Case Study
Higley Learning Center

GILBERT, AZ
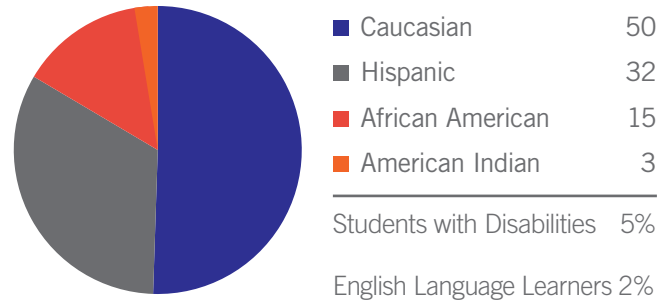
Can at-risk students navigate online credit recovery programs?

Problem: Students with behavioral and academic issues were performing poorly in traditional school settings.

Solution: A flexible, online alternative program allowed middle and high school students to take control over their own learning.

Outcome: Personalized attention increased achievement on the AIMS HS Reading, Math, and Writing Tests, credit recovery, and graduation rates.

School Demographics

■ Caucasian	50
■ Hispanic	32
■ African American	15
■ American Indian	3

Students with Disabilities 5%

English Language Learners 2%

Background

Higley Unified School District (HUSD) is one of only 15 K–12 school districts in Arizona to receive an "A" rating by the Arizona Department of Education. While HUSD has a 94 percent graduation rate and 85 percent of their student body goes on to college, a small group of students seemed to consistently fall behind, lose credits, and drop out of school. To reverse this trend, the district created the Higley Learning Center (HLC), a nontraditional, alternative educational program using Edgenuity curriculum.

HLC serves a diverse array of at-risk middle and high school students. While the majority are eleventh and twelfth-grade students looking to recover credits and get back on track for graduation, HLC also enrolls pregnant and homeschooled students as well as students with behavioral and disciplinary problems.

A More Personalized Learning Environment

Principal Greg Keith believes that students underachieve and behave poorly when their learning environment is not structured. At HLC, students learn in a smaller, structured setting, which allows them to receive more personalized instruction. Edgenuity's courses are provided over three 80-minute blocks in four computer labs. Each computer lab is led by a content-area expert who helps clarify any questions students have about information provided in Edgenuity's courses.

"Thanks to Edgenuity, kids who had no interest in school are now excelling academically."

Greg Keith, Principal, Higley Learning Center

Because of the block scheduling of the classes, students can earn one credit per Edgenuity class each semester. This allows students to earn six credits a year. The goal is for students to recover a semester's worth of credits in one quarter and a year's worth in a semester. Typically, high school students attend HLC full time for core and elective instruction. Some high school students spend the morning in traditional schools and arrive for credit recovery at HLC during the afternoon or after school. All students are encouraged to spend an additional hour on courses at home and to take advantage of school computer labs that are open on weekends.

Targeted Instruction

Edgenuity allows teachers to better identify and treat student learning needs. Diagnostic pretests and prescriptive testing identify the exact skills that students have mastered and narrow instruction only to the areas where students need additional support and practice.

Teacher David Reed says diagnostic and prescriptive testing is motivating to students. He notes that many high school students taking credit recovery courses have seen the course material before. According to Reed, diagnostic pretesting "takes away the punitive aspect" and helps students finally "see the light at the end of the tunnel."

Edgenuity also provides powerful data to help teachers individualize instruction. At HLC, teachers circulate around the classroom carrying iPads that display Edgenuity student achievement reports. The reports help teachers monitor student progress and know exactly when to intervene. Reports are also emailed to the students and parents every Monday, reinforcing successes, challenges, and course expectations.

Critical Response

Students acknowledge the difference Edgenuity is making in their lives. Rhonda, 18, believes the Edgenuity Geometry, English Language Arts, Psychology, and Sociology courses made learning seem easier and gave her a sense of what is possible. "I really like taking Edgenuity courses on the computer. It gives me one-on-one help. It's much easier when I get to work at my own pace." Rhonda came to HLC with only 17 high school credits. After using Edgenuity, she recovered all the credits needed to graduate. She now plans to go to community college and pursue a degree in psychology.

Principal Greg Keith reports that Rhonda is not an anomaly. He notes that Edgenuity courses have helped a number of pregnant and over-aged students get back on track: "Kids start using Edgenuity and realize they can get things done a lot faster than they could in a traditional setting. All of a sudden they start rattling off course work and get more motivated because they are being successful."

Data indicates that of the 59 high school students enrolled in Edgenuity courses at HLC, 87 percent of students completed their classes with passing rates. In addition, of the 48 HLC students at risk for dropping out, only one student did so.

Further, when 2012 data from the Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards High School (AIMS HS) Reading, Math, and Writing Tests were analyzed, results indicated that eleventh- and twelfth-grade students from HLC outperformed their state peers (See Graph 1).

Graph 1: Higley Learning Center Edgenuity Students Grades 11 and 12 (N = 59) and Students Statewide

Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding the Standard on the 2012 AIMS HS Reading, Math, and Writing Tests

Legend: ■ State   ■ Edgenuity

Y-axis: Percent Meeting/Exceeding Standard (0% to 100%)

Category	State	Edgenuity
HS Reading 11th Grade	43%	85%
HS Reading 12th Grade	30%	95%
HS Math 11th Grade	21%	35%
HS Math 12th Grade	17%	61%
HS Writing 11th Grade	39%	65%
HS Writing 12th Grade	22%	79%