



A Successful Intervention Program Evolves into Individualized Learning for All

Cook County Schools, Georgia



Joy Folsom, Director of Student Achievement
Dr. Courtney Holley, District MTSS Director/School Psychologist



3,200 students
Grades pre-K to 12



Courseware
Exact Path
Reading Eggs
Study Island



46% economically disadvantaged
52% Caucasian
33% African American
10% Hispanic

The Challenge:

Cook County Schools, located in southwest Georgia, may be part of a small community, but the district is doing big things. In 2017, school leaders recognized the need to streamline their digital partners and remove program duplication, which is when they turned to Edmentum, the provider of one of their most beloved programs, Study Island, Edmentum. Through an expanded partnership with Edmentum, leaders have been able to address a plethora of program needs, including intervention, early literacy, academic growth, standards proficiency, and credit recovery, guided by a cohesive vision and centralized support.

By strengthening a longstanding partnership with Edmentum, school leaders at Cook County Schools in Georgia have been able to address a plethora of program needs, including intervention, early literacy, academic growth, standards proficiency, and credit recovery, guided by a cohesive vision and centralized support. In 2019, the district has earned the SSTAGE Star Award for Promising Practices for its superb intervention continuum across all grade spans and has achieved impressive year-over-year Lexile and Quantile growth to back it up.

How They Did It:

Cook County Schools' first foray into Edmentum programs began with use of Study Island nearly 10 years ago, and students in grades 3–8 continue to benefit from the formative assessment and Georgia standards-based practice today. In 2017, school leaders in Cook County Schools also began incorporating both Reading Eggs for early literacy and Exact Path for tier 2 and tier 3 intervention across grades 3–10. Through this expanded partnership, Edmentum quickly became a critical part of the district's intervention success, and in spring 2019, Cook County Schools was honored with the SSTAGE Star Award for Promising Practice for its continuum of research-based interventions from elementary through high school.

This continuum began with leaders establishing clear policies and procedures for intervention at each school level and includes the use of Exact Path in grades 3–10. For lower elementary students at the primary school, Exact Path program use incorporates more whole-group and small-group instruction guided by diagnostic data, as students develop stamina working independently. In grades 3–5, tier 2 and tier 3 students receive support in a pull-out program three or five days a week, respectively, for 45 minutes each day. At the middle school level, a dedicated interventionist leads Connections classes for struggling students in math and reading, in which students work on individual skill gaps in their learning paths and can “level out” to earn additional time in gym or other elective-based Connections classes. And, finally, in high school, block scheduling is modified

so that tier 2 and tier 3 students receive embedded intervention within remedial content classes in what's known as a "skinny"—consisting of 45 minutes of both ELA and math every day.

"The way every school is utilizing Exact Path is a little bit different, and that's how it should be," noted Dr. Courtney Holley, district MTSS director and school psychologist. "It doesn't have to just be a computer program. It can direct your instruction if you use it in the way I think it's intended. You can use it in small groups. You can use it individualized, and you can use it in whole group."

This flexibility has allowed elementary school teachers to incentivize students with pizza parties tied to mastery trophies earned in the program. Similarly, in middle school, students track their progress with a little car on a bulletin board where they can earn free Connections class periods when they reach their goal. In high school, students complete their individualized learning paths to become peer leaders. All the while, educators at all levels are able to review assessment scores and learning path progress to plan for whole-class instruction or small-group targeted reteaching around specific skills. These successful implementations have even won over a few early skeptics.

"Within six weeks [a high school teacher], had come to see me and said, 'This is amazing! The things that I'm seeing my students do on this—they're truly engaged!'" recalled Dr. Holley.

During the 2019–20 school year, leadership at Cook County Schools has already made strides to replicate the success in the intervention program by taking Exact Path districtwide. This has included expanding use of the diagnostic as an initial measure of strengths and needs for all K–10 students, as well as access to their individualized learning paths.

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Director of Student Achievement

Success:

Each Exact Path diagnostic assessment provides a scale score and a corresponding Lexile® measure (for reading) and Quantile® measure (for math) as a result of a MetaMetrics linking study. An evaluation of Lexile and Quantile growth for each grade span is detailed below for both the 2017–18 and 2018–19 school years.

	Reading			Math		
	Elementary Lexile Growth	Middle Lexile Growth	High Lexile Growth	Elementary Quantile Growth	Middle Quantile Growth	High Quantile Growth
2017–18	+107	+156	+153	+52	+20	+34
2018–19	+60	+16	+90	+53	+28	+25

Upon closer inspection, students not only made growth in every category, but for most grade span and subject combinations, students also started at a higher point in 2018–19 than they finished the year prior. Cook County Schools interventionists are pleased with this ongoing progress and expect these gains in growth to translate to critical gains in proficiency.

An additional measure of success, as noted by Dr. Holley, is the decreased number of referrals for special education services. Between the 2016–17 and the 2017–18 school years, referrals dropped from 46 to 24, and in the 2018–19 school year, referrals dropped again to 21. Dr. Holley believes this is likely

a result of students receiving appropriate and targeted interventions with fidelity, such that when referrals are made, they are of higher quality and guided by objective data.

“We have loved Exact Path, and we’re excited about using it,” commented Dr. Holley. “I like that we’re using the diagnostic tier 1 [this year], so we will have a continuum of growth and data from kindergarten on up.”

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Dr. Courtney Holley,
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The Future:

Educators at Cook County Schools continue to identify additional opportunities to get the most out of their Edmentum suite of programs. The 2019–20 school year marks the first one in which teachers are using Courseware for students in the alternative school, both to support credit recovery and as a curriculum support for daily instruction. Additionally, school leaders and teachers alike reflect on best practices so that they can continue to tell great success stories like this one.

“We had a high school student who was tested on Exact Path,” recollected Dr. Holley. “He had a Lexile of 200, which is really low. He grew to a 595 Lexile, and his different domains—the reading, language and vocabulary,

reading literature, and reading informational—grew over 200–300 points and some 500 points in each area. He made a lot of progress, and that was from August 2018 to May 2019—just one school year.”

For more information:

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