

A+ Program enables senior to recover credits in record time

After leaving her previous school, Lacey Guzman had little hope she would be able to walk across the stage and receive her high school diploma. But a new program at Coleman High School gave her a renewed sense of hope for graduation and an unexpected level of academic success.

Like many other students, Guzman found herself falling behind in her coursework due to lack of attendance. Instead of giving up, dropping out or getting a GED, Guzman enrolled in the A-Plus credit recovery program.

Remarkably, in only one semester, Guzman completed 25 self-paced classes. She will now be able to graduate in May 2008 and she has her sights set on a career as a pharmacist or a pediatrician.

Midland ISD piloted the A-Plus program in the last six weeks of the Spring 2007 semester and it is now offered to seniors at Lee and Midland senior high schools and in grades 9 through 12 at Coleman High School. Students are selected for the program where they use self-paced computer programs in a classroom setting to learn the course material. Teachers familiar with each computer program give additional assistance as students work through the lessons.

Coleman counselor Joyce Nichols said they are hoping the A-Plus program will, "help bring the dropout rate down."

"As educators, sometimes we don't realize the potential of students who have fallen so far behind," said Nichols. "(These students) get discouraged and we think they don't have the motivation to continue. This program has given students a second chance at the opportunity to complete high school graduation requirements at a faster pace than the traditional setting," Nichols said. "The students are able

to see themselves progress through the lessons on the computer and they are really encouraged by that."

Guzman described herself as a quick learner, but was always distracted in a classroom setting. Prior to falling behind, she always had strong grades.

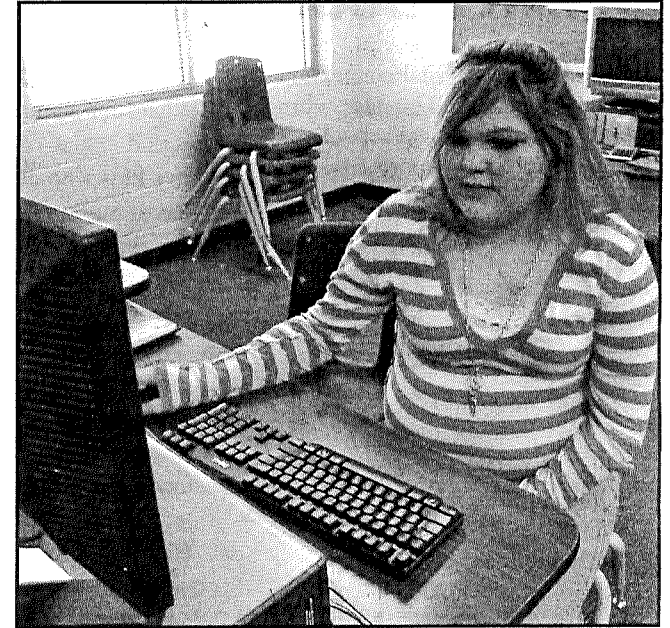
"When you are in a class with 30 different students, it takes you longer to learn things. It was good for me to come here because I always thought I learned faster than everyone else."

Her learning pace paid off as she amazed her teachers, her mother and herself by completing her government course in 2 ½ weeks and introduction to business in one week.

"When she told me she got all those credits, I couldn't believe it," Lacey's mother Jan Saenz said. "I didn't think she was going to do that well. It makes me real proud that she has accomplished so much in such a short period of time. I feel blessed with the A-Plus program because I think she would have gotten discouraged and gone for a GED." Saenz added Lacey could not have done it without the support she received from Nichols and her teachers at Coleman.

Curtis Simmons teaches secondary math including A-Plus Algebra at Coleman High School. Many of the students in his A-Plus class have been through Algebra two or three times, but have failed due to excessive absences.

"They are bored in a traditional setting because they have seen it all before," Simmons said. "This way, if they know the material they can move on to a new concept. In A-plus, the concepts are new, the ideas are new. There is not as much repetition, but the kids are learning just as much. We also get to teach one-on-one to clarify their lessons, and



Coleman High School senior Lacey Guzman used the A-Plus credit recovery program to catch up and work through 25 classes at her own pace in one semester. Guzman will now be able to graduate on time.

kids learn better that way," he said.

"It's rewarding to see kids catching up and being successful by recovering their credits," Simmons said. "It's incredibly rewarding to see a kid graduate from Coleman because you know a lot of them have overcome more challenges and still have become successful."