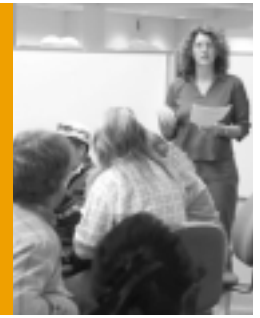


Ohio Community Implements Alternative Education Solution with Support of PLATO Professional Services



In 2002, community leaders in Dayton, Ohio, recognizing the need for alternative educational opportunities for students age 15-21 described as truant, non-attenders, or dropouts, created the Out-of-School Youth Taskforce to help address the needs of some of the 5,000-6,000 students who met these criteria daily.

The taskforce looked at the needs of the Dayton area workforce and found that the biggest employers—the health care industry, the IT industry, and Wright Patterson Air Force Base—needed semi-skilled entry level employees to fill a growing void. From this need, the Mound Street Health Careers Academy, the Mound Street IT Academy, and the Mound Street Military Careers Academy were born.

"The challenge for the Mound Street Academies was to find a way for one educator to deliver a variety of curriculum areas to many students," said Betsy Apolito, Principal of Mound Street Health Careers Academy. "Additionally, our charter required that students be able to access their coursework anytime, anywhere." PLATO Learning was selected to provide the Mound Street Academies with a multi-faceted solution that included online learning, curriculum integration and ongoing professional services.

Implementation planning and instructional goal setting begin

The first step in addressing the curricular needs of this very diverse population was for PLATO Professional Services to work with staff at the academies to create an implementation plan to establish short- and long-term instructional goals. As a result of the planning discussions between the academies and PLATO Professional Services staff, it was determined that credit recovery would be the primary focus and that the PLATO Web Learning Network (PWLN) was the educational and curricular option of choice for the Mound Street Academies staff and students.

In order to articulate the focus on credit recovery to the staff members from each academy, PLATO Professional Services delivered a two-day initial training on PWLN and

its courseware. The PLATO Educational Consultant assigned to the project outlined the instructional strategies to ensure the successful delivery of the courseware and a framework by which course credit could be earned via customized student learning paths. While the majority of the staff at the academies were certified teachers and had had various teaching experiences, they were by no means capable of teaching all subject areas to their 20 students. PWLN offered the academies a solution to its curricular needs since it allows students to work at their own pace through the required courses.

PLATO Web Learning Network meets a variety of requirements

"One of the greatest features of PWLN for our staff and students is the home access," said Betsy Apolito. "When students are unable to attend school or want to expedite their credit recovery, they are able to access PWLN from any computer that has Internet connectivity. That means public libraries are also a wonderful resource for those who do not have the luxury of a home workstation. Teachers find it beneficial to check students' work on the weekends and evenings. Reports are clear and concise and show a true measurement of student progress."

For the Mound Street Academies, PWLN is the exclusive means of delivering instruction and content to their students. "We have utilized the PLATO Learning courses to develop our own Mound Street courses that reflect local, state,

and national standards," said Ms. Apolito. "Our goals are to meet the needs of students academically by providing quality instruction to meet Ohio graduation requirements and allow students to attend training programs geared toward each school's focus."

Professional services plan fosters high degree of staff ownership

These goals are clearly defined in the implementation plan developed by the academies and PLATO Professional Services and addressed by the ongoing staff development program. "Mound Street Academies and PLATO Learning are partners in the overall success of the program," said Ms. Apolito. "PLATO Professional Service came to the table with an effective model of implementation and a game plan to promote our long and short term instructional goals." With a professional services program that emphasizes curriculum integration and model teaching, this unique partnership fosters a higher degree of staff ownership and support to ensure that best practices are implemented and evaluated.

The doors of Mound Street have only been open since September 23, 2002, but the academies have already begun to plan the next steps for student success, including upgrading their PLWN client-hosted environment to the new version in the summer of 2003 and continuing to integrate the PLATO Professional Services curriculum support to help achieve the program's objectives.