

# Interactive Mathematics Helps Students at Kansas City Kansas Community College Approach Math in a New, Exciting Way



## Overview—Kansas City Kansas Community College, Kansas City, Kansas

- Students get the added reinforcement they need with Interactive Mathematics.
- Faculty can devote more individualized attention to each student.
- The program engages students with varied learning styles.
- Students who use the program in prealgebra perform better in elementary algebra than students who had traditional math courses.

Like many mathematics departments around the country, Kansas City Kansas Community College was having a difficult time engaging their developmental math students. So in the fall of 1997, the faculty set out to find an alternative way of teaching math. They discovered an interactive multimedia program called Interactive Mathematics from PLATO Learning, formerly delivered by Academic Systems. They implemented Interactive Mathematics in the fall semester of 1998, and today the department offers 34 sections of the program, from prealgebra through college algebra.

“When we initially tested Interactive Mathematics, we were very excited with the program,” said Michele Bach, mathematics instructor at Kansas City. “We liked the fact that it was interactive; we liked the audio and video features and the reinforcement it gives students. Everything’s built into one program and that’s impressive.”

### Added Reinforcement

Engaging students in new ways isn’t the only positive outcome of using Interactive Mathematics in the classroom. Students at Kansas City also benefit from the added reinforcement the program offers. “Students like the ability to go back and review as many times as they want,” said Bach. “And they don’t feel like they only get instruction during class, they can also go home and use the program. That’s a real plus for a lot of our students.”

While some students prefer the traditional classroom setting over a computer-aided course, many students like the flexibility and pace of Interactive Mathematics. “We’ve had students who started out using the

**INSTITUTION:** Since 1923, Kansas City Kansas Community College has been a foundation of lifelong learning for members of the community. This urban, two-year, comprehensive community college offers associates degrees and certificate programs in a wide range of fields, servicing the large community of Kansas City as well as Wyandotte and Leavenworth counties.

**SIZE:** An average of 6,400 students attend Kansas City Kansas Community College, taking classes at the main campus in downtown Kansas City or at the satellite campus in Leavenworth County.

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“I’ve looked at other programs and Interactive Mathematics has it all, hands down. I would definitely recommend it.”

MICHELE BACH,  
MATHEMATICS PROFESSOR

program and have done every single one of their math classes with the computer, and they love it,” said Bach. Students who have taken classes using Interactive Mathematics have also scored better on post tests than their traditional counterparts in the same class. In a 2002 study on computer-assisted versus traditional instruction, the difference between pre- and post-test scores for traditional instruction was 21.82 percent, compared with 26.38 percent for computer-aided classes.

### Multiple Methods

One of the most important benefits of Interactive Mathematics is how it accommodates a variety of learning styles. The program shows students multiple ways of approaching each problem, offering plenty of examples for students to view. And for instructors, this added reinforcement gives them more time to focus in on students who need extra help and attention. “The explanations are good. The focus and the development is super,” said Bach. “I have to say that PLATO Learning is one of the few companies who also really listens to faculty and then acts on what we think is important.”

### Making Way for the Future

For both instructors and students at Kansas City, one of the defining factors of the program is the ability to track a student’s progress at any given point throughout the semester. In a traditional classroom, students may have to wait four or five weeks into the semester to know where they stand in the course. With Interactive Mathematics, tests and quizzes are built right into every lesson, so students know whether or not they grasp the material within the first few days of class. “This program can help faculty catch problem areas early on. I am hoping it has made faculty more aware of what’s been going on in their traditional classrooms. It’s because of this that I’m a real advocate of the program. I think it’s great,” said Bach.

“After only a few days using Interactive Mathematics, you can see at any moment exactly where your students are instead of four or five weeks into the semester with a traditional lecture.”

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