



<http://www.eschoolnews.com>

Contents Copyright 2007 eSchool News. All rights reserved.

Beyond remediation

How one Missouri school district helps every student with just one courseware solution

By Larry Bohannon

September 26, 2007

The 3,750-student Sikeston School District in Sikeston, Mo., counts as one of its 10 schools an alternative school that was using an online courseware program from American Education Corporation (AEC) to help struggling learners improve their academic performance.

My team and I were intrigued by the capabilities of AEC's A+nyWhere Learning System courseware program. We liked the program's competencies, and its adaptive nature; we liked that it would give each student an education prescription. But, initially, the product mostly lay dormant, because we didn't take full advantage of the service available from the vendor to help us implement it.

Discovering the courseware's potential

We were invited to a local meeting by the software developer, AEC. When they showed us what we had, it wasn't long before our use of the program took off. The alternative school staff saw the courseware's potential, invested more time in professional development, and it started growing. School leaders started a train-the-trainers program, which further fueled the program's use: The more the teachers used it, the more they understood the program's potential.

The A+nyWhere Learning System (A+LS) is an eLearning solution that consists of an instructional management system supported by core curriculum content for grades K-12. It can be delivered through a local-area network, a wide-area network, or the internet. Our district's alternative school used the A+LS courseware program's research-based curriculum content in the subject areas of reading, mathematics, language arts, science, writing, and social sciences.

The assessment component of the A+LS courseware program was a good fit for our alternative school teachers' needs. The courseware contains more than 130,000 assessment items intended to determine whether students have mastered specific skills. Tools like Course Assessments allow teachers to obtain comprehensive evaluations of the skills taught in any A+LS title, while the program's Adaptive Assessments generate tests "on the fly," selecting test items based on the skills that need to be tested. Teachers can create their own tests, and each lesson in the system includes a mini-test.

We really liked that A+LS writes the prescription for each student. If students don't understand a concept, the program will take them back to an easier

problem and let them work their way back up through the system. It also engages students, because it has enough graphics and rewards to keep students motivated.

Teachers can use the system to track students' performance and get immediate feedback to see if they are improving. Our alternative school saw student performance increase in as little as 20 days.

When we saw the product's potential, we brought it into our vocational school and high school as well. We'd had a tutorial program where we paid teachers to come in and help the students. The program just died--even with funding--because there was no courseware to supplement it. Once we brought the A+LS courseware program into our high school, however, it was a tremendous success. We liked it so much that we dedicated a whole class to it. It's already been a success with our seventh and eighth graders, and we plan to offer the class to fifth and sixth graders next year.

A new teaching opportunity opens

As our teachers and students embraced the A+LS program's ability to get kids back on track and beyond, another unexpected scenario manifested itself.

Our primary uses of the A+LS courseware at that time were for tutoring and remediation. But we also had an accelerated gifted math student, and we wanted new ways to engage his thirst for knowledge. We put him on the A+LS system, and he ate it up.

This encouraged us to look at the A+LS courseware in new ways. Teachers saw that it was not just for remediation; there was some challenging content in the program, too. They began using it in other ways, such as for credit recovery, summer school courses, and ACT preparation.

Our teachers discovered that the A+LS courseware program offered many open-ended questions, including higher-level math. It also could help us prepare students for the state's new end-of-the-year course exams.

In practical terms, we used A+LS to construct a core competency test. If students are not "proficient," there will be an A+LS prescription they can go through to prepare them for that core competency skill. We can pull out competencies that are covered in a specific subject, and we can make sure these match the GLEs for that grade level. A feature called the A+ District Driven Assessment lets us take a "snapshot" of school performance at any time during the school year.

The A+nyWhere Learning System courseware program aligns with Missouri state standards. An alignment tool within A+LS provides the means to add further instructional materials, such as textbooks with various content standards. The program's assessments test students on specific learning objectives defined by any standard chosen by the school or district. This gives our educators the capability to assign students, individually or in groups, any instructional content easily.

Teachers like that they can pull up data to see how well students are doing. The A+LS courseware helps us determine which learning program is best for each age group. That includes using the system for a new GED program for students ages 16 through adult.

A very rewarding outcome of this program is the change we have seen in student confidence. Some students come into the program and can't read. They think they'll never be able to read. When they see the data from the A+LS courseware, they can see where they were and how far they've come. They see their effort is paying off.

I believe that ongoing service by the provider, AEC, was critical to helping our district discover the product's full potential. This service helped us take a program with great potential because of its capabilities, and implement it fully for positive results.

Larry Bohannon is assistant superintendent of the Sikeston School District in Sikeston, Mo.

Links:

[Sikeston School District](#)

[American Education Corporation](#)

Tech News for School Websites... **Improve Your School Website
with Daily eSchool News Headlines!**

www.eschoolnews.com
info@eschoolnews.com
7920 Norfolk Ave., Suite 900
Bethesda, MD 20814
(800) 394-0115 - Fax (301) 913-0119

[Privacy Policy](#)
[Manage your FREE eSchool News eMail subscriptions here](#)
Contents Copyright 2007 eSchool News. All rights reserved.