

PLATO Learning and a Goals 2000 Grant Help Lake Forest Middle School Get Results



Lake Forest Middle School in Cleveland, Tennessee is nestled in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, about an hour east of Chattanooga. The school, made up of 1,050 students and 57 teachers, is a Title I school with 52% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch. Three years ago, low test scores and low student achievement landed Lake Forest Middle School on the state's list of failing schools. New principal Ritchie Stevenson applied for a Goals 2000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education in an effort to bring meaningful change to his school.

Principal Stevenson was successful in his grant application, and the school was awarded a Goals 2000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The U.S. DOE states that the Goals 2000: Educate America Act helps states and communities realize the national commitment to improving education and ensuring that all children reach high academic standards. By initiating, supporting, and sustaining coordinated school reform planning and implementation, Goals 2000 focuses improvement efforts on high expectations and achievement results for all students. This results-focused comprehensive effort is known as standards-based education reform.

Principal Stevenson decided to use the Goals 2000 grant to purchase PLATO Instructional Solutions language arts and math software, primarily because of its individualized approach to learning. "I looked at other programs but PLATO

Learning was the best fit for our school," said Principal Stevenson. "It's solid, no bugs— unlike other software I've had. And it's flexible, we can go from second grade all the way to GED with PLATO Instructional Solutions courseware."

The school tested the students to evaluate their reading and math skills and used the test results to create individual remediation plans, with each student using the PLATO Learning labs for one hour a day. With 60 stations in two labs and another 40 stations for sixth grade math alone, the school used PLATO Learning products to support the skills students were learning in the classroom. Students spent a semester working on a particular math curriculum area, then a second semester working with PLATO

Instructional Solutions math courseware. During the 2002 summer school session, teachers used PLATO Instructional Solutions to give students the extra individual attention they needed by adding the PLATO Learning lab to the day's activities. Thanks to this intensive effort, Lake Forest Middle School is no longer on the list of Tennessee's failing schools.

But the school does not intend to stop there. Principal Stevenson plans to expand the program by adding two PLATO Instructional Solutions courseware stations in each science class, and the school has a goal of two stations for every classroom in the future. "I'm convinced that the investment in the PLATO Instructional Solutions courseware and hardware has had, and will continue to have, a positive impact on our school," said Mr. Stevenson.