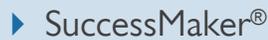# Savvas Efficacy & Quality
CASE STUDY

▶ SuccessMaker®

SKYLINE DISTRICT 5 (D-5)
BAPCHULE, ARIZONA

Staff: Rodney James, Vice President of Education, Skyline Education, Inc.,
Vaughn Flannigan, Principal Skyline D-5, and Deanna Tsosie, Lab Manager Skyline D-5

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KEY FINDINGS

Since implementing SuccessMaker® in 2012–2013, the percentage of 5th through 8th Grade students achieving proficiency on the state assessment in math and reading has increased significantly. Student proficiency rates have increased 16 percentage points in math and 23 percentage points in reading. Each student cohort's proficiency rate in math and reading has increased over the same period of time.

DISTRICT/SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT DEMOGRAPHICS

- Bapchule is an unincorporated community in northern Pinal County, Arizona. The town is located on the Gila River Indian Community south of the Phoenix Metropolitan Area.
- Skyline Education is the parent company of six charter schools located in Arizona. The philosophy of the schools revolves around the three As—arts, academics, and athletics. These six schools serve approximately 1,200 students and are growing. Skyline District 5 (D-5) joined the Skyline Education group in 2008.
- The school serves approximately 120 students in Grades 5 through 8 on the Gila River Indian Reservation.
- 100% of the students are classified as American Indian/Alaskan Native.
- 88.6% of students are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program.
- Students with Disabilities account for 20.6% of the student population.
- Student and teacher mobility annually is less than 5%.

GOALS AND CHALLENGES

Skyline D-5 sought to achieve three goals by implementing SuccessMaker.

1. Enable each student to progress two grade levels in one academic year. Students entering Skyline D-5 arrive, on average, two to three years behind grade level. All students entering the school are benchmark tested with Galileo Assessment® to measure their accurate grade level ability. Achieving this goal allows students to leave the school on grade level.

2. Support different types of learning styles to meet all students' needs.

3. Provide a primary content and assessment solution for the school's Response to Intervention (RTI) program. This goal emerged in the second year of implementation.

Goal three arose from observation of SuccessMaker data in its first few months of usage during the spring of 2013.

In his role as Principal of another Skyline campus, Rodney James used SuccessMaker with a selected population including Title 1 students, special education students, and the lowest performing 25% of students. Mr. James saw SuccessMaker's impact and recognized its potential to serve all students, including the gifted population. In the summer of 2013, Mr. James was moved to his current position of Vice President of Education at Skyline Education and began working with the education department members to determine how to implement SuccessMaker and measure its impact. The team mapped out a project scope defining the three identified goals.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- During the first few months of implementation in spring of 2013, a Savvas Educational Consultant conducted a two-hour initial training on SuccessMaker, advising staff on program implementation, course customizations, and report generation. Some additional staff members used the training modules available on mytrainingconnection.com but Mr. James notes that those training modules were not mandatory.

- SuccessMaker lab manager Deanna Tsosie has been with Skyline D-5 for two years and essentially taught herself how to use the program. She signed up for mytrainingconnection.com and utilized the online teacher tutorials whenever possible to increase her familiarity with the program. After mastering the basics and setting up her students and classes, she received training from a Savvas Educational Consultant who worked at her site, focusing on the specifics of generating reports.

IMPLEMENTATION

- The first phase of implementation occurred in the spring of 2013. Principal Vaughn Flannigan notes, "Skyline Education brought SuccessMaker to our campus because of the program's strong content alignment to our state assessment." He adds,

  "Our teachers found SuccessMaker content had a strong correlation to the state assessment, and the program was extremely interactive with our students. Student engagement in math and reading instruction increased when utilizing SuccessMaker."

- The first full year of SuccessMaker implementation was the 2013–2014 school year. Every 5th–8th Grade student in the school was targeted. The initial benchmark data from Galileo was used to determine how much daily access each student had to the SuccessMaker program.

- SuccessMaker addressed the challenge of meeting Tier1 RTI needs. Each student at Skyline used SuccessMaker math or reading once a day for a class period regardless of whether the student was on grade level, below grade level, or gifted. Students at Skyline D-5 were served in a 53-station PC computer lab.

- In the Tier 1 model, the lab manager monitored the students for the 7th–8th Grade teachers, allowing the core subject teachers to meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and intervention meetings, and/or to review the SuccessMaker data on specific students' growth. The 5th–6th Grade teachers attended lab with their students and the lab manager.

- Depending on the benchmark data, students were provided between one and three sessions daily of both math and reading, meeting the Tier II RTI model. Students who performed at Falls Far Below (FFB) on the benchmark assessment were provided access to three daily sessions on SuccessMaker. To avoid adversely impacting core class instruction, the staff assigned additional SuccessMaker time during physical education and/or elective class. Once students were identified as on grade level, they were able to return to their elective class. Parents in the community supported this plan.

- In the Tier III RTI model, the number of students' SuccessMaker sessions was determined by benchmark scores and review of the Areas of Difficulty Report (AOD) to isolate the specific skills for which they needed individual or small group instruction. Instructional coaches worked with the students using traditional paper and pencil approaches and other methods to help them master the concept.

- SuccessMaker reports also identified some students performing more than two years below grade level and needing additional time on task to meet a growth goal. That additional time was not available during the school day so the district provided home access to students through the school portal. Home usage was found to be most successful when partnered around a contest, such as tracking the minutes a student logged in and worked from home, and providing a class incentive. Home usage was always optional to promote equity in the community, where some students were unable to use SuccessMaker at home due to Internet access limitations.

HOW SUCCESSMAKER WORKS

The SuccessMaker program responds to each student individually upon completion of the Initial Placement Motion (IPM). The system then offers curriculum that is at higher or lower levels as it evaluates the current instructional level of the student in each of eight reading strands and 16 math strands.

Once the IPM is completed, the system calculates an average of the strand level scores and places the student at the appropriate level. For example, a student might have an instructional level of 4.3 in reading, but a vocabulary level of 3.9. This student would begin at the level at which he or she scored on the IPM for each strand, not at the average level of 4.3. The student in this example would begin work in vocabulary at the 3.9 instructional level. The process is the same for math.

SuccessMaker collects the following data on each student as he or she works:

- Time on task and number of sessions.
- Level of each strand, IPM level, current level, and gains (the difference between the student's current level and IPM level).
- Overall grade level average, overall percentage of correct responses, and average time on task.
- Number of skills attempted, number of skills mastered, number of skills not mastered, percentage of skills mastered, and specific areas of difficulty for that student.

SuccessMaker administrators and teachers used the following reports to gain an understanding of student use and performance:

- System Enrollment and Usage (SEU).
- Cumulative Performance Report (CPR).
- Student Performance Report (SPR).
- Areas of Difficulty (AOD).
- Prescriptive Scheduling Report (PSR).

RESULTS AND DATA

Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) is a standards-based assessment that measures student proficiency on the Arizona Academic Content Standards in Mathematics, Language Arts, and Writing. The AIMS meets federal requirements for student assessment. It is administered in the spring to students in 3rd–8th Grades and uses the following scoring categories:

- **Exceeds (E)** the Standard: A student demonstrates superior performance in the subject matter.
- **Meets (M)** the Standard: A student demonstrates competency in the subject matter.
- **Approaches (A)** the Standard: A student partially demonstrates fundamental knowledge of the subject matter.
- **Falls Far Below (FFB)** the standard: A student does not demonstrate fundamental knowledge of the subject matter.

Students who score Meets or Exceeds pass the assessment. Students who score Approaches or Falls Far Below fail the assessment. Source: http://www.azed.gov/assessment/aims/

AIMS math and reading proficiency rates increased following the SuccessMaker implementation. Following a partial year (spring 2013) and a full year (2013–2014) of using SuccessMaker, the percentage of students achieving proficiency (Meets or Exceeds) on the AIMS reading assessment increased over the year prior to the SuccessMaker implementation. Fifth Grade reading proficiency rates increased 8 percentage points, 6th Grade reading proficiency rates increased 31 percentage points, 7th Grade reading proficiency rates increased 23 percentage points, and 8th Grade reading proficiency rates increased 30 percentage points (Figure 1).
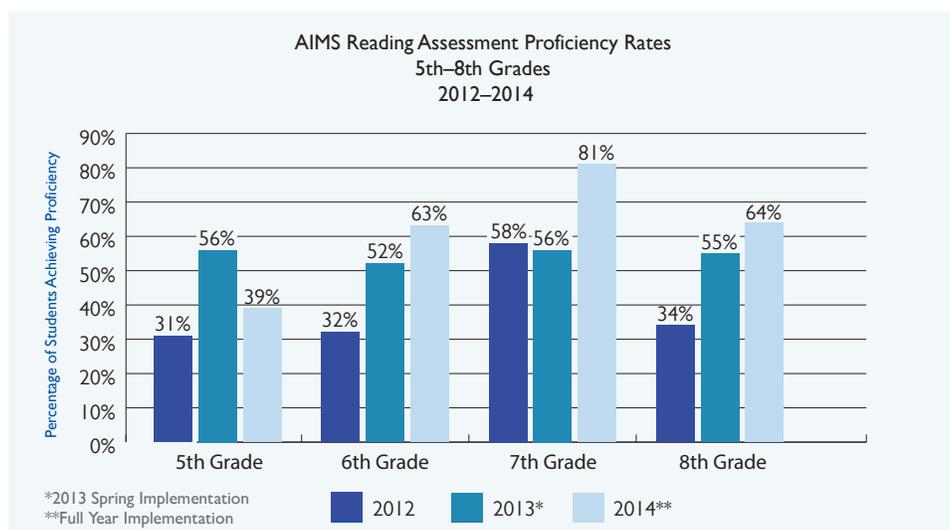

Figure 1. Percentage of students achieving proficiency (Meets or Exceeds) on the AIMS reading assessment.

Math proficiency rates also increased. Following a partial year (spring 2013) and a full year (2013–2014) of using SuccessMaker, the percentage of students achieving proficiency (Meets or Exceeds) on the AIMS math assessment increased over the year prior to the SuccessMaker implementation. Fifth Grade math proficiency rates increased 3 percentage points, 6th Grade proficiency rates increased 2 percentage points, 7th Grade math proficiency rates increased 7 percentage points, and 8th Grade math proficiency rates increased 38 percentage points (Figure 2).
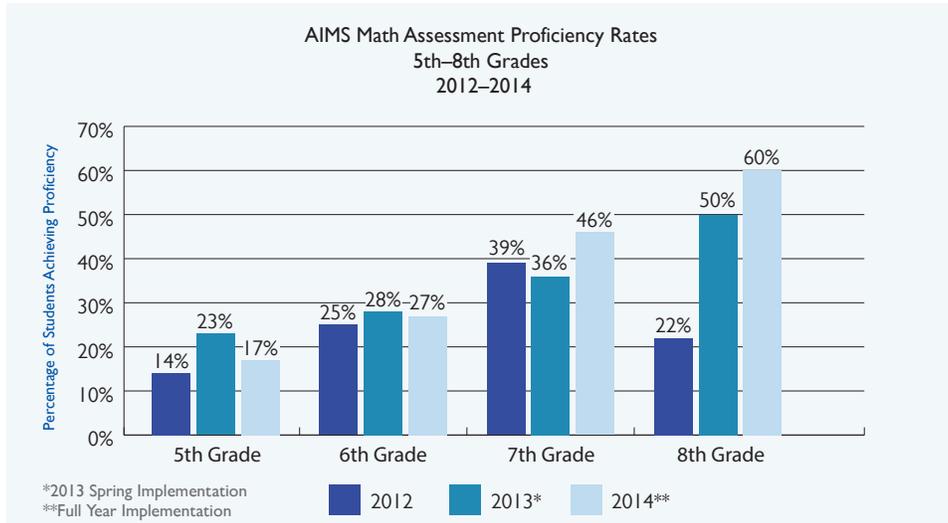

Figure 2. Percentage of students achieving proficiency (Meets or Exceeds) on the AIMS math assessment.

When asked about the decrease in reading and math proficiency rates for 5th Grade students from 2013 to 2014, Principal Flannigan notes that the students arriving from the feeder school are often more than two years below grade level, lack computer skills, and face many challenges transitioning to a more rigorous school. The 5th Grade staff at Skyline D-5 begins the year with a focus on prior core knowledge and heavy review of early elementary content. He feels that by 7th Grade the students are close to grade level, and that the true measure of the gap closing is seen in Grades 7 and 8 . His goal is to have students leave his school on grade level.

The percentage of all 5th–8th Grade students achieving proficiency (Meets or Exceeds) on the AIMS math and reading assessments increased over the two-year period of SuccessMaker implementation. In 2012, prior to implementing SuccessMaker, the Skyline D-5 math proficiency rate was 25%. Two years later (2014), the percentage of students in all grades achieving proficiency in math was 41%, an increase of 16 percentage points. Prior to implementing SuccessMaker, the students' reading proficiency rate was 39%. Two years later (2014), the percentage of students in all grades achieving proficiency in reading was 62%, an increase of 23 percentage points (Figure 3).
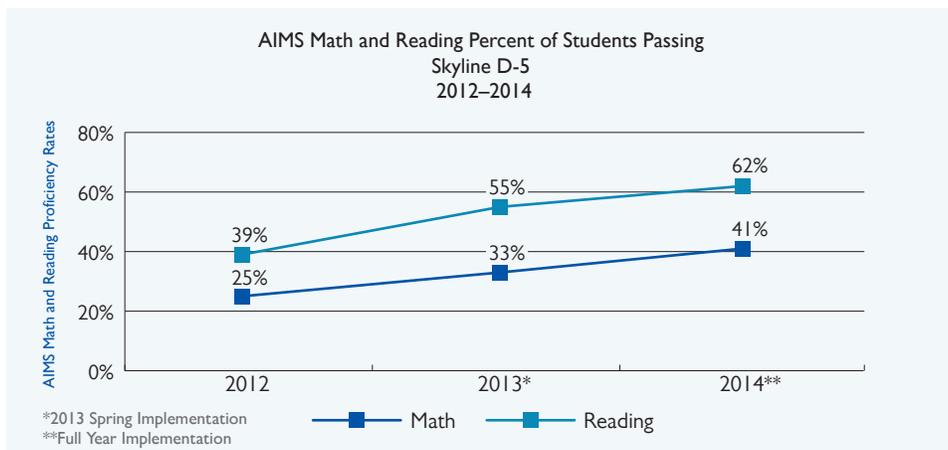

Figure 3. Percentage of students in 5th–8th Grades achieving proficiency (Meets or Exceeds) on the AIMS mathematics and reading assessments. Source: https://www.azreportcards.org

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Each student cohort has increased the percentage of students passing the state assessment in both math and reading. Cohort I (graduating class of 2018) achieved proficiency (Meets or Exceeds) on the 2012 AIMS reading assessment at 32%. The following year, after implementing SuccessMaker, the proficiency rate rose to 56%, an increase of 24 points. In 2014, Cohort I's reading proficiency rate rose to 64%, an increase of 8 points between 7th and 8th Grades. Cohort I reading proficiency rates increased 32 percentage points over the two-year period (Figure 4).

Cohort II (graduating class of 2019) achieved proficiency (Meets or Exceeds) on the 2012 AIMS reading assessment at 31%. After implementing SuccessMaker in spring of 2013, Cohort II's reading proficiency rate rose to 52%, an increase of 21 points. In 2014, Cohort II's reading proficiency rate rose to 81%, an increase of 29 points between 6th and 7th Grades. Cohort II reading proficiency rates increased 50 percentage points over the two-year period (Figure 4).

Cohort III (graduating class of 2020), achieved proficiency (Meets or Exceeds) on the 2012 AIMS reading assessment at 56%. After implementing SuccessMaker in spring of 2013, Cohort III's reading proficiency rate rose to 63%, an increase of 7 points between 5th and 6th Grades (Figure 4).
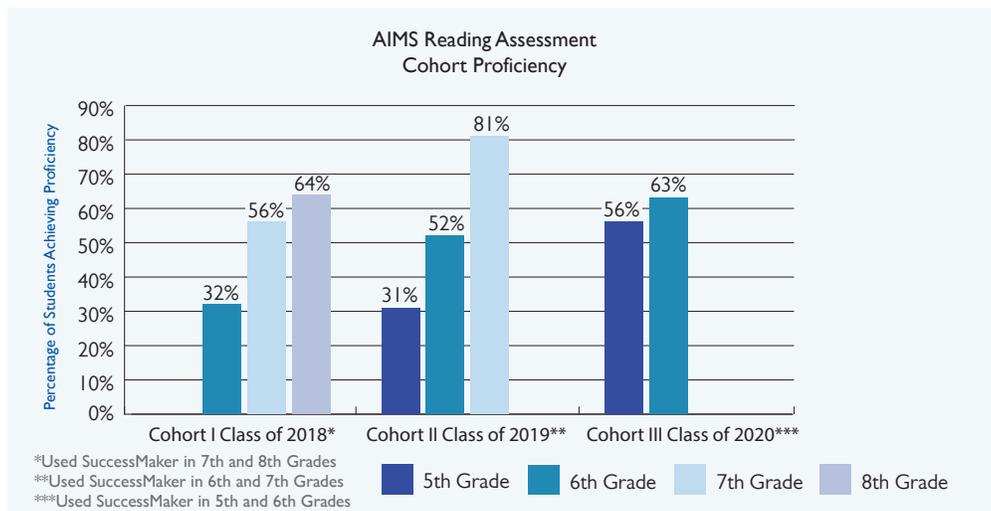

Figure 4. Percentage of students in Cohorts I, II, and III achieving proficiency (Meets or Exceeds) on the AIMS reading assessment.

Cohort I (graduating class of 2018) achieved proficiency (Meets or Exceeds) on the 2012 AIMS math assessment at 25%. The following year, after implementing SuccessMaker, the proficiency rate rose to 36%, an increase of 11 points. In 2014, Cohort I's math proficiency rate rose to 60%, an increase of 24 points between 7th and 8th Grades. Cohort I math proficiency rates increased 35 percentage points over the two-year period (Figure 5).

Cohort II (graduating class of 2019) achieved proficiency (Meets or Exceeds) on the 2012 AIMS math assessment at 14%. After implementing SuccessMaker in spring of 2013, Cohort II's math proficiency rate rose to 28%, an increase of 14 points. In 2014, Cohort II's math proficiency rate rose to 46%, an increase of 18 points between 6th and 7th Grades. Cohort II math proficiency rates increased 32 percentage points over the two-year period (Figure 5).

Cohort III (graduating class of 2020), achieved proficiency (Meets or Exceeds) on the 2012 AIMS math assessment at 23%. After implementing SuccessMaker in spring of 2013, Cohort III's math proficiency rate rose to 27%, an increase of 4 points between 5th and 6th Grades (Figure 5).
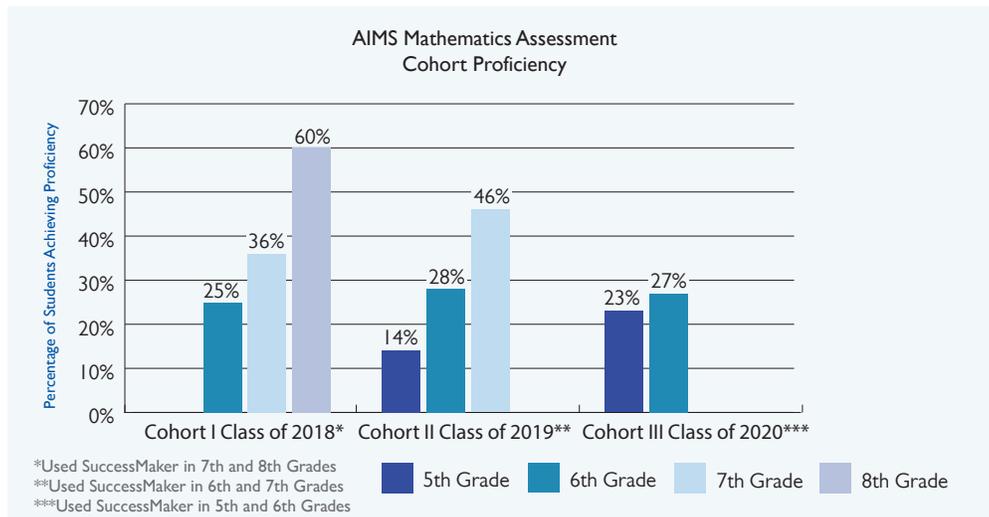
AIMS Mathematics Assessment
Cohort Proficiency

Cohort I Class of 2018*: 5th Grade 25%, 6th Grade 36%, 8th Grade 60%
Cohort II Class of 2019**: 5th Grade 14%, 6th Grade 28%, 7th Grade 46%
Cohort III Class of 2020***: 5th Grade 23%, 6th Grade 27%

*Used SuccessMaker in 7th and 8th Grades
**Used SuccessMaker in 6th and 7th Grades
***Used SuccessMaker in 5th and 6th Grades

Legend: 5th Grade, 6th Grade, 7th Grade, 8th Grade

Figure 5. Percentage of students in Cohorts I, II, and III achieving proficiency (Meets or Exceeds) on the AIMS math assessment.

THE TEACHER/STUDENT/PARENT/ADMINISTRATOR EXPERIENCE

Teachers

Mr. James observed that teachers initially lacked buy-in to the program. However, during the spring of 2013 teachers began seeing students actively engaged in SuccessMaker, as compared to the period prior to implementation, when the same students had struggled on the same concepts in class. Teachers started to see students transfer concepts learned in the lab into the classroom. Students who previously did not participate began raising their hands and answering questions correctly. Poor classroom behavior decreased while engagement in content increased. "Those factors brought a lot of support from the staff, and the buzz started to generate." Mr. James added,

> *"After a few months, SuccessMaker results speak for themselves."*

Lab Manager Ms. Tsosie provided core and homeroom teachers with the class Cumulative Performance Reports for both math and reading. Teachers monitored the growth and time on task of the overall class. In addition, every few weeks the teachers were provided the Individual Student Performance Report. The teachers were interested in each student's gain and specific Areas of Difficulty (AOD). Teachers monitored AOD data and provided individual or small group instruction on an identified weak skill or objective not mastered, and this instruction provided a key piece of the school's Tier III RTI model.

Students

In his former role as a Skyline campus principal, Mr. James spoke with the students about SuccessMaker. He found that this communication encouraged buy-in to the program because the conversation about the students' growth was brought to their individual level.

> *"Some of our teachers have been very creative using their data to identify each individual student's growth target to achieve in SuccessMaker. One student really liked zombies, so the data wall theme was how to get to a target of two years' growth before the zombies got you."*

Mr. James noted that using motivation techniques resulted in students looking forward to using the program and thinking of it more as a game. Students would share that they had grown "X" amount based on the staff's bi-weekly report analysis. "Students knew how much they had grown and how much time they had on task and it motivated them to continue working." Students also knew the teachers and administrators were checking SuccessMaker and that the information was not just falling into a vacuum. There was accountability, and students knew the staff cared about student success.

Parents

Principal Flannigan notes that, along with the traditional report card, parents are provided their student's SuccessMaker data. The school keeps a Student Achievement Profile (SAP) for each student. The SAP moves with each student as he or she progresses through the school. SuccessMaker data, including gain and current level, are noted in the SAP report.

Mr. James discusses SuccessMaker at parent advisory meetings. He commented that the parents strongly support the program and appreciate that they have access to SuccessMaker at home. Parents shared that when they see their student struggling they do not always know how to help, or they are unfamiliar with how some of the math concepts are taught. With a computer and Internet access, they are able to provide at-home intervention for their student.

Administrator

Principal Flannigan monitored the reports and met with other Skyline Education principals to review students' scores.

> *"As an administrator I was interested in overall progress and making sure our Tier I, II, III, and Falls Far Below students were on task. Time on task in SuccessMaker was essential for those students to move up to grade level."*

SuccessMaker time-on-task and grade-level gain data support Mr. James's assertion that time in SuccessMaker is essential for students to move up in grade level.

Time on task for 6th–8th Grade students in SuccessMaker math ranged from approximately 19 hours to 99 hours. Dividing that range into 20-hour quartiles and comparing mean gain in SuccessMaker math for students whose usage falls into each quartile reveals that the most significant grade-level gains were achieved by students in the third and fourth quartiles, representing more than 59 hours of SuccessMaker math usage (Figure 6).
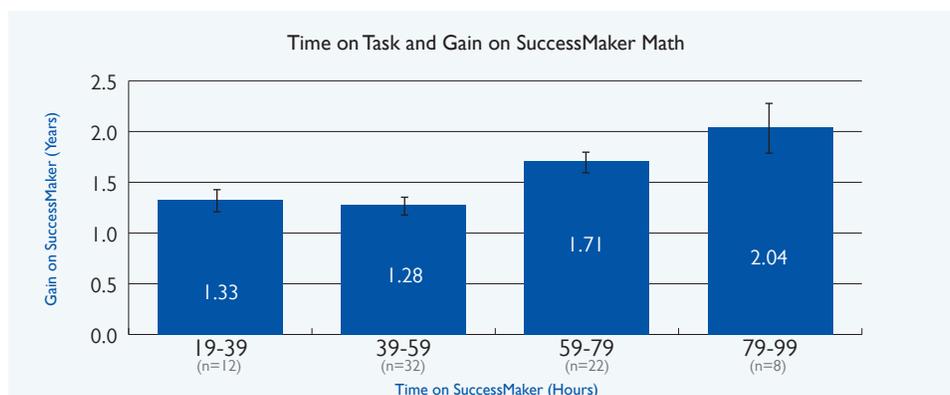

Figure 6. Average gain of 6th–8th Grade students on SuccessMaker math courseware during 2013–2014 school year.

There is a moderate positive correlation (r = 0.5746) between time on task in SuccessMaker math and grade-level gains (Figure 7).
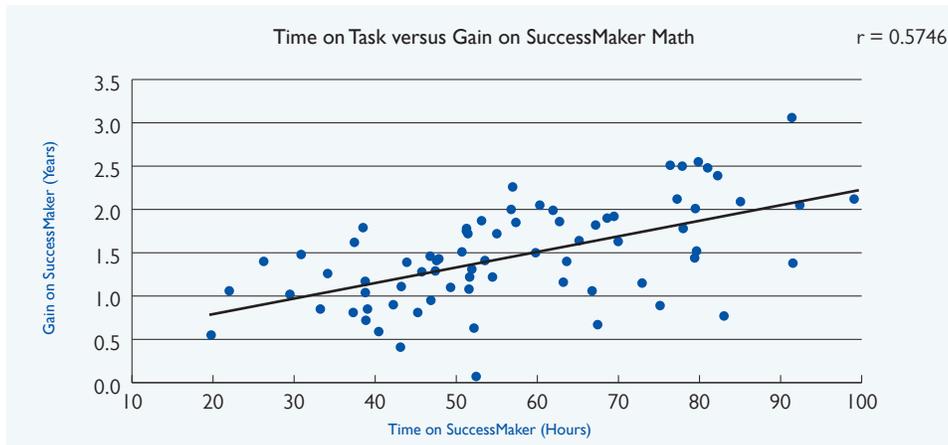

Figure 7. Relationship of grade-level gain for 6th–8th Grade students and time on task in SuccessMaker math courseware during 2013–2014 school year.

Time on task for 6th–8th Grade students in SuccessMaker reading ranged from approximately 18 hours to just under 90 hours. Dividing that range into 18-hour quartiles and comparing mean gain in SuccessMaker reading for students whose usage falls into each quartile reveals that the most significant grade-level gains were achieved by students in the third and fourth quartiles, representing more than 54 hours of SuccessMaker reading usage (Figure 8).
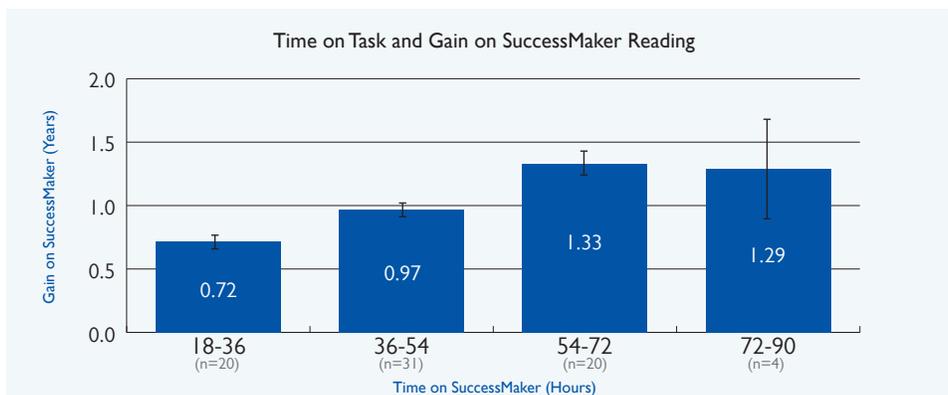

Figure 8. Average gain of 6th–8th Grade students on SuccessMaker reading courseware during 2013–2014 school year.

There is a moderate positive correlation (r = 0.5493) between time on task in SuccessMaker reading and grade-level gains (Figure 9).
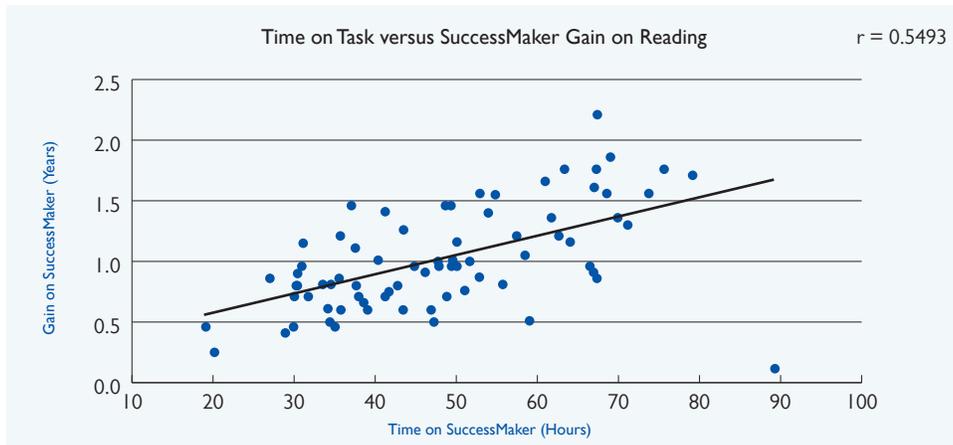

Figure 9. Relationship of grade-level gain for 6th–8th Grade students and time on task in SuccessMaker reading courseware during 2013–2014 school year.

Mr. James commented that in order to make SuccessMaker a positive experience for the teachers, many of whom were skeptical that the program was just "one more thing," the program needed to be incorporated into everything the district did. One step was to incorporate SuccessMaker report data into the Student Academic Plans. The more the district incorporated SuccessMaker into other aspects of the school operations, the more value the teachers saw in the program because the data was always alive and present. "Our RTI model was driven off SuccessMaker. The data was used to monitor how effectively we were helping our students grow."

Mr. James monitored SuccessMaker reports and reviewed them with the data coach, curriculum director, and lead teachers at the individual campus sites. He generated the Cumulative Performance Report on a regular basis to monitor gains. The report enabled investigation of an individual student's progress on the program over a specific two-week window in order to monitor progress toward an RTI goal. If the student was not at goal, the Prescriptive Scheduling Report was used to determine how much additional time each student needed to get to goal, and those students were directed to get the additional time on task with home usage, if possible.

CONCLUSION

Using SuccessMaker reading and math allowed Skyline D-5 to achieve several goals:

- Provide all students a more rigorous curriculum, enabling significant growth for students two or more years below grade level, while challenging the accelerated students.
- Use technology to support multiple learning styles.
- Have one program serve as the core of the campus Response to Intervention (RTI) program. SuccessMaker provided the content to serve Tier I and II students, and the detailed reports allowed educators and coaches to know what specific skills and objectives needed to be covered in their individual or small group Tier III instruction.
- Increase AIMS reading and math proficiency scores.

Additional benefits included:

- Increased student engagement during classroom math and reading instruction.
- Fewer behavior problems.
- Improved parental involvement and support at home.

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