

Case Study

West Aurora School District

AURORA, IL

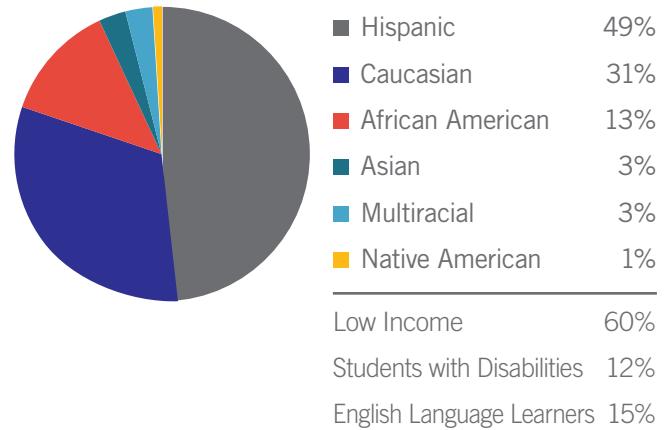
Can an online program be versatile enough to meet the needs of all students?

Problem: Students with behavioral and academic problems were dropping out of school.

Solution: A flexible alternative education solution motivated and empowered students to re-engage in their education.

Outcome: Personalized instruction and rigorous curriculum increased student engagement.

School Demographics



Background

Located 42 miles west of Chicago, West Aurora School District (WASD) serves a diverse population of learners. Of the 12,128 students in Grades K–12, 60 percent of students are from low-income backgrounds, 15 percent are eligible for bilingual programs, and 12 percent are enrolled in special education services. In 2012, administrators were looking for an engaging online summer school curriculum. Their goal was to find a program that could not only provide credit recovery options to struggling students at risk of dropping out of school, but also offer enrichment opportunities to gifted students.

Choosing Edgenuity: Flexibility is the Primary Concern

“I liked that the courses were customizable and that they would closely mirror our own curriculum,” explains Luanne Kelsey, Director of Non-Traditional Programming for WASD. “We had a lot of different types of students to serve in summer school, and I liked that Edgenuity could meet the needs of a variety of students.”

In summer 2012, WASD piloted Edgenuity courses with three different populations of students:

- 1) middle school students who did not pass the reading or math middle school courses;
- 2) incoming ninth graders who sought to enroll in an accelerated biology course; and
- 3) at-risk high school students who required credit recovery.



“We had a lot of different types of students to serve in summer school, and I liked that Edgenuity could meet the needs of a variety of students.”

The goal was to test Edgenuity's effectiveness for possible expansion with alternative education schools. Courses were offered twice a week, three hours a day, in teacher-supervised computer labs. Following the success of the Edgenuity summer school implementation, the program was continued during the school year.

Engaging Content and Effective Learning Supports

WASD administrators observed that the Edgenuity courses helped students across the academic spectrum succeed. Detailed course guidelines clearly outlined the expectations for students, with warm-up activities connecting prior experiences to new content. The explicit instruction helped solidify content knowledge by activating background knowledge and providing repetition and review.

In addition, administrators explained in follow-up interviews that course material was engaging and accessible to the various targeted student populations. In particular, students benefited from explicit instructional videos featuring certified, on-screen teachers, as well as from rigorous assignments, interactive multimedia activities, and simulated lab experiments.

Edgenuity's learning management system also helped students take control of their own learning, which was apparent in the WASD pilot program. Online learning accommodated individual academic needs by allowing students to pause, rewind, and replay instruction as frequently as desired. Students also became engaged in their studies and progress and were frequently observed using the Edgenuity dashboard to track progress and measure their work against a district-assigned goal. Color-coded flags alerted students if they were lagging behind the ideal pace of the class. Red indicated that a student was falling behind, blue signified that the pace of work was on track, and green meant a student was excelling beyond course goals. Leaders in the school district noted that the Edgenuity Progress Bar has inspired competition in the classroom to see who can stay in the green.

Helping Teachers Become Even More Productive

Teachers in WASD also used Edgenuity's reporting tools and features to monitor student progress and identify areas where students needed additional support. With this information, teachers were empowered to do what they do best: motivate students and ensure that they truly master content.

Meeting the Needs of All Learners

Kelsey reports that Edgenuity is also helping to bolster students' self-confidence. "Not every child fits into the traditional school model. But thanks to Edgenuity, students have more confidence than ever before." Kelsey says one student, who previously had behavioral and academic challenges, later emailed her to say she had found new hope and optimism that she would succeed in school after using Edgenuity. According to Kelsey, "Edgenuity was the carrot that helped this student excel." Data indicates that 86 percent of students completed their classes with passing grades.