Building High-Quality Sustainable Virtual Programs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

edmentum™

Virtual Learning has experienced consistent year-over-year growth since almost the beginning of the 21st century. This growth has been driven by a number of factors: students that need a more flexible schedule; students unable to physically attend school because of medical or other reasons; students that have not found success in a traditional school environment; students that want to expand their access to more course options; and students that simply prefer virtual learning for all or some of their education. Throughout this sustained growth virtual learning has seen a variety of different instructional models emerge, some producing high quality results and others failing to meet expectations – with much of the research and media attention focused on the latter. The pandemic has compounded negative perceptions of virtual learning by often conflating emergency remote learning models with existing virtual models.

Quality sustainable virtual learning is more than just a virtual modality. It is an intentionally designed comprehensive educational system that includes high quality virtual instruction, curriculum and assessment designed for virtual learning, a technology platform optimized for online delivery, and a suite of student support services that meet the needs of diverse learners.

It has never been more important or urgent to define and hold the line on high-quality sustainable virtual learning. As a leader in virtual learning for over two decades, Edmentum is in

the unique position of being able to use what we've learned in that time to exam the evidence of effective outcomes and develop a framework of best practices for designing and scaling high-quality sustainable virtual programs that truly meet the needs of students, families and educators.

In a 2021 Education Next poll 48% of parents of elementary-age children and 68% of parents of high school-age children believe students should have options to continue remote learning. In addition, 2021 Tyton Partners research indicates that 60% of schools are anticipating that 6% or more of students will be fully virtual or hybrid in the future.

The first step in this research process to define high-quality sustainable virtual programs is to look holistically at a variety of virtual programs and identify successfully program components and practices. To that end, Edmentum has produced a series of five case studies that evaluate outcome data across different virtual programs and student populations.
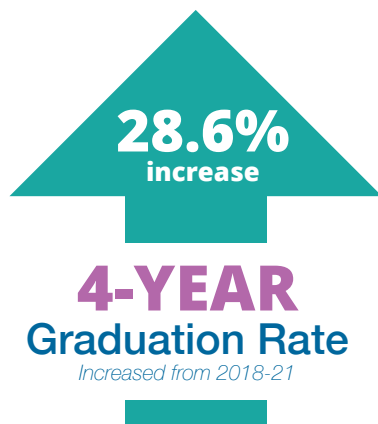
Case Study Summary

SAT Scores

+212

Points Higher Than Nation Average

28.6% increase

4-YEAR
Graduation Rate

Increased from 2018-21

Successful Course Completion

Legend:
- EdOptions Rural/Town
- Comparison Study Rural
- Comparison Study Town

(Chart axis: 80%, 70%, 60%, 50%, 40%, 30%, 20%, 10%)

High Academic Achievement In a Virtual and Blended Learning Environment

This case study analyzes data from high achieving college-bound students enrolled in a nationwide virtual program with 15 locations in 12 states. The middle and high school students in this study are all elite student-athletes motivated to succeed in K–12 education with the goal of attending prestigious post-secondary institutions. The study found that these students were attaining high academic achievement, outperforming key national measures like SAT, ACT, and GPA.
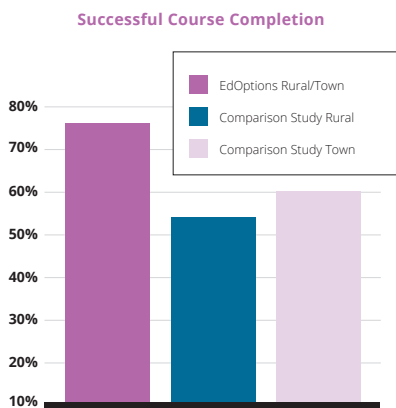
Equity in Virtual Learning, Improving Outcomes for Diverse Populations

In this study we look at issues of equity in education to understand how virtual learning can support success for students experiencing multiple risk factors, including students that are socioeconomically disadvantaged, experiencing housing insecurity, and students that have not previously experienced success in a traditional learning setting for a variety of reasons. This study demonstrated that students with risk factors can be successful in a learning program that includes a system of support with additional resources like: Success Coaches, Guidance Counselors, and Special Education Instructors. Students in this study outperformed a similar demographic population of students in a 10-year longitudinal study of virtual learning outcomes, attaining higher levels of successful course completion across all core subjects. The virtual program in this case study also improved their 4-year graduation rate by 28.6 percentage points and reduced their dropout rate by 27.4 percentage points over a two-year period.

Virtual Learning and Rural Schools, Improving Access and Opportunity for Learners in Rural Communities
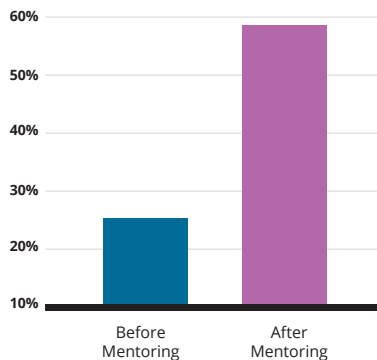
One-in-five Americans live in rural communities that struggle under the weight of economic stagnation and social decline. In recent decades rural communities have experienced both negative population and unemployment growth. Students in rural communities have less access to course options, to advanced curriculum, to highly qualified teachers, to broadband, and other critical education and life opportunities. In this study, an analysis of CTE course usage looked at 483,482 course enrollments and demonstrated that students were leveraging virtual learning to successfully expand course access. Additional analysis in this case study identified significantly higher rates of successful course completion when comparing data from three rural district virtual programs to a similar dataset in a separate 10-year longitudinal study.

Case Study Summary

91.7%
Median Course Grade

Elementary Students and Virtual Learning, Evidence-Based Outcomes and Best Practices

Elementary-age children have unique developmental needs that require specific pedagogical practice within an effective virtual model. This study examines evidence and research to understand the roles and relationships of teachers, school leaders, parents, and students within the context of effective virtual learning and elementary education. This study looked at over 1,500 elementary-age students in EdOptions virtual program during the 2020–21 school year. Within the backdrop of a global pandemic and emergency remote learning, this study showed that elementary students enrolled in Edmentum's virtual program achieved high levels of academic success with high completion rates and median course grades of 91.7%.

Scaling Effective Virtual Teaching Practices, Equipping and Supporting Teachers for Success

Teachers and education leaders often face an uphill battle in building high-quality sustainable virtual programs. This study looks at a mentoring model that: 1) supports educators in designing high-quality sustainable virtual programs, and 2) provides the training and skills teachers need to transition from a traditional classroom setting to becoming an effective virtual teacher. This case study looks at 700 course enrollments across three school districts: Oakdale Public School, OK; American International School of Nouakchott, Mauritania Africa; and Bristol Township School District, PA. The study found that with Edmentum's Virtual Teacher Mentoring program these districts increased overall teacher confidence in their virtual teaching abilities and demonstrated high levels of student academic success.

Before Mentoring | After Mentoring