Research Brief

Vertus Charter School - ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

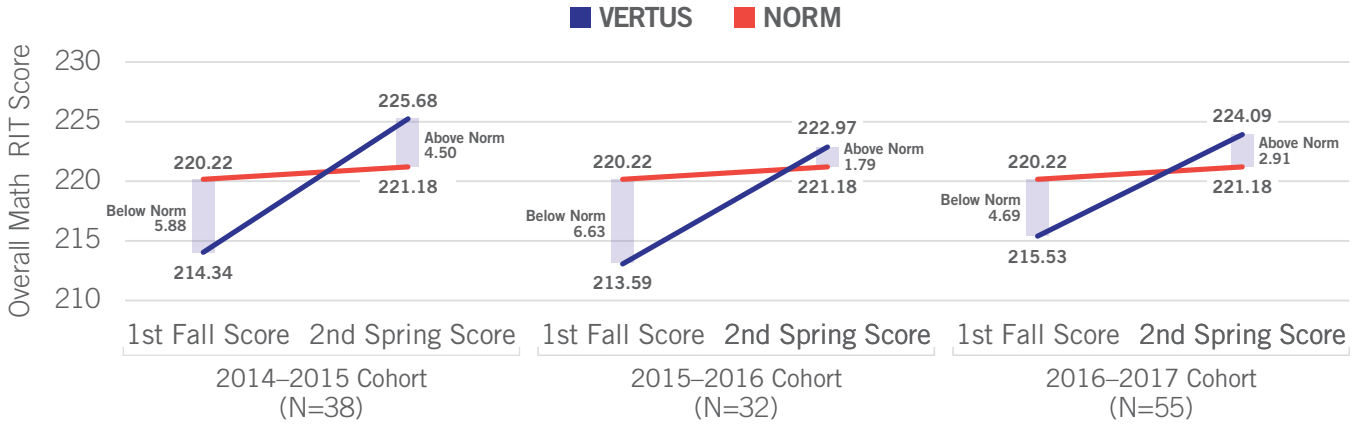
After Using Imagine Edgenuity for Two Years, Vertus Charter School Students Erase Mathematics Achievement Gap

Vertus Charter School (VCS) uses a blended learning model in which students learn in part through Imagine Edgenuity's online courses and in part through in-person instruction and support. To assess program impact, fall and spring MAP® Growth™ data were collected from 9th grade students enrolled in the school during the 2014–2015, 2015–2016, and 2016–2017 school years. Findings show that for three straight cohorts, students using Imagine Edgenuity online courses eliminated the mathematics achievement gap that had existed between VCS students and the national norm on the mathematics RIT scale. For example, in fall 2014, 2015, and 2016, 9th grade Imagine Edgenuity students were performing 6, 7, and 5 points, respectively, below the national norm. However, after using Imagine Edgenuity for two years, these students were performing 4, 2, and 3 points, respectively, above it (Figure 1).

VERTUS CHARTER SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS:	
African American:	85%
Hispanic:	12%
Caucasian:	3%
Special Education:	20%
Low Income:	85%

Figure 1. Vertus Charter School Students

NWEA MAP Math Norm and Mean RIT Scores by Ninth Grade Cohort

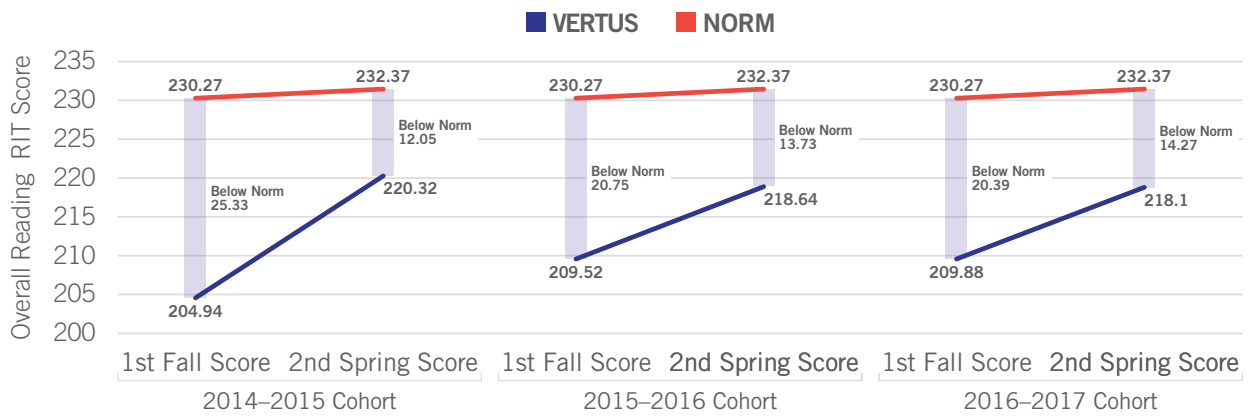


In fall 2014, 2015, and 2016, 9th grade VCS students were performing well below the NWEA MAP Growth norm. After two years of using Imagine Edgenuity, VCS students performed above the national norm.

Students also reduced some of the reading achievement gap that existed between themselves and the national norm. In fall 2014, 2015, and 2016, 9th grade Imagine Edgenuity students were performing 25, 21, and 20 points, respectively, below the national norm. By spring 2016, 2017, and 2018, the gap with the national norm was reduced by 12 points, 14 points, and 14 points, respectively (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Vertus Charter School Students

NWEA MAP Reading Norm and Mean RIT Scores by Ninth Grade Cohort



After two years of using Imagine Edgenuity, students reduced the gap in reading by 13 points (2014–15 cohort), 7 points (2015–16 cohort), and 6 points (2016–17 cohort).

Challenge

VCS is a year-round high school serving inner-city boys in Rochester, New York, who are at risk of dropping out, violence, unemployment, and incarceration. The school is overwhelmingly populated by low-income, minority, and struggling students. In 2014, the school began researching engaging online programs and selected Imagine Edgenuity because of its research-based approach to instruction and the availability of MyPath™, which can offer individualized learning paths tailored to each student's unique needs.

Solution

VCS students attend school five days a week, 204 days a year. The school day runs from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and half a day on Fridays. Students spend about half their time (200 minutes a day) working on core courses on Courseware and supplemental instruction on MyPath in a computer lab staffed by certified teachers who provide targeted supports for students who need remediation and practice, and the other half receiving whole-group, small-group, and one-on-one instruction with teachers. Outside of the computer lab, students attend 45-minute English, mathematics, science, and social studies classes led by teachers. In addition, students participate in daily character development and career preparation seminars, as well as hands-on learning activities such as 3D printing, game design, and art.

Lessons Learned

VCS administrators attribute their positive results to:

- **Strong student-staff relationships:** Students are organized into small teams of 12 to 16 who go through the school day together under the supervision of a full-time staff member called a preceptor. Preceptors work with their teams to create and monitor academic and character goals each week.
- **Personalized support:** With a year-round calendar, students spend more time in school and less time on the street. Using data and reports from the Learning Management System, preceptors and teachers create personalized learning plans that build on each student's current level of readiness and track student engagement, progress, and achievement.
- **Opportunity for character and career development and exploration:** Preceptors lead daily seminars focused on character development, habits of work, and habits of mind.