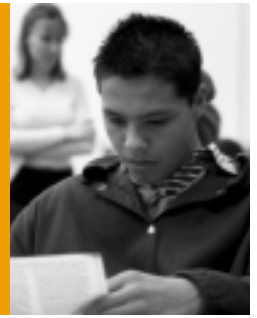


Academic Success Center Lives up to Name

Alternative program in Columbus, Georgia allows students to earn graduation credits and Technology Career Diploma



It's not every day that you can learn all you need to know about a school just from its name. That is the case with Academic Success Center, an alternative school that is part of Muscogee County Schools in Columbus, Georgia. This school is for students who have been unsuccessful in traditional educational settings and it is the last resort to get their high school diploma.

An alternative

In 1999, Academic Success Center wrote a request for a waiver from the Georgia Department of Education that allows students to earn graduation credits and ultimately a Technology Career Diploma in one year without the standard course time. They based the formula for their Secondary Vocational Connections (SVC) program on the comprehensive alignments that PLATO Learning provided to the state's curriculum standards and the Georgia High School Graduation Test. Principal, Sandy Denham said, "We wanted to reach, restore, and redirect dropouts to help them successfully return to school and graduate. With PLATO Instructional Solutions, we are able to provide opportunities for our students to develop both academic and career skills and clearly document their results to meet the state requirements."

The benefits

One of the key benefits of PLATO Instructional Solutions courseware, according to Denham, is that students may complete the PLATO Learning curriculum at their own pace and when they pass the test: they graduate. Denham added, "Our goal is a high school diploma. That's an achievement with these kids because 100% of them have met with failure in traditional education. The major benefit with PLATO Learning software is that it allows students to move up to their ability level, clearly document their strengths and focus instructional time on their weaknesses."

Another perspective

Leslie Robertson, SVC program supervisor, believes that PLATO Instructional Solutions is important to their success, "The needs of two students are never the same so customizing a learning path for each student is key." Robertson goes on to say that the student's role is different in the SVC program as well, "These students know coming in that they need to take the responsibility for their own learning, we don't stand over them." "And our students respond better to that challenge - you can see their confidence building as they track their own progress on PLATO Instructional Solutions courseware," added Robertson.

Incredible results

The students in the SVC program using PLATO Learning software were able to achieve extraordinary results on the GHSGT exam in the fall of 2000. In fact, their scores were higher than students at Academic Success Center not using PLATO Instructional Solutions courseware: (All students passed the Language Arts portion of the test.)

These results clearly show that even students who have failed in traditional educational settings can be successful with the help of tools like PLATO Instructional Solutions software and educators who care enough to give them another chance.