

# Potential VVHS dropouts get back on graduation track

New online credit recovery program

BY NATASHA LINDSTROM  
STAFF WRITER

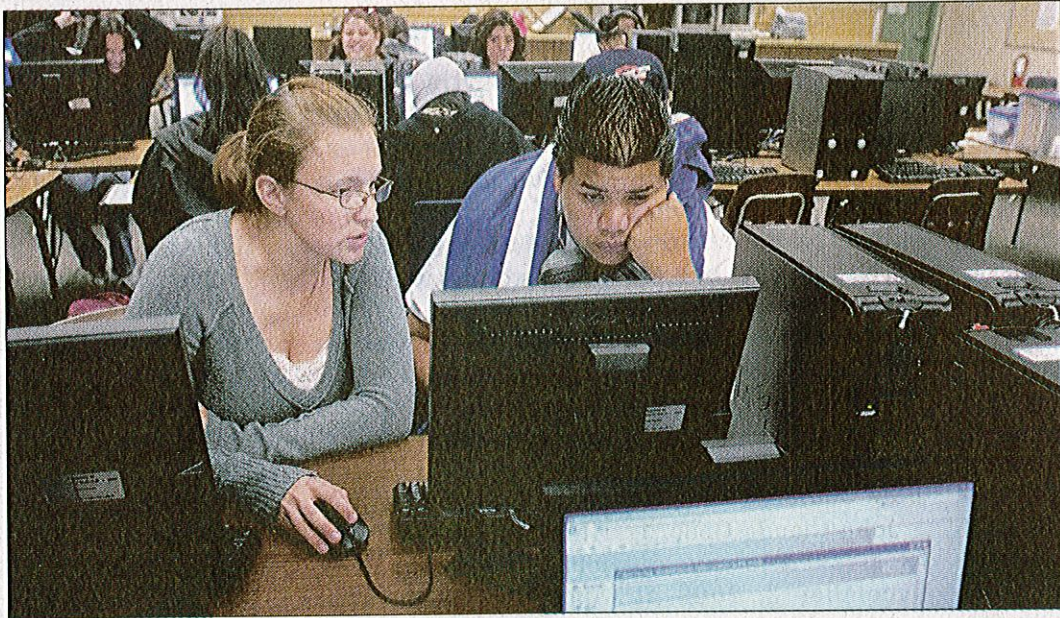
**VICTORVILLE** • Ana King had a rocky freshman year at Victor Valley High School.

She moved to Victorville mid-semester and though she tried, she couldn't seem to catch up in some subjects.

King thought failing algebra and drawing meant she'd be stuck in summer school and risk not graduating — until a school counselor referred her to a new online option.

Victor Valley High School has launched a new credit-recovery program called Apex Learning, a digital curriculum that lets students master courses at their own pace.

"You can go as fast as you can," King said, "or if you



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**CATCHING UP:** Jessica Macy, a teacher at Victor Valley High School, helps Raymond Dimas during the school's APEX program. The program allows students to make up missed credits on an independent study-type program after school.

want you can go slow."

Since introducing the online course system in October, school officials filled the program's 120 seats quickly, and they're hoping

to add more.

"We target students that are behind on units, but they're not behind on enough units to put them into a continuation-type setting," said

Jessica Macy, Apex site coordinator and English teacher. "We're finding alternate methods that help kids

# APEX: May cut the dropout rate

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graduate.”

Macy said she sees dozens of students who fall behind because they transfer from a different district or state with different graduation requirements, or they enter school mid-semester, which allows them to earn only half the required units for that period.

As a teacher, she said she observes students so preoccupied with worries about their part-time jobs or home lives they aren't retaining lessons.

“I just notice with my students alone their family issues can be so extreme at times that

they can't focus in school,” Macy said. “Or maybe when they're young and not so mature they mess around in school.”

The \$23,000 Apex program is funded by a grant from ASSETs, an after-school program at Victor Valley High. Apex offers nearly every type of course, including electives along with all levels of English, math, science and history. Students can work up to four days in a computer lab after school each week and from their computers at home.

Freshman, sophomores and juniors can earn up to 10 units per year through the program, and seniors can earn up to 20 units per year.

“We don't all learn at the same time and the same place at the same speed,” Chris Douglass, principal at VVHS, said. “This program gives them the opportunity to get some credits they may not have been so successful at the first time around.”

Between the new online APEX, seventh period additions and summer school, some 400 students — or 20 percent — of Victor Valley High's student body participate in programs to catch up on credits, Douglass said.

The goal is to reduce the estimated 11 percent of students who drop out from Victor Valley High over a four-year period,

according to 2008-09 state data.

King, who said Apex video tutorials and multimedia features make learning more fun, is eager to enroll in Victor Valley College and advance to California State University, San Bernardino, to study criminal justice.

“It does still take a lot of determination and a lot of work,” said Macy, who personally meets with Apex students to check on their progress every two weeks. “But it makes graduating a more reachable goal for them.”

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Natasha Lindstrom may be reached at (760) 951-6232 or at [nlindstrom@VVDailyPress.com](mailto:nlindstrom@VVDailyPress.com).