

CASE STUDY

Providing Preemptive Intervention for Struggling Students

Dorchester School District Two, South Carolina

Challenge

Students were slipping off the graduation track earlier and earlier in their academic career. The district wanted a preemptive intervention strategy that reached students before they required formal credit recovery.

Goal

- Use online learning to increase student achievement and improve graduation rate.
- Use online learning for recovery programs and address struggling students' needs earlier in their academic career.

Solution

- Selected Apex Learning digital curriculum to launch a multitiered intervention program, including preemptive interventions, to address struggling students' needs.
- Apex Learning provides extensive virtual support for increasing student achievement.

Results

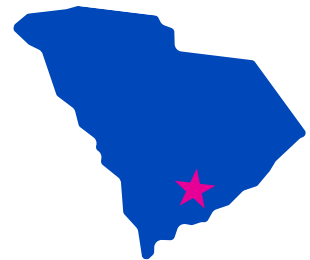
- Graduation rate increased 4 percentage points to 74.4% in 2010–2011.
- Dropout rate fell from 4.3% to 2.9% in 2009–2010.
- Seventy percent of students who completed an Apex Learning course received credit for past failed courses.
- Dorchester's credit recovery program was one of five statewide recipients of the inaugural Innovation Award from the South Carolina State Department of Education.

Graduation Rate



District Profile

- Dorchester is located in Summerville, South Carolina, 24 miles outside of Charleston
- 26,000 students
- 26 schools



Increasing Graduation Rates

Dorchester's primary focus was improving remediation opportunities for students to recover portions of credits or full credits and still graduate on time. After considering several providers, Dorchester's instructional technology specialists selected Apex Learning digital curriculum to enhance instruction and increase student achievement. Early efforts directly addressed class failure and graduation rate.

Offering Unit Recovery

Students received tiered levels of remediation for multiple paths to success. As part of a cascading series of interventions, students who scored below 70 percent on a unit could use Apex Learning digital curriculum to remediate portions of the course before receiving an official failing grade. Teachers assigned unit remediation so students could improve in individual areas of deficiency.

Building Additional Interventions

Dorchester introduced additional academic interventions during and outside the regular school day. High schools offered a variety of whole credit recovery options where students who failed only one class worked independently to complete their online coursework. Exams were scheduled with their teachers and proctored on-site. Those who failed more than one class and required a more structured framework enrolled in an online credit recovery program offered during a regular class period in a blended learning environment, staffed by a full-time, certified teacher.

Supplementing the Classroom

Concurrent efforts were under way to enrich the traditional classroom. By integrating Apex Learning digital curriculum into regular classroom instruction, teachers used data to assess, remediate, and accelerate students. For example, using this model, an Algebra I teacher introduced the class to a particular concept in the traditional way. Then the teacher used the Apex Learning diagnostic to easily determine where individual students struggled and provided them with targeted remediation. Teachers using this approach saw a steady rise in student scores.

“Apex Learning digital curriculum allows us to offer a cascading series of interventions and safety nets. If you fail the unit, there’s unit recovery. If you fail the quarter, there’s quarter recovery. If you fail the course, there’s credit recovery. We’re trying to catch these students before they fail and keep them on course for graduation in four years.”

Joseph R. Pye
Superintendent

Expanding Online Intervention Options

Success with Apex Learning was so encouraging that the district expanded their offerings the following year: 8th grade summer school expanded to include grades 9 -12; science and social studies were added to math and English recovery and original credit course options during the school day; unit recovery was added to preempt course failure; and the evening school continued to offer an alternative route to graduation. Dorchester later added differentiated instruction in middle school, providing a double dose of math and English to increase mastery; End of Course readiness; ACT®, SAT®, and ACCUPLACER® readiness, as well as GED preparation for adult learners.

Contact

Apex Learning

1215 Fourth Ave., Suite 1500
Seattle, WA 98161
Phone: 1 (206) 381-5600
Fax: 1 (206) 381-5601