



Creating Virtual Personalized Learning for All in Harvard, Illinois

Harvard Community Unit School District 50 - Harvard, IL



Dr. Carey Tafoya,
Superintendent
Dr. Mary Cooke,
Director of Curriculum
and Assessment



2,737 students
Grades pre-K-12



Courseware
Exact Path
Study Island



99% free or reduced
lunch
29.8% Caucasian
67.3% Hispanic

The Challenge:

At the start of the 2018–19 school year, Harvard Community Unit School District 50 (Harvard CUSD 50) was without a response-to-intervention (RTI) program for students and realized that it needed to act fast to support the large portion of freshman students who started off high school with failing test scores in science. To combat the underperformance, as well as support other at-risk students, the district turned to Edmentum.

“We were stuck; we had no RTI program,” remarked Dr. Mary Cooke, director of curriculum and assessment. “And, just as we were getting going, our first semester science grades for that current freshman class came in, and a third of them failed science. So right off the bat, we had a third of our incoming freshman class not on track to graduate. And that was startling to us.”

Harvard CUSD 50's superintendent, Dr. Corey Tafoya, knew that the district needed to focus on "reexploring what it means to be a learner" and set the bar high for educators to dig into RTI methods. He also wanted to reignite the desire to focus on personalized learning for every student.

"We're no longer satisfied with saying, 'We taught it; we don't know what happened,'" stated Dr. Tafoya. "We want to measure, identify, promote, and really set fire to learning."

Serving a predominately socioeconomically disadvantaged student population in Harvard, Illinois, Harvard Community Unit School District 50 strives to ensure that each of its students is empowered to beat the odds. By partnering with Edmentum, educators are supporting all K-12 learners by offering differentiated instruction, rigorous online curriculum, and standards-aligned practice to increase graduation rates and recover missed credit opportunities.

How They Did It:

Harvard CUSD 50 began its Edmentum journey with a full RTI rollout that put Courseware, our robust, grades 6-12 curricula, at the center. High school students were able to take courses over the summer of 2018 that their normal schedule throughout the school year did not permit them to do. This allowed students to recover lost credits and receive credit advancement depending on their needs.

Harvard CUSD 50 turned to two other Edmentum programs at the junior high and elementary level. Exact Path and Study Island assisted the district by making its NWEA® MAP® Growth™ assessment data actionable. Study Island was used as a formative assessment tool, focusing on standards mastery. Exact Path was used to offer diagnostic-driven, individualized learning paths, and it was implemented during center work so that students would continually close gaps in learning based on their unique needs.

“It was kind of the perfect storm for us to really put something together that's been hugely beneficial in our district,” reflected Dr. Cooke. “Instead of [teachers] having to reinvent the wheel, they have these ready-made offerings aligned to the standards that the students needed to work with. Over the last year and a half, watching that flourish has been amazing to see.”

Professional development also played a significant role in Harvard CUSD 50's successful implementation. Starting over the summer of 2018, it added a curriculum bootcamp for educators to get to know the curriculum they would be teaching. This helped educators to zero in on accomplishing improved graduation rates and overhauling RTI methods. It also allowed the district to thoughtfully prepare its teachers with the tools to properly utilize the programs in their edtech toolbelt: Courseware, Study Island, and Exact Path.

“Trying to find a place where it was immediately applicable and starting with a few of the hard chargers that were aligned to where we wanted to go was something important,” said Dr. Tafoya.

He pointed out that if schools and districts want everyone on board with the programs that they're implementing, they need to work quickly. Both Dr. Tafoya and Dr. Cooke believed that Edmentum was the perfect partner for the challenge of swift adoption and found that the district's educators immediately saw how useful the programs are.

Learning During a Pandemic:

Harvard CUSD 50 was no newcomer to online learning, but the pandemic added a new set of challenges to the mix. Going into the 2020–21 school year, Dr. Tafoya and Dr. Cooke got to work preparing their teachers not only to cover previous material to assist with learning loss from school shutdowns but also to weave in essential, new content.

Parent focus groups also confirmed continued support for safer learning at home, as long as the access to online programs remained consistent.

“I think [Edmentum] is really what's given people the confidence that we can satisfy educational needs of our students, even in a remote situation,” said Dr. Tafoya. “And I do not know that we would have been able to do that

without really having weighed into the idea that it is possible through online tools and supplementary tools.”

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Dr. Mary Cooke
Director of Curriculum and Assessment

Success:

Harvard CUSD 50 has seen success with Edmentum, both prior to the outset of the pandemic, as well as presently. The district feels that Edmentum has afforded it with standards-aligned curriculum and also offered educators a one-stop shop for RTI, skills practice, and credit recovery. The district is especially proud of the new mindset on personalized learning for all students it has taken with Edmentum, which is now a critical piece to changing its approach to RTI.

Success is not just at the administrative level either. Educators at the high school are seeing the programs make a huge difference, especially with students coming from a nontraditional educational background.

“I've had homeschooled students come in, and they've missed all of the essential stuff in middle school, and they use [Edmentum] to get caught up,” stated AP® U.S. History teacher Nick DeFilippis. We had one specific student

that I am aware of, who graduated on time, has a great job now, and became a great student. I think [Edmentum] helped transition homeschooled students.”

High school science teacher Shannon Ryan had a similar experience with a student who utilized Edmentum programs for a nontraditional route to graduation.

“I have this specific student that graduated this past year, that if you gave them Edmentum, they would absolutely crush it, and this specific student was able to graduate simply because they responded well to independent, online learning,” said Mr. Ryan.

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Dr. Corey Tafoya
Superintendent

The Future:

Harvard Community Unit School District 50 has already seen a lot of success but is not done yet. The district has some inspiring goals lined up for the future, including commitments for quality professional development and top-notch graduation rates.

Dr. Tafoya was quick to add that Edmentum's tools have empowered the district to move forward with its goals, confident that it is creating something valid enough to correctly measure its students' learning and growth.

When asked if the district would recommend Edmentum programs to other schools in need of remote-learning accessibility, Dr. Cooke responded with certainty, "If someone were to ask about Edmentum, I'd say 100 percent. I would tell anybody that asked to go for it, not to wait for another sunny day."

For more information:

Contact [800.447.5286](tel:800.447.5286) or visit www.edmentum.com (/) to learn more about Edmentum's online learning solutions.