



## CASE STUDY:

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### **SkillsTutor at Henkels & McCoy Palmetto Youth Connections, Charleston, SC**

Prepared by:

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Henkels & McCoy/Palmetto Youth Connections  
Charleston, SC

## **I. Site Description**

Palmetto Youth Connections (PYC) is a community partnership administered by Henkels & McCoy that provides training and educational services for out-of-school youth throughout South Carolina. Henkels & McCoy is a national organization that oversees a variety of programs and services including a Training Services Group that enhances the productivity and competitiveness of the nation through comprehensive programs that provide training and technical instruction to youth and adults. The program receives funding from the Department of Labor and the Workforce Investment Act.

Since 2006, PYC has been providing training to at-risk, out-of-school youth, ages 16-21 who have one or more barriers to employment, such as being deficient in basic skills or unable to secure or maintain employment for more than six months. Currently the program serves about 1,000 youth in thirteen counties. Roughly 80% of the youth served are deficient in Basic Skills, almost 70% are female, and most score 8.9 or below on the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) in reading and math. Many of the participants are trying to earn their General Education Development (GED), while others are pursuing a high school diploma through Adult Education. The program also provides pre-employment work skills and many students move into occupational skills training at local technical or community colleges or enter on-the-job training, the military, full-time college classes, or full-time employment.

Palmetto consists of four program sites:

- Santee-Lynches Workforce Investment Area in Clarendon, Kershaw, Lee, and Sumter Counties.
- Trident Workforce Investment Area in Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester Counties.
- Upstate Workforce Investment Area in Cherokee, Spartanburg, and Union Counties.
- Workline Workforce Investment Board in Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens Counties.

Roughly 1,000 students in these programs use SkillsTutor as an integrated part of their training, and throughout the country over 10,000 students enrolled in Henkels & McCoy training programs use SkillsTutor.

*“We’ve really used the content in SkillsTutor as our map for our workshops. We can then use post-tests to see where students need to do remedial work in SkillsTutor.”*

– Kal Kunkel, Region Manager McCoy/Palmetto Youth Connections, Charleston, SC.

## **II. Details of Implementation**

SkillsTutor serves as a central and integrated component of the training and instruction work carried out at PYC. The PYC programs have three common goals:

1. To increase literacy and numeracy.
2. To obtain a nationally recognized credential, typically a GED, High School Diploma and/or an occupational skills certification.
3. To place students in employment or a postsecondary education setting.

PYC has been using SkillsTutor for five years. The content in SkillsTutor is used as a map for planning and carrying out workshops and training sessions throughout each six to eight week session at PYC. The overall training period is roughly 18 months with some students able to complete the program in under a year, and others, typically those with Individualized Education Plans (IEP) spending closer to two years in the program.

Students are given a pre-test at the beginning of the program to gauge their level and determine what areas need remediation. Because SkillsTutor is a comprehensive program, sessions are designed around the content provided by SkillsTutor, and worksheets and handouts are used from the SkillsTutor web site during instructional sessions. By mapping the training sessions to SkillsTutor, instructors are able to ensure that all required skills are covered. At several points throughout the weeks of training, SkillsTutor assessments, aligned to TABE, are used to measure student progress. SkillsTutor work is customized to individual student abilities and used to supplement content covered in the workshops. PYC uses the Math, English Language Arts, Reading, Science, and Employability Skills Online (ESO) components of SkillsTutor.

The PYC program also uses the TABE aligned assessments to determine if students who have a high school diploma are prepared to enter the workforce or attend a technical school. Program administrators are familiar with the requirements for local technical colleges and they use the same integrated approach of combining workshops with customized SkillsTutor assignments in order to ensure students entering technical college have the skills needed to be successful.

*“It was really intuitive for staff to set up to use. All of our staff are able to use it and pull reports and set up their classes.”*

– Kal Kunkel, Region Manager McCoy/Palmetto Youth Connections, Charleston, SC.

### III. Usage and Gains Reported for 2010-2011

From 7/1/2010 to 6/30/2011, 431 students were registered in the program and these students completed 22,101 activities during 2,769 hours of instruction. The most heavily used programs were the Math and the Workforce Readiness Programs followed by Language Arts. Basic Math and Math B were the most heavily used with students completing 5,423 lessons. Workforce Readiness Skills and Work Effectiveness were the second most heavily used with students completing 3,723 lessons.

Gains were seen between pre-test and post-test scores for all subjects, with significant gains of 13% or higher for 14 of the 21 subjects tested. Language (61% gain), Intermediate Math (50% gain), and Math C (40% gain) showed some of the largest gains between pre- and post-test scores. Between 15 and 44 students completed both the pre- and post-tests for 11 of the 21 subject areas and the average gain in these cases was 18%. For the remaining 10 subject areas the number of students completing pre- and post-tests was 15 or fewer students, with an average gain of 23%.

*“We are able to make customized assignments based on the areas we want to focus in on, and we use pre- and post-tests for measurements. This helps us see where a student is—to see if a specific student is catching on to a particular subject area or needs more help.”*

– Kal Kunkel, Region Manager McCoy/Palmetto Youth Connections, Charleston, SC.

#### Gains: Henkels & McCoy, 7/1/2010 to 6/30/2011

Subject	Students Taking Pretest	Students Taking Posttest	Pretest Score	Posttest Score	Gains
Language	1	1	41%	66%	61%
Intermediate Mathematics	15	15	48%	72%	50%
Math C	4	4	58%	81%	40%
Science I	1	1	61%	83%	36%
Math B	20	20	62%	81%	31%
Language Arts C	7	7	68%	89%	31%
Basic Mathematics	17	17	51%	66%	29%
Career Decision Making	42	42	62%	77%	24%
Writing	3	3	49%	60%	22%
Language Arts B	17	17	69%	81%	17%
Language Arts A	44	44	74%	85%	15%
Reading Comprehension C	1	1	66%	75%	14%
Reading	2	2	72%	81%	13%
Work Effectiveness	39	39	67%	76%	13%
Job Seeking Skills	29	29	73%	79%	8%
Math A	41	41	82%	88%	7%
Information Skills	1	1	86%	91%	6%
Reading Vocabulary A	5	5	88%	93%	6%
Work Maturity Skills	37	37	77%	81%	5%
Workforce Readiness Skills	32	32	76%	79%	4%
Reading Comprehension B	2	2	78%	79%	1%

*“Our staff really likes it because it is very easy-to-use and administer and the correlations from the different sections have been really useful, whether it be academic, with the TABE assessment correlations, or if you go into the employability side, where the career coaches are working on the soft skills.”*

– Kal Kunkel, Region Manager McCoy/Palmetto Youth Connections, Charleston, SC.

## **SkillsTutor**

SkillsTutor is an online supplemental program that is used to help increase proficiency in math, reading, writing, language, science, and workforce readiness. SkillsTutor provides differentiated instruction, diagnostic testing, prescriptive assignments, and automatic reporting for the K-adult learner. It can be integrated into classroom instruction or used after school with minimal guidance.

*“The flexibility of the system is something that has really appealed to us.”*

– Kal Kunkel, Region Manager McCoy/Palmetto Youth Connections, Charleston, SC.

SkillsTutor has a flexible and easy-to-use management system that allows instructors to assign lessons by standard and monitor progress while providing real-time usage and performance data. This research-based system aligns to state and national standards including the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE). SkillsTutor is a division of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. For more information, go to [www.skillstutor.com](http://www.skillstutor.com).

