai said the program is unique in that it offers almost 1,000 different writing prompts. Additionally, the program can be aligned to any of the 50 states' curricula.

Ragin said the district saw improvement after implementing the program last year. The goal is to broaden its use to the elementary grades as well.

Perhaps it's because they're using computers, perhaps it's because it's a flashy Web program, or perhaps it's passing along legitimate aid — whatever the case, Ragin said students do seem to be more motivated to write and produce better quality writing.

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