

# Case Study

## Rio Rancho Cyber Academy

RIO RANCHO, NEW MEXICO

### *Edgenuity Middle and High School Students Outperform Peers on the New Mexico Measured Progress Exam*

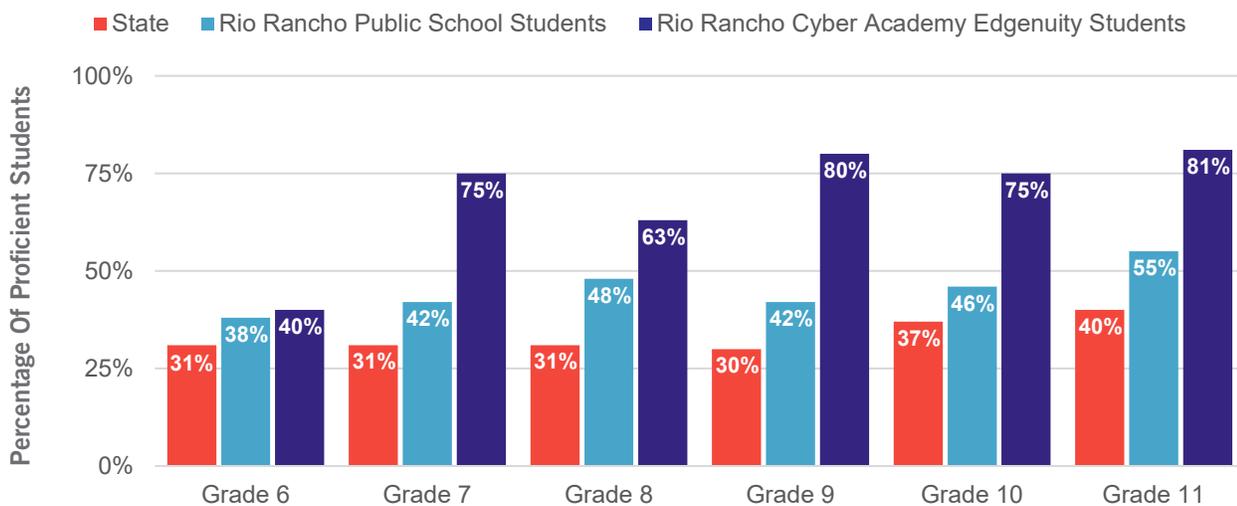
Founded in 2005, Rio Rancho Cyber Academy (RRCA) is an accredited, diploma-granting school that uses Edgenuity online courses as its core curriculum for students in grades 6–12. In 2020, Weld North Education compared the performance of RRCA students and students in the district and state on the 2019 New Mexico Measured Progress Exam. Data showed that, on average, a greater percentage of RRCA students than district or state students scored at the Proficient level on the spring 2019 New Mexico Measured Progress English Exam in English language arts (ELA) and math assessments (Figures 1 and 2). Notably, while 80 percent of Edgenuity 9th-grade students achieved proficiency on the spring 2019 New Mexico Measured Progress Exam in math, only 31 percent of students in the district and 17 percent in the state scored at the Proficient level.

#### RIO RANCHO CYBER ACADEMY DEMOGRAPHICS:

White:	52%
Hispanic:	40%
Asian:	2%
Black:	1%
Low Income:	24%
Gender: Female	52%

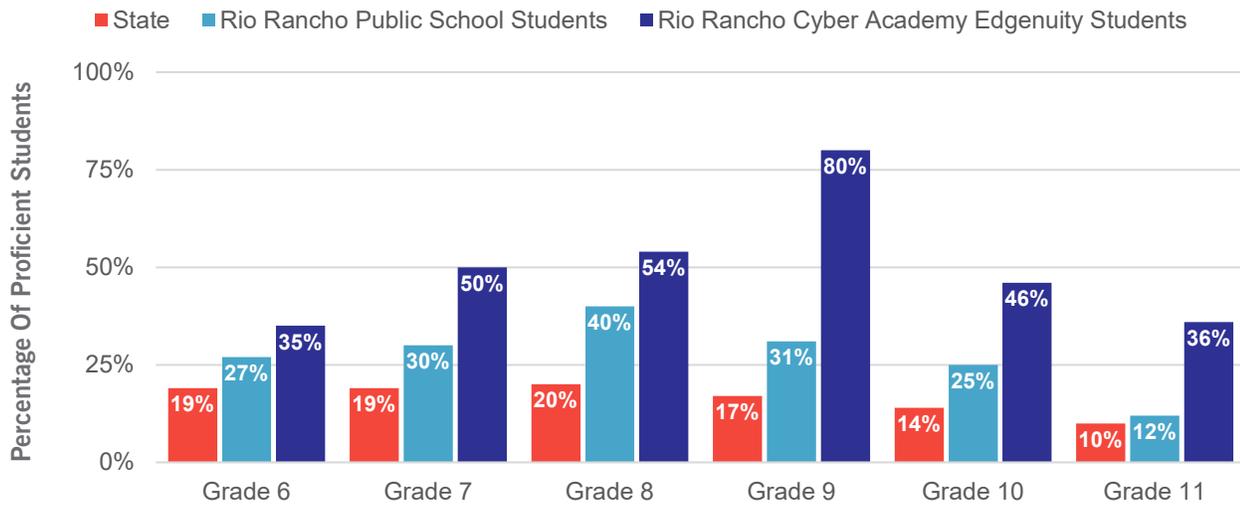
**Figure 1. Rio Rancho Cyber Academy, Rio Rancho Public Schools, and New Mexico State Students**

Percentage of Students Achieving Proficiency on the ELA New Mexico Measured Progress Exam by Grade Level, Spring 2019



**Figure 2. Rio Rancho Cyber Academy, Rio Rancho Public Schools, and New Mexico State Students**

Percentage of Students Achieving Proficiency on the New Mexico Measured Progress Math Exam by Grade Level, Spring 2019



## Challenge

RRCA strives to merge evidence-based traditional teaching methods with the latest technological advances in interactive distance learning. The school needed to provide a flexible schedule for students while maintaining the rigor of traditional face-to-face learning in an online environment. Their goal is to allow students to experience deeper learning regardless of whether they are in school or at home.

## Solution

RRCA students complete Edgenuity mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies courses on their personal computers at home and attend school two days a week (7:30 a.m. to 2:05 p.m.). They spend a minimum of five hours a week working on each Edgenuity course.

At school, teachers provide instruction in a computer lab. Students begin the day reviewing math material with their teacher for 90 minutes. During this time, teachers answer questions and clarify complex concepts and skills. After the morning math period, teachers provide small-group instruction to help students refine their notetaking, writing, critical thinking, and analytical skills. Teachers also lead students in project-based activities designed to support individualized intervention and enrichment. Formative assessments and consistent feedback are an integral part of the work done at school, which, in turn, supports remote learning.

## Lessons Learned

---

Year after year, Edgenuity students at RRCA consistently outperform their peers in the district and across the state on state assessments. The school attributes its success to:

**Small student-teacher ratio:** At RRCA, every teacher is responsible for managing, monitoring, mentoring, motivating, and modeling learning for 25 students. Teachers regularly provide academic counseling and tutoring in person and via e-mail. Instructors evaluate student performance prior to each unit assessment by reviewing students' notes and homework for clarity, content, and completion.

**Collaborative leadership:** RRCA's blended learning program began with an interdepartmental team drawn from the entire Rio Rancho education community, including instructional leaders, staff from the informational technology and curriculum teams, educators and assistants who would eventually work at RRCA, members of the school board, and parents. By creating a whole-school selection committee to choose the best online program for RRCA students, collaborative leadership and buy-in was a bedrock principle of the school—ensuring a long-term commitment to the program and investment in its success. When the school implemented Edgenuity as part of its blended learning strategy, “It was important for the credibility of the program and for district buy-in for us to build a collaborative team that would steer the introduction of blended learning implementation,” said Heidi Kenworthy, Online Program Manager at RRCA. “In the beginning, you have to build a reputation that online learning is just as rigorous as traditional learning and having the curriculum team on board from the start helps to solidify that reputation and lend credibility to a new, exciting program.” Measurable goals were established and regularly considered, with the data easily pulled from the Edgenuity program to allow for frequent, clear assessments of student growth, success, and challenges—making growth attainable through collaboration.

**Promoting deeper learning:** RRCA identified the skill sets students need to achieve success in creating, discussing, and presenting interactive work. Skills include:

- Reading and answering questions to develop vocabulary and comprehension, to activate schema, and to predict and question.
- Notetaking to use vocabulary and refresh objectives, to study and review, and to underscore relevant information.
- Writing short answer responses and essays to determine writing purpose, to think and organize, and to use relevant information.
- Developing Thinking Maps® to organize thinking and information, to document information, and to discuss learning in class.

**Using data to drive instruction:** RRCA works to ensure that all students achieve 100 percent completion of their assigned coursework within a school semester, along with a minimum 70 percent mastery of the content. Because Edgenuity Courseware is available to students 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all students can take the time they need to meet this goal. Teachers at RRCA mentor, monitor, motivate, and model, helping students understand what mastery of a topic or skill looks like, and encouraging them to take ownership of their success and learning. If students struggle with an online activity, they can reach out to a teacher—either in person or by e-mail—for immediate help.