



The Effectiveness of Edmentum Online Solutions in the Context of School Improvement

A Curriculum Effectiveness Study From Edmentum

Overview

This study documents the achievement gains made by some of the nation's lowest-performing schools that are using Edmentum's award-winning online curriculum and assessment solutions as part of their school improvement process. The study focuses on schools that have received funding through the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program and have implemented Edmentum's online solutions as part of their coordinated improvement efforts. Results show that these schools are making dramatic and significant progress in student learning and achievement. Over a two-year period, across all high schools in the study sample that were on improvement and using Edmentum's online solutions, the graduation rate increased by an average of 24%, a gain of 12 points. This percentage point increase is approximately ten times greater than the national annual average increase in graduation rates between 1998 and 2008. Schools that used Edmentum's comprehensive online courses solution, Plato Courseware, had even better results. These schools saw an average increase in graduation rates of 53%, a gain of 22 points. This study details Edmentum online solutions as highly-effective tools that schools in need of improvement are using as part of their turnaround process.

School Improvement Grant (SIG) program

In 2009 the Obama administration challenged the education community to make the nation's lowest-achieving schools its highest priority. The administration introduced a program to encourage bold reforms that would dramatically transform these low-performing schools into safe environments where students are learning.

Authorized under Title I, section 1003(g), of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and supplemented by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the SIG program puts \$3.5 billion toward turning around the nation's lowest-performing schools. The SIG provisions clearly state that change must be dramatic, improvement must be rapid, and results must be significant. Moving beyond the restructuring provisions of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the SIG program focuses on the nation's persistently lowest-achieving schools and considers student growth when determining school progress.

When identifying the lowest-achieving schools, state education agencies arrange them into three tiers, each tier representing a level of priority for SIG funds:

- includes any Title I school in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that is among the lowest-achieving 5% of those schools in the state or is a high school that has had a graduation rate below 60% for a certain number of years.

Study at a Glance

- Seventeen Tier I and Tier II School Improvement Grant recipients in ten states
- Maximum increase in percentage of students meeting state proficiency standards in reading of 128%
- Graduation rates improved an average of 24 percent
- Maximum increase of 167% in percentage of students meeting state proficiency standards in mathematics
- Graduation rates as much as doubled

- consist of secondary schools that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds and are identified by state education agencies as “persistently lowest-achieving.”
- includes Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that are not Tier I schools.

For each Tier I and Tier II school identified in a district’s SIG application, the district must specify one of four improvement models it will implement in an effort to turn around the school:

- Replace the principal and no less than 50% of the staff, introduce significant instructional reforms, increase learning time, and provide flexibility and support.
- Reopen the school under the management of a charter school operator, charter management organization, or an education management organization.
- Close the school and reassign students to higher-achieving schools.
- Replace the principal, introduce significant instructional reforms, increase learning time, and provide flexibility and support.

Methodology

Data Sources

This study focuses on the achievement gains of some of the nation’s lowest-performing schools that are using Edmentum’s online curriculum and assessment solutions as part of their school improvement process. Schools that use Edmentum online solutions were cross-referenced with SIG recipient lists available from the US Department of Education website and state-specific education agency websites to obtain a sample of schools. A total of 17 schools were eligible for this study based on the availability of data (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Study Sample

School Type	State	Tier	Model	Edmentum Assessments	Plato Courseware
High School	Georgia	I	Transformation	x	
High School	Georgia	I	Transformation	x	x
High School	Georgia	I	Turnaround	x	x
High School	Illinois	II	Transformation		x
High School	Illinois	II	Closure	x	
High School	Illinois	II	Transformation	x	
High School	Indiana	II	Turnaround	x	
High School	Michigan	II	Not Available	x	
Middle School	Michigan	II	Not Available	x	
High School	New Mexico	I	Transformation	x	
High School	New York	I	Transformation		x
High School	New York	II	Transformation	x	
High School	Oregon	I	Transformation	x	x
High School	Pennsylvania	II	Transformation	x	
High School	Pennsylvania	II	Turnaround	x	
High School	Texas	I	Not Available	x	
Elementary School	Utah	I	Transformation	x	

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is a measurement defined by NCLB that allows federal, state, and local education agencies to determine how every public school and school district in the country is performing academically. According to the US

Department of Education, AYP is a diagnostic tool that determines how schools need to improve and where financial resources should be allocated. While AYP is controversial, its provisions under NCLB have resulted in more standard and timely reporting of these principal measures:

- school attendance
- graduation rate
- proficiency
- participation in testing

To document achievement gains of schools on improvement that are using Edmentum online solutions, publicly available data was taken from state education websites. This data included the annual percentage of students who met or exceeded each state’s proficiency standard during the 2008–2010 academic years, as well as high school graduation rates during the same time period.

Results

Proficiency

Data related to the annual percentage of students who met or exceeded each state’s proficiency standard was compiled and analyzed. Table 2 below provides a summary of the data points for schools with available data. Figure 1 provides a representation of the average percentage increase in reading and mathematics for schools in the study sample.

Figure 1. Average increase in students who met or exceeded the state’s proficiency standards in reading and mathematics for schools on improvement using Edmentum online solutions

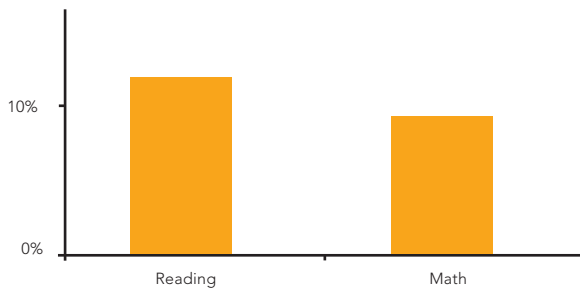


Table 2. Change in percentage of students who met or exceeded the state’s proficiency standards in reading and mathematics for schools on improvement using Edmentum online solutions

School Type	State	Reading				Mathematics			
		2008	2010	Point Gain	Percentage Increase	2008	2009	Point Gain	Percentage Increase
High School	Georgia	72	82	10	14%	76	83	7	9%
High School	Georgia	68	76	8	12%	84	87	3	4%
High School	Michigan	29	38	9	31%	14	26	12	86%
Middle School	Michigan	50	70	20	40%	41	56	15	37%
High School	New Mexico	25	57	32	128%	9	24	15	167%
High School	Oregon	44	50	6	14%	38	48	10	26%
High School	Pennsylvania	43	50	7	16%	32	44	12	38%
High School	Pennsylvania	46	46	<1	<1%	40	41	1	3%
High School	Texas	83	86	3	4%	47	72	25	53%
Elementary School	Utah	36	49	13	36%	32	34	2	6%
Average				11	30%			10	43%

Table 2 and Figure 1 show that schools that have implemented Edmentum online solutions as part of their school improvement efforts have seen rapid and dramatic increases in student learning and achievement. The average increase in the percentage of students who met or exceeded the respective state’s proficiency standard was 30% in reading and 43% in mathematics, a gain of 11 and 10 points, respectively. Further, half of the schools across both content areas experienced double-digit increases in the percentage of students who attained the proficiency standard (maximum increases of 32% in reading and 25% in Mathematics).

Graduation Rate

Graduation data from schools on improvement that are using Edmentum online solutions document the change in graduation rates from the 2008 to 2010 academic years. Table 3 on the following page provides a summary of the changes in graduation rates at schools using Edmentum solutions as part of their improvement efforts. Figure 2 provides a graphical representation of the increase in graduation rates for the schools in the study sample.

Table 3. Change in graduation rates for schools on improvement using Edmentum

School Type	State	Graduation Rate*		Point Gain	% Increase
		2008	2009		
High School	Georgia	46	72	26	57%
High School	Georgia	61	72	11	18%
High School	Georgia	31	63	32	103%
High School	Illinois	91	96	5	5%
High School	Illinois	81	92	11	14%
High School	Illinois	84	87	3	4%
High School	Indiana	57	63	6	11%
High School	New Mexico	57	65	8	14%
High School	New York	42	49	7	17%
High School	New York	43	52	15	35%
High School	Oregon	72	81	13	18%
High School	Pennsylvania	N/A	85	<1	<1%
High School	Pennsylvania	N/A	87	7	8%
High School	Texas	60	70	17	28%
Average				12	24%

* Percent of students graduating in a given school year

Figure 2. Percentage increase in graduation rates for schools on improvement using Edmentum

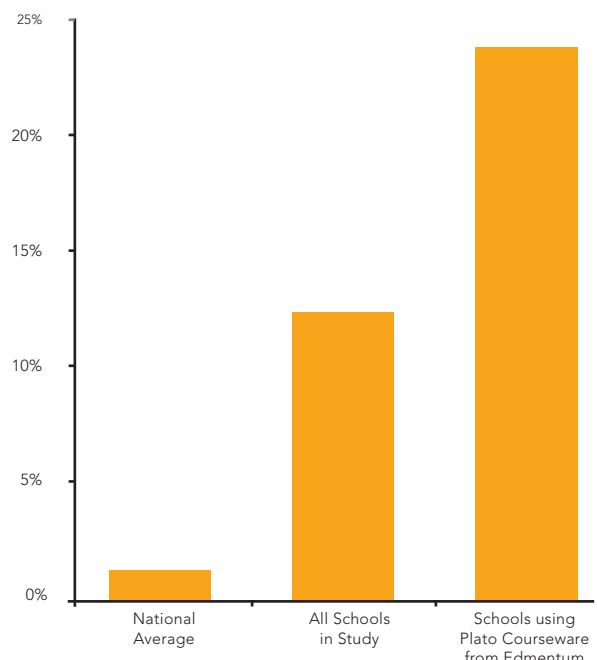


Table 3 and Figure 2 show that schools that have traditionally struggled with student performance and that have implemented Edmentum online solutions as one tool to address school improvement efforts have experienced profound gains in graduation rates in recent years. All 15 schools included in this analysis showed gains in their graduation rates during the study period, with 14 of the 15 schools experiencing gains that outpaced the annual national average during the preceding decade. The only school that did not see an increase greater than the annual national average had a graduation rate that exceeded 90% at the beginning of the study period.

Over a two-year period, across all high schools in the study sample that were on improvement and using Edmentum online solutions, the graduation rate increased by an average of 24%, a gain of 12 points. This percentage point increase is approximately ten times greater than the national annual average increase in graduation rates between 1998 and 2008.¹

¹Diplomas Count 2011. Education Week, Volume 30(34).

In schools that use Plato Courseware, Edmentum’s comprehensive online courses solution, the increase in graduation rates was even more pronounced. Plato Courseware is particularly effective in helping students who have previously failed a course—and are therefore at risk of not graduating—recover those credits. Schools in the study sample that implemented Plato Courseware as part of their school improvement process saw an average increase in graduation rates of 22% over the two-year study period.

Improving college and career readiness for high school students has become a topic of intense focus for educators and policymakers. The results of this study are therefore encouraging, as they indicate that targeted improvement efforts are working and that Edmentum’s online solutions are highly-effective tools to help students learn and be successful.

Edmentum’s School Improvement Solutions

Edmentum is a leading provider of technology-based instructional solutions for kindergarten through adult learners. For more than 50 years, Edmentum has been at the forefront of educational technology with innovative, research-based products and solutions to meet the changing needs of educators and learners. Edmentum’s online solutions make it possible to differentiate learning more effectively based on continuous assessment and adjustment to individual student needs.

Edmentum’s solutions cover a broad range of teaching and learning needs, with nearly 200 full-semester rigorous and engaging online courses that are aligned to state and common core standards and standards-based online assessments that accurately identify student needs and prescribe a course of study within an interactive curriculum. Edmentum’s innovative curriculum management solutions help educators effectively manage the teaching and learning environment by fully integrating academic standards with instructional resources. Edmentum’s research-based model of student achievement and industry-leading professional services support continuous school improvement and help to ensure that all learners have the opportunity to achieve academic and career success.

Under SIG’s transformation model—the model most commonly employed by low-performing schools—a school is required to implement four strategies designed to result in improved student learning outcomes. The following table presents Edmentum solutions that align to each of these strategies.

Edmentum provides a rigorous and comprehensive suite of solutions aligned to specific school improvement strategies.

Improvement Strategy	Edmentum Solution
1. Develop teacher and school leader effectiveness.	Edmentum offers relevant, job-embedded professional development services for integrated school improvement solutions. These ongoing, high-quality services leverage technology and achievement data to help accelerate learning.
2. Implement comprehensive instructional reform strategies.	Edmentum curriculum and assessment solutions use data to differentiate instruction to meet students’ needs. They are vertically aligned from one grade to the next and are aligned to state and national (Common Core) academic standards. A. Plato Courseware features full-semester courses that can be used for targeted intervention, for first-time credit, and to recover credits for failing students. B. Edmentum assessments include formative, benchmark, and progress monitoring tools to ensure that students are on track to meet or exceed state proficiency requirements. Instructional resources are automatically prescribed to students in areas targeted for individual improvement.
3. Extend learning time and create community-oriented schools.	Students can access Edmentum’s flexible, online instructional and assessment solutions anytime and anywhere. Edmentum solutions provide flexibility for extended day programs, resulting in increased instructional time, more time for educator collaboration, and additional time for student enrichment opportunities during the school day.
4. Provide operating flexibility and sustained support.	Edmentum’s online solutions provide schools with increased operating flexibility (including staffing, scheduling, and budgeting) to implement a comprehensive approach to improving student achievement outcomes.

Plato Courseware

Plato Courseware offers nearly 200 innovative, semester-long online courses for kindergarten through adult learners in reading and language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, electives, advanced placement, and global languages. The structure of each course is built around discrete learning objectives that align to state and Common Core standards. These courses are designed to explicitly incorporate multiple levels of rigor within an integrated online learning environment. Each course is ready to use, but also highly customizable.

Plato Courseware accommodate instruction that is below grade level, at grade level, and above grade level by providing ways to reach learners in different environments, including a lab, a blended model in which online curriculum supplements the traditional classroom, or a completely virtual experience. Plato's online courses can be used for original credit, credit recovery, intervention, and advanced placement. Independent research documenting the efficacy of Edmentum solutions with at-risk learners has found Plato Courseware to be highly effective. Students who use Plato to retake courses they previously failed experience, on average, a 17-point gain in teacher assigned course grades, and 84% of students pass courses that they had failed with traditional classroom instruction².

Edmentum Assessments

Edmentum offers a full range of assessment solutions, including diagnostic, formative, benchmarking, placement, and integrated course-level assessments. Edmentum assessments accurately evaluate learners and prepare them with individualized learning while helping educators to more effectively guide instruction.

Diagnostic assessments play an important role in determining learner placement, in monitoring student progress, and in establishing accountability requirements. They reveal the specific strengths and learning needs of an individual or a group of learners in relation to what will be taught.

Edmentum's diagnostic assessment solution uses standards-based online assessments that assist in evaluating a learner's individual needs and subsequent placement. These assessments easily and automatically link to curriculum to provide an end-to-end solution for all learners. Educators can then respond to specific needs with focused, standards-based solutions to ensure that learners receive the personalized instruction that is so important to academic achievement.

Edmentum's comprehensive suite of assessment solutions helps educators identify at-risk learners, monitor an individual's progress, and determine when learners are on track toward continued growth and advancement.

Edmentum Professional Development

Edmentum's professional development model is designed around an effective school improvement methodology designed to build capacity, coach educators and administrators, and facilitate strong implementations in which learner achievement goals will be met and school capacity is enhanced.

Edmentum's professional development process focuses on key, interrelated areas of impact for successful academic program implementation. Educational consultants use this "lens" to guide the process around unique program, instructor, and learner needs for success.

²Evidence of Effectiveness of PLATO Online Secondary Solutions on Student Achievement and College and Career

³Evidence of Effectiveness of PLATO Online Secondary Solutions on Student Achievement and College and Career Readiness (2010). Report available at: <http://www.plato.com/resources/efficacy>.

- Facilitation—analyzing student and program data in order to develop goals and a timeline for strategic program implementation
- Student Improvement—deeply examining student motivation and all of the internal programmatic and implementation structures that support student motivation and improvement
- Curriculum—identifying resources for alignment and integration of Edmentum curriculum and assessments, and facilitating the analysis of student achievement and program data to ensure that the curriculum is meeting intended learning goals
- Program—evaluating what is working, what needs refinement, what needs to be modified, and what the next steps are to move forward, which results in a continuous connection back to facilitation and keeps the focus on goals, outcomes, and results

Conclusion

The School Improvement Grant program provides an opportunity to implement bold reforms to transform the nation's lowest-performing schools. Research has shown that there is not one single "best approach" to dramatic school improvement efforts. Rather, success is generally the result of multiple coordinated initiatives. Edmentum provides research-based and research-proven curriculum, assessment, and professional development solutions that are used by schools throughout the United States as part of their School improvement reform efforts. Edmentum's rigorous and engaging programs provide targeted learning opportunities for struggling students and also support teachers with the data, reporting, and development tools they need for success. This study documents the rapid, dramatic increases in student learning and achievement that schools facing extraordinary challenges have attained while using Edmentum online solutions.