

# Six Programs at Canadian Inner City High School Use PLATO Instructional Solutions Courseware to Engage Students and Improve Results



Gordon Bell High School, a large inner city school in Winnipeg, Manitoba, is proud of the multicultural nature of its student body. Over 1,000 people of many different backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs work together at the school in a spirit of harmony and mutual respect. Teachers and administrators at Gordon Bell High have found PLATO Instructional Solutions to be a highly flexible and useful tool across the school's wide range of programs and curriculum areas and with its many different types of students. PLATO Instructional Solutions courseware is one of many important tools that support and enhance the school's inclusive approach to educational program delivery.

In the science department, teaching staff report that PLATO Science chemistry and biology courseware is being used for enrichment, that the senior high students find the animations highly engaging, and that Web-based activities are frequently integrated right into the PLATO Instructional Solutions courseware. Dave Coulter, Science Department Head, projects certain sections of PLATO Science courseware on to a large screen and uses them for actual class instruction.

In the ESL program, students in grades 7-S4 (equivalent to 7-12) are using the PLATO Learning math courseware modules both independently during spare periods and in regular class time. Beth McFee, ESL Department Head, finds that PLATO Instructional Solutions courseware provides a method of simultaneously working with many students at different levels. Once students have been assessed and introduced to the courseware, they can often complete units independently during spare periods following class instruction.

In Special Education, PLATO Instructional Solutions courseware is being used at all grade and skill levels. Teachers have found that it holds the attention of Special Ed students, including those who are seriously mentally and intellectually challenged, and that the PLATO Learning individualized approach serves the needs of a wide range of students and supports and reinforces the school's language arts and math curricula.

Gordon Bell High also has a special group of adult students aged 18-28 who are paid to build and renovate houses. In the past, these students would not have graduated, and they typically have big gaps in their education. As part of their program, called Youth Builders, they use PLATO Instructional Solutions

courseware, attend classes, and receive course credits with the goal of ultimately completing grade 12. The off-campus Youth Builders program uses PLATO Instructional Solutions to develop skills in the senior English program, to assess math and language competency for new students, and to develop their math skills.

Another off-campus program is planning to use PLATO Instructional Solutions courseware in a variety of ways. Fresh Start, a special program for aboriginal students aged 18-29, hopes to use PLATO Learning reading strategies, career development skills, GED 2002 matrix, employment partnerships, writing series, and other modules.

JUST Learning is an off-campus school partnership between New Directions and Gordon Bell High School with a focus on young women between the ages of 14 and 18. Students in the program are working on senior English and math. Students are currently working on the PLATO Fastrack Curriculum Placement Test assessment and will then continue with individualized programs.

"The flexibility of the PLATO Instructional Solutions courseware and its appropriateness for so many different needs have made it a suitable tool for our school," commented Technology Department Head Judith Dueck. "This fall we introduced PLATO Fastrack assessments for the incoming 7th and 8th grade students to diagnose gaps in learning, identify students who need extra help, and prescribe appropriate lessons to ensure students have what they need for success." Principal Hart Sera sees future potential for PLATO Learning in other programs in the school.