SUCCESS STORY WITH ACHIEVE

JOEL WILSON

INSTRUCTOR:
Joel Wilson

INSTITUTION:
Eastern Virginia Career College

PRODUCT IN USE:
Achieve Writer's Help for Hacker

Course Details

Course:
English Composition 1

Format:
I taught an online class with an optional Zoom-based lecture on Wednesday nights.

How many weeks long is the course?
8 weeks

How often does it meet?
Meetings were encouraged but not mandatory. Students could attend if they wanted to, but they were not required. We met once a week for 8 weeks on Wednesday at 7 PM for 1 hour.

What are the student demographics?

This course was offered at Eastern Virginia Career College. The college services healthcare majors. My students were all students seeking acceptance into the nursing program. They were required to take general education classes prior to full acceptance (though they were accepted on a provisional basis depending on their passing of general education requirements).

Implementation

What do you assign in Achieve?

I assigned two study plans and two papers. I used the following assignments:
- *Study Plan for Sentence Grammar*
- *Study Plan for Reading Skills*
- *Narrative Essay*
- *Argument Essay*

How does it fit into your syllabus?

Achieve fit perfectly into my syllabus. I used to assign grammar quizzes. Those were replaced by the study plans.

I also assigned writing exercises generally to assist the progression of writing. These could be outlines, drafts, or discussions to generate topics. The writing activities replaced these, allowing me to create united writing assignments from generation through drafts, all in Achieve.

What percentage of the grade is Achieve?

Achieve constituted 95% of the grade. Only a required Post-Test was administered outside Achieve.

Why did you decide to use Achieve?

I have seen students make good progress using Achieve at other institutions. My students at EVCC tended to be adults with limited experience with higher education. Many have worked in paraprofessional health careers for years, having now decided to return to school to pursue a degree program. Achieve helped them bridge their gaps in grammar and reading, allowing me to focus more on their writing. This in turn helped them to be better prepared for future classes.

Results

What are you seeing / hearing from students about Achieve? Survey results or overall course grades?

Students loved the peer review function. When I discussed this with them, they appreciated being assigned specific areas of their peers' writing to comment on and tools to help them deliver effective comments. They said they would do peer review in other general education classes, but they didn't know what they were supposed to do or say. Peer review through Achieve allowed them function allowed them to more readily be directed to comment on specific areas of their peers' drafts.

What do you think of Achieve? How has it changed your teaching?

I love Achieve. I love "off loading" grammar instruction. The adaptive learning functionality ensures students are all gaining the necessary skills, employing technology to do what I could never do on my own, at least not without enormous time and resources.

Lessons Learned

What's better now that you are using Achieve?

My students receive the help they need-- and not from me. Achieve fills in the gaps that I struggled to do. I could help their writing--slowly--as they needed. Achieve is helping them in those two areas, and they show much greater growth.

What will you do differently next time?

I have used Achieve for 5 semesters and have found a system that works, pairing a study plan with an ongoing paper.

How do you think this will impact higher education going forward?

I think technology has been marketed as a solution for many years--but technology alone can't "fix" higher education. Achieve, on the other hand, in conjunction with well-planned teaching, has the potential to change the fabric of higher education. With all the prewriting and drafting stages housed in the same area of the system, students can make remarkable progress compared to the traditional system of loose papers or disparate dropboxes in the LMS. Grammar activities did not benefit whole classes--if they even benefited a few students. Achieve's study plans, on the other hand, allow students to really make up for years of not having strong reading or grammar skills in just a short time as the areas where they need the most help are targeted.