

# With Interactive Mathematics, Many More Students at Milwaukee Area Technical College are Passing Math—and Enjoying It



## Overview—Milwaukee Area Technical College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

- Retention rates have increased.
- The program lets instructors easily adjust for underprepared students.
- Students receive more individual attention.
- Motivation and enjoyment increase when students learn math by doing it.

Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) began using Interactive Mathematics (formerly an Academic Systems product) in 1998 and has seen an increase in the pass rates of students. While data for the department as a whole has yet to be collected, instructors say more students are succeeding and showing more persistence. The failure rate has significantly declined.

“That’s a tremendous improvement,” said Peg Williamson, technology coordinator and mathematics instructor at the college. “I’ve taught math for 30 years, and I know what I’m getting out of students now is so much better than anything I’ve gotten before.”

MATC has a dedicated math lab complex with four classrooms that use PLATO Learning’s materials in courses across the developmental math curriculum, and distance learning will begin in the spring. Overall, instructors are finding that students who stay in the courses are achieving more success than their peers in traditional courses.

“What’s happening is the students are very motivated to do the math because the computer engages them and expects them to do the work and answer the questions—they’re forced to read and study and work through problems,” Williamson said. “This is my seventh semester teaching this way, and I can say that grades are better, retention is better, students like math better, and I’m able to give them a lot more individual attention.”

Getting students to succeed in math courses at MATC isn’t always easy, especially because prerequisites for a math course are not always enforced. So students sign up for any class they want to, and the faculty have to teach them whether they’re prepared for the course materials or not. Interactive Mathematics helps them effectively meet this challenge by providing comprehensive content across all levels of developmental math, enabling

**INSTITUTION:** Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) is a publicly-supported, comprehensive, higher education institution committed to increasing the potential and productivity of the people in its district. The largest two-year college in the Midwest, MATC reaches students through the delivery of high-quality instruction and programs that are consistent with current and emerging educational and labor market needs. Known as a leader in technical education and instructional innovation, the college offers 150 associate degree, technical diploma, and short-term certificate programs. In 2000, nearly 90 percent of graduates were employed within six months of graduation.

**SIZE:** MATC serves approximately 65,000 students across four campuses.

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PEG WILLIAMSON,  
TECHNOLOGY COORDINATOR  
AND MATHEMATICS INSTRUCTOR

students who need more background to access it with the simple click of a mouse.

### Students' Attitudes, Attendance, and Total Approach are Greatly Improved

Instructors are also finding students' attitudes and attendance are greatly improved in courses that use Interactive Mathematics—contributing to their overall success.

“I’m seeing their attitudes toward math become much more positive. They like it because they’re experiencing success and the program makes it more fun and interesting with the interactivity and graphics,” Williamson said. “The program helps them not just memorize things, but actually learn it and do it, which makes a big difference in their self confidence and has lasting effects on them.”