

Evaluation of Success Virtual Learning Centers 2013 to 2015

Results from a limited investigation of Edgenuity instruction in a blended learning context provides preliminary evidence of the program's positive impact on high school students' reading, language, and mathematics competency.

Evaluation Objectives

Hypothesi LLC is an independent evaluation firm based in Ann Arbor, Michigan. As part of a two-year study, Hypothesi LLC examined the reading, mathematics, and writing outcomes of Success Virtual Learning Center students who used Edgenuity during the 2013–2014 and 2014–2015 school years. Results showed that overall, students who used Edgenuity courses made statistically significant improvements in their reading, mathematics, and writing achievement.

Methodology

Each student's reading, math, and written language achievement was assessed at the beginning and end of the study with the NWEA MAP Growth Reading, Language, and Mathematics tests as well as the BASI Math and Written Language tests.

Developed by the NWEA, the MAP Growth Reading, Language, and Mathematics tests are Common Core–aligned, computer-adaptive assessments administered to students in grades 3–12. If a student answers correctly, the next question is more difficult; if a student answers incorrectly, the follow-up item is easier. Tests are typically administered three times a year. Each MAP Growth assessment uses the Rasch (RIT) unit, an equal interval scale score, to measure student growth and determine student mastery of various defined skills within disciplines.

Developed by Achilles N. Bardos, the BASI is a multilevel, norm-referenced achievement test that measures math, reading, and written language skills for students in grades 3–12. The test yields composite standard scores. According to the BASI technical manual, a standard score that remains the same from fall to spring indicates normal growth. Therefore, any gains on the BASI can be interpreted as exceeding normal growth.

Participants

NWEA MAP Growth Mathematics, Language, and Reading test data were available for 75 students (approximately 30% of the students enrolled for the majority of the school year) who used Edgenuity courses during the 2014–2015 school year. BASI Mathematics, Written Language, and Reading test data were available for 121 students (approximately 30% of the students enrolled for the majority of the school year) who used Edgenuity courses during the 2013–2014 school year.

Implementation

Founded in 2012 by Berrien Springs Public Schools in partnership with Dallas Bell, owner of Student Retention, Success Virtual Learning Centers (SVLC) are designed to provide blended and virtual learning options to students who are struggling academically, at risk of dropping out, or who need an alternative to the traditional school setting.

Evaluation Overview

Grades:

9-12

Number of Students:

121 (2013–14); 75 (2014–15)

School Years:

2013–2014 and 2014–2015

Measures:

Northwest Evaluation Association

Measures of Academic Progress

(NWEA® MAP® Growth™) Reading,

Language, and Mathematics tests and Basic

Achievement Skills Inventory™ (BASI™)

References

Blazevski, J. (2015). External Evaluation Report of Success Virtual Learning Centers 2014–2015. Ann Arbor, MI: Hypothesi LLC.

Blazevski, J. (2014). External Evaluation Report of WMV Online Education Program 2013–2014. Ann Arbor, MI: Hypothesi LLC.

In addition to providing a diploma, SVLC offers a structured internship program designed to give students on-the-job training. Because of its success at graduating at-risk students, the program has been expanded to 15 local school systems across Michigan.

Students attend SLVC 36 to 52 weeks a year. They are given the option of working on their online Edgenuity courses at home or in a local learning center that is open five days a week, seven hours a day. Students take one class at a time and complete each class every three weeks, for a total of 12 classes a year.

While in the local learning center, certified teachers work with students individually to review notes, set learning goals, and provide academic remediation or support. They also provide additional academic and emotional support via phone and video conference calls. Students are required to meet with teachers to discuss how they are meeting daily and weekly goals.

Performance-based accountability is the hallmark of SLVC. Every day, SLVC tracks whether students are logging into courses, spending enough time in courses, mastering content, and communicating with teachers. Based on student performance, students are offered a continuum of academic and behavioral support.

- Tier 1 includes students who have completed 33 percent of their weekly coursework and are on track for completing at least 12 classes annually. Students in Tier 1 are provided with general academic and behavioral support.
- Tier 2 includes students who have completed 20 percent of their weekly coursework and who are on track for completing four to eleven courses annually. These students are provided with more focused, targeted instruction and behavioral support to help them catch up and get ahead.
- Tier 3 includes students who have completed less than 10 percent of their weekly coursework and will complete fewer than three courses during the year. These students are provided with intensive intervention. Each week a Tier 3 student stays in Tier 3, they earn a strike. If the student earns three strikes, the student is required to sign an academic contract. If a student earns an additional three strikes for violating the contract, the student is encouraged to transfer to a traditional school.

Assessment Results

NWEA MAP Growth Results

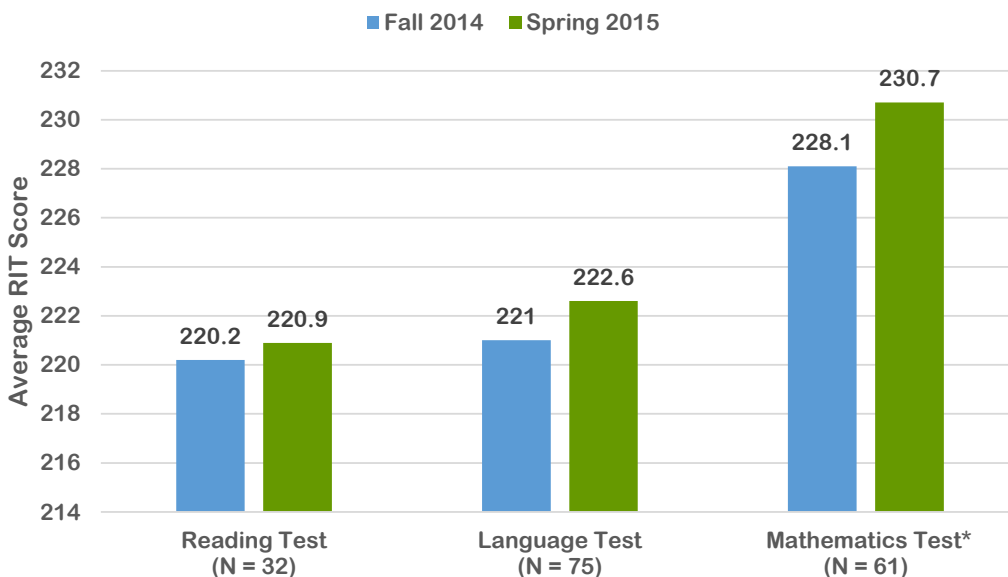
After one year, students showed significant improvement in their mathematics skills. Smaller gains were seen in other subject areas, based on our limited sample. As Graph 1 shows, on the NWEA MAP Growth Reading test, students improved from a fall 2014 RIT score of 220.2 to a spring 2015 RIT score of 220.9. On the NWEA MAP Growth Language test, Edgenuity students improved from a fall 2014 RIT score of 221 to a spring 2015 RIT score of 222.6. Perhaps most notably, on the NWEA MAP Growth Mathematics test, Edgenuity students improved from a fall 2014 RIT score of 228.1 to a spring 2015 RIT score of 230.7, a statistically significant gain of 2.6 RIT points.

BASI Results

Paired t-tests revealed that students demonstrated significant gains on the BASI Mathematics, Written Language, and Reading tests, as Graph 2 shows. Students made the largest improvements on the Written Language test, significantly gaining 5.4 standard score points.

Graph 1: Success Virtual Learning Center Edgenuity Students, Grades 9–12

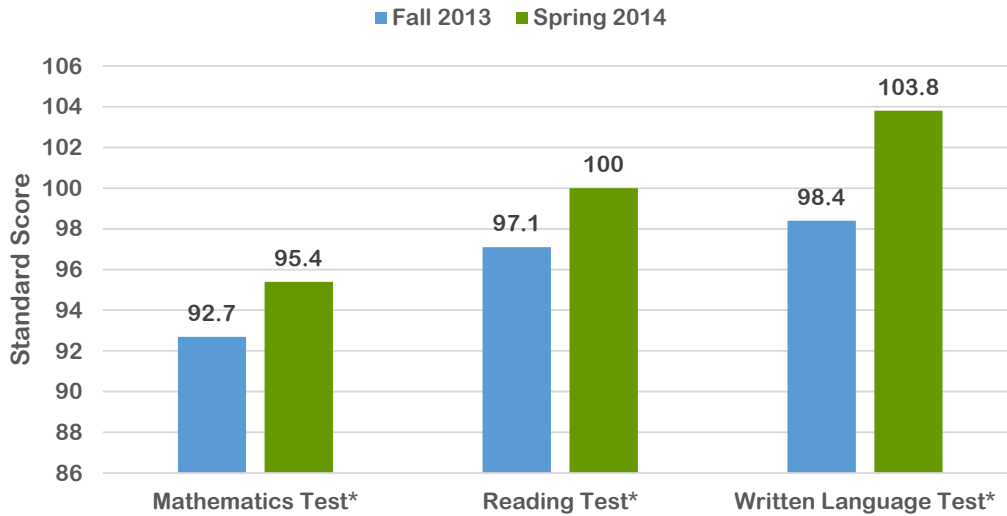
Performance on the NWEA MAP Growth Tests, Fall 2014 to Spring 2015



*Note: Paired t-tests revealed gains were statistically significant at ($p \leq 0.05$).

Graph 2: Success Virtual Learning Center Edgenuity Students, Grades 9–12 (N = 121)

Performance on the BASI Tests, Fall 2013 to Spring 2014



*Note: Paired t-tests revealed gains were statistically significant at ($p \leq 0.05$).

Conclusion

In conclusion, results from this limited study suggest that using Edgenuity can have a positive impact on students' academic achievement. Using Edgenuity, SVLC students demonstrated significant gains on the NWEA MAP Growth Mathematics test. Students also demonstrated significant improvement on the BASI, exceeding annual growth expectations in all tested subject areas.