



Vantage Learning Spells Success in More than Half of Utah's School Districts

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Utah's students are boosting critical writing, reasoning and computer skills in the classroom, thanks to a licensing agreement for MY Access! the award-winning online writing tool developed by Vantage Learning. Twenty four districts have decided to use MY Access! this school year after teachers, directors and administrators from across the state saw a marked improvement in student performance. Students submitted over 400,000 essays to MY Access! in one school year and administrators decided to expand their use of MY Access! to over 70,000 licenses in over twenty four school districts throughout the Utah school system.

In addition, Vantage Learning is now working with Utah educators to customize MY Access! to meet the districts' unique curriculum requirements. For example, in one district, Vantage's engineers have added specific prompts and categories to emphasize career topics and technical topics as a focus.

"We started an initiative to heavily implement MY Access! during the last three years in our junior high schools, and after just one school year, the results were eye-opening," says Kate Ross, instructional coach for language arts teachers in Utah's Alpine School District. "After we saw how effective MY Access! was in improving writing skills, district leaders began to lobby the state to underwrite more licenses, so we could bring this wonderful technology to as many students as possible. And working with the folks at Vantage Learning to customize MY Access! demonstrates their commitment to helping our students reach their full potential."

In Alpine School District alone, administrators decided to issue a district wide benchmark test using MY Access! to students in grades three through 11 at the start of the 2007-2008 school year. The results were astonishing as they saw students' proficiency levels jump from 48 percent proficient to 78 percent. And by spring 2008 every junior high school using MY Access! saw at least 90 percent of their students pass the direct writing assessment, part of the Utah Performance Assessment System for Students (U-PASS) exams—a remarkable achievement for those schools.

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 focus and meaning, organization, content and development, language use and style, mechanics and conventions, and overall writing proficiency. MY Access! instantly scores the essays on a scale of one to six. This provides immediate feedback to students, and saves teachers valuable grading time so they can focus on personalized, targeted student instruction instead.

Students are engaged and motivated by immediate remedial instruction. And teachers say MY Access! scores are more accurate than expert human scorers, giving educators the time and confidence to focus on one-on-one instruction instead of paper-grading. That's the kind of help teachers in Utah's schools need to assist them in managing large classrooms, many of which have up to 40 students.

MY Access! also supports multilingual capabilities, which help improve the writing skills of the district's English language learners (ELL)—a welcomed resource for teachers, considering more than ninety languages are spoken by ELL students in Utah's urban school districts. MY Access! is available in five languages, giving ELL teachers the ability to adapt the program based on students' English proficiency. Its unique translation feature allows ELL students to write in English, but receive feedback and corrections in their native language.

"We work with hundreds of school districts across the country and listen closely to each educator's needs," says Harry Barfoot, vice president of sales and marketing of Vantage Learning. "When these districts in Utah said they wanted MY Access! to better prepare students for the U-Pass state tests and help their growing ELL student population, we delivered a customized version of our award-winning program to do just that. Now, Utah schools are experiencing the excitement and promise of this writing tool. We're delighted that we can serve so many educators with different needs."