

SUCCESS SPOTLIGHT

Focus on Skills Development Leads to Remarkable Gains in Georgetown County

In 2017–2018 and 2018–2019, state assessment scores for students in Georgetown County School District (GCSD) in South Carolina lagged behind the state average in both reading and math.

In 2018, 42 percent of South Carolina students met expectations for English language arts (ELA), but the percentage of GCSD students who did the same was 37 percent. For math, 47 percent of students statewide met standards, but only 37 percent of GCSD students did the same. In 2019, the amount of GCSD students who met ELA expectations was, once again, five percentage points behind the state (40 percent to 45 percent, respectively.) The district's 2019 math score was slightly stronger than in 2018 (38 percent of students met expectations) but still lower than the state's 45 percent.

These scores and what they revealed about students' learning needs inspired leaders of this coastal district to search for programs that would help educators enhance learning.

Heading into the 2019–2020 school year, Fedrick Cohens, GCSD's executive director of elementary schools, and Stephanie Stuckey, director of student interventions and support services, were charged with turning the tide.



GCSD

STUDENTS
5,785

GRADES
K–12

TITLE I
79%

SEE
MORE



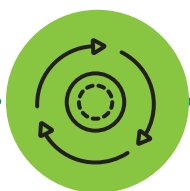
What They Did

At this point in time, a handful of GCSD schools had been using *i-Ready Assessment* and *Personalized Instruction* for a few years with select student groups and were generating positive results. Inspired by this success, GCSD began piloting *i-Ready* with all Grade 3 students during the 2019–2020 school year. District leaders were surprised by educators' enthusiasm for the new programs and how quickly they saw improvements in their students' engagement and learning.

"The more [students] know about their areas of growth, the more they want to improve their learning."

—Fedrick Cohens,
Executive Director of
Elementary Schools

These improvements were driven in large part by the following:



Consistency across the District:

Before the districtwide implementation of *i-Ready*, GCSD didn't have the ability to understand student learning at a macro level. The decision to use *i-Ready* in all its schools gave all GCSD schools (even those with tight budgets) access to proven programs and equipped them with common language to discuss student progress.



Personalized Instruction:

i-Ready student data enabled educators to personalize instruction for students and ensure they'd target the most important skills.



Educator Confidence:

Getting assessment data at the appropriate time gave GCSD teachers confidence in their interventions and personalized learning strategies.



Access to Rich Resources:

Because the needs of students can differ, GCSD teachers were particularly excited about the variety of materials they had access to through Teacher Toolbox, a digital library of standards-based materials.



Skill-Centered, Small Group Instruction:

GCSD teachers emphasized small group instruction as an effective way to differentiate for diverse student needs. Teachers prioritized working on students' skill development during small group instruction, a practice that led to learning growth in multiple areas.



Student Ownership:

Data chats have helped students better understand their learning and what they need to improve.

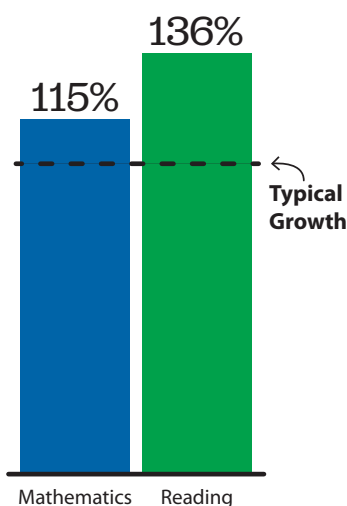
What They Accomplished

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, GCSD students made remarkable gains in reading: 21 percent of students went from being a grade level behind to being above grade level—from Tier 2 to Tier 1.

GCSD saw the following improvements in its students, according to the *i-Ready Diagnostic* reports:

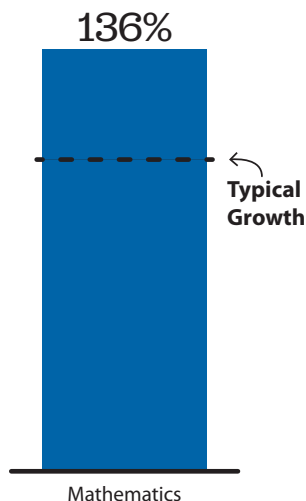
Typical Growth

During the 2020–2021 school year, students met or exceeded their Typical Growth in mathematics by 115 percent and in reading by 136 percent when students used *i-Ready* for 30 minutes and passed lessons with 70 percent or higher.



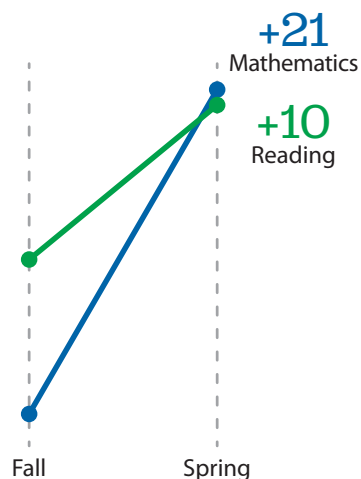
Typical Growth: Mathematics, Grades 3 and 4

In mathematics, Grades 3 and 4 students who were three or more grade levels below exceeded their Typical Growth by 136 percent.



Placement Levels

In mathematics, student placement levels grew by 21 percentage points from fall 2020 (15 percent) to spring 2021 (36 percent). In reading, student placement levels grew 10 percentage points from fall 2020 (25 percent) to spring 2021 (35 percent).



These improvements have led to *i-Ready* being used with all GCSD students in Grades 3–8.

“Having a consistent program across the district where we really can actually utilize data to see where weaknesses and strengths are across the district—across grade levels, across skill areas—is a blessing,” Cohens said.

*“Teachers really got excited about it and felt comfortable using the *i-Ready* platform. And when they started to see the growth of their students, they got even more excited. And you know what happens when teachers are excited about something—they don’t keep anything in.”*

—**Stephanie Stuckey**, Director of Student Interventions and Support Services



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