

# PLATO® Intervention Solutions Produce District-wide Results at Guilford County Schools



## Program profile

Guilford County Schools, the third largest school district in North Carolina serving more than 70,000 students, sought to improve graduation rates and boost student achievement by using technology-based intervention and credit recovery solutions. For several years, Guilford County had been using an outmoded, MS-DOS-based software program, which left both students and teachers unimpressed.

## Overview

Before PLATO:

- Students were bored by text-heavy lessons, and teachers and administrators found it difficult to customize course content.
- “Every summer, we had to spend days with a computer programmer learning how to tailor lessons to fit our students’ needs, as well as align with the state curriculum,” said Steve McGrath, program director for the district’s Saturn Academy, one of 24 sites countywide using technology-based intervention solutions. “Even when we finished re-programming the software, there was still very little flexibility for us to choose a unique set of coursework that was aligned to the skills our students most needed to improve.”

In the summer of 2006, Guilford County Schools (GCS) switched to a new software solution from PLATO Learning as part of a summer school pilot program. Unlike with its old solution, GCS found that PLATO® intervention and credit recovery solutions had far superior instructional content with much greater student engagement. Further, they were easy to use and implement to address the district’s needs for individual assessment resulting in personalized intervention and remediation. For example, if a student is having trouble understanding square roots, a teacher can assess the student’s unique gaps in understanding and can then assign specific instructional content designed to help the student master the concept. With the old solution, teachers needed to assign an entire algebra course in order to teach one or two key concepts. PLATO Learning solutions also made it possible to customize courses so that all North Carolina objectives were addressed appropriately. This was especially critical for courses that have state-mandated standardized tests.

Less than a year later, GCS has expanded its pilot program to multiple school locations, including alternative learning sites. Today, more than 1,000 students district-wide are recovering credits using PLATO® Courses and instructional content. Why are districts like Guilford County Schools rapidly embracing PLATO® intervention solutions? Because educators quickly realized how easily the instruction inspires kids, supports teachers, and influences immediate, positive learning outcomes.

## A customized solution

PLATO® intervention and credit recovery solutions are uniquely positioned to improve student performance because specific coursework can be tailored to individual needs. Guilford County modifies its intervention and recovery courses each year based on End-Of-Course (EOC) guidelines and students’ greatest areas of instructional need. PLATO Learning solutions’ unmatched flexibility has helped Guilford County expand its use of the software, using the

### INSTITUTION:

Guilford County Schools

### STATISTICS:

- Third largest school district in North Carolina
- Over 70,000 students

### CONTACT:

Steve McGrath,  
program director,  
Saturn Academy,  
Guilford County Schools, NC

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product as curriculum enrichment, customized intervention, and recovery content at each site. Other solutions don't offer a high degree of content flexibility, and the ones that do tend to require significant back-end modifications and re-programming. With PLATO Learning, adding and removing specific lessons from a course module is possible with a few mouse clicks.

GCS also enjoys greater flexibility in providing students with new distance learning options using PLATO Learning solutions. The district is using the PLATO software to help kids work from home to stay caught up with their coursework. The school allows access to PLATO from the computer lab at a local church and library in order to improve access to the program for students that don't have a computer at home.

"We want to go beyond the traditional computer-lab setting, reaching out into the community to offer our students the opportunity to work on their lessons after traditional school hours, for the purpose of skill remediation, test preparation, or credit recovery," said McGrath. The fact that the PLATO solution is self-paced and fully accessible via the Internet allows struggling students to work from home or other remote locations on evenings and weekends, helping students make the most of their time at the school building.

### A teacher-driven solution

According to McGrath, teachers in the district deserve a great deal of praise for how readily they embraced the PLATO Learning solution. "Once we implemented the summer school program, we set a goal to train every high school teacher in the county on how to use PLATO for curriculum enrichment and benchmark remediation and to get every teacher in the district excited about PLATO, something we thought might be a tough sell, especially to veteran teachers," said McGrath. Fortunately, the software's excellent reporting functions, rigorous content, and strong appeal for students brought an overwhelming number of teachers on board. "Because the students enjoy using the PLATO software and teachers can see real student progress

through the monitoring and reporting features, teachers weren't as resistant as we had anticipated," said McGrath. This teacher-driven process allowed GCS to leverage the full potential of the PLATO solution at each of its learning sites.

### What customers think about PLATO Learning

"Implementing PLATO's credit recovery program throughout our county school system has been much more successful than I ever imagined. Fewer students are dropping out since first implementing our credit recovery program using PLATO courseware. This has also led to a higher cohort graduation rate, which is a critical part of meeting AYP requirements for No Child Left Behind."

"The features of PLATO that allow for instructional intervention are invaluable for increasing student mastery, and teacher interaction is the key to our success with PLATO. Classroom teachers teach the lessons, take their students to the lab to reinforce skills from that day's lesson using the PLATO curriculum, then return to the classroom to address any areas that require further practice or discussion. It is a huge piece of our customized intervention solution."

"We all know that each student learns differently. Many students may be challenged when it comes to reading, but these same students are certain to benefit from both the visual and audio components imbedded in the PLATO courseware. Unlike other solutions, PLATO has a lot of interactive content that keep students engaged."

### PLATO Learning success at-a-glance

- Highly interactive, visual lessons that engage all students, even kids who have difficulty reading.
- Efficient and effective distance learning, allowing students to recover credits from home, a public library, or any Internet-enabled computer.
- Customizable courses, allowing for unmatched curriculum flexibility based on teacher and student needs.
- Scalable to reach every student at every school or alternative learning site in a district.

### For more information

Contact 800.44.PLATO and visit [www.plato.com](http://www.plato.com) to learn more about PLATO intervention and credit recovery solutions.

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STEVE McGRATH,  
PROGRAM DIRECTOR,  
SATURN ACADEMY,  
GUILFORD COUNTY SCHOOLS, NC