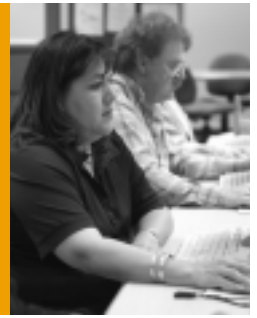


Developmental Needs Met by Community College

New technology-based courses help students achieve success



Students in a developmental writing course using PLATO Instructional Solutions courseware outpaced their counterparts who initially scored higher in their placement tests. This pilot program led to the use of technology-based instruction across several disciplines.

Developmental needs

Labette Community College discovered during the 1997-1998 school year that 87% of entering students needed developmental coursework in at least one of the following areas: reading, writing, and math. In order to respond to that need, Labette used a Title III (Student Success) Grant to develop a comprehensive basic skills program starting with writing.

The solution and the technology

Joyce Taylor Fields, College Skills Coordinator, and the Writing Committee created two developmental writing courses, which were piloted during fall, 1999. Students were placed in either Basic Writing I or Basic Writing II depending on their initial scores on a placement exam. Students scoring less than 52 were automatically placed in Basic Writing I, with those scoring from 52 to 69 placing in Basic Writing II. A score of 70 moved students out of developmental courseware into English Composition I. Basic Writing

I was created to include a computer-assisted instruction component utilizes PLATO Instructional Solutions. One hour out of each week's three hours of instruction was spent in the computer lab using the PLATO Writing Series curriculum. Basic Writing II relied on traditional instruction with no PLATO Learning software component.

Why stop there?

Labette was so pleased with the writing pilot that it has expanded its use of PLATO Instructional Solutions courseware to several other programs. Another successful pilot program was launched for reading. The open entry/open exit competency based course in reading is taught entirely with PLATO Learning software. According to Fields, "One student began Basic Reading I at a third grade level and after completing the

course in two months her COMPASS reading assessment showed an increase in her reading level to grade 12." Fields added, "In another area of the College, the Adult Basic Education and GED programs, we have started to utilize PLATO Learning's CASAS and GED alignments with our students. We have very limited staff in these areas and the PLATO Learning System will allow instructors to function more as facilitators – allowing us to serve more of the most difficult to serve individuals in our community." Results are in on that program as well. All of the GED students who used PLATO Instructional Solutions courseware passed all 5 of their GED examinations. In addition, PLATO Learning software is used as the exclusive instructional resource in the following courses: Trigonometry, College Algebra, Calculus, Applied Math, Applied Communications, and Reading in History/Sociology.