Putting Practices in Place for Sustained Student Growth

"What can we do to help our kids on a day-by-day and week-by-week basis?" was a question Dr. John B. Gordon III asked himself when he took over as division superintendent of Suffolk Public Schools in fall 2019.

While cultivating lifelong learners and ensuring student success has always been a top priority for the Virginia district, Gordon and members of his new leadership team wanted to double down on this commitment to drive student achievement. As such, the district began to look at new and innovative ways to take its support of all students—as well as educators— to the next level. This included finding a new diagnostic that would provide the data needed to better inform teaching and learning.

"Our district was pretty consistent with its reading and math achievement over the last 10 years, but [we] never saw any sustainable increases," said Gordon. "We wanted to change this."

SUFFOLK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

STUDENTS
13,750

TITLE I
50%

GRADES
K–12

> "*i-Ready* gives us the data-driven vehicle needed to help our students get to grade-level learning."
>
> —**Kelly Greening,** Supervisor of Math Instruction

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What They Did

The district began looking at teaching and learning through the lens of its students to drive ongoing and sustainable change. "This was definitely an aha moment for us," said Gordon. "Everything we did was traditionally based off of teacher feedback. But when we started having conversations with our students, we got more insights into the 'why' and 'how'—why students thought they were performing at the levels they were and how we can better help."

These insights helped steer a number of initiatives, including:

Delivering Data-Driven Support and Scaffolding

The district wanted a new diagnostic to provide teachers with the data needed to personalize and scaffold learning for students as well as group students based on skills and needs for small group instruction. After successfully piloting *i-Ready Assessment* and Personalized Instruction, the district moved forward with a full implementation of the program in fall 2020 for Grades K–5.

Focusing on Student Engagement

Keeping students engaged throughout the learning process is also an emphasis for the district.
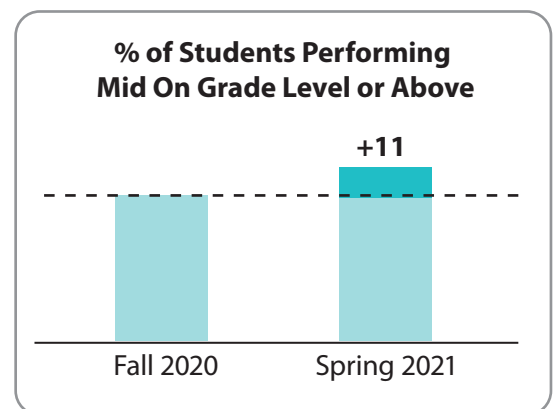
Providing Ongoing Practice

The district is constantly working to reinforce learning—whether through remediation, tutoring, small group learning, or personalized instruction—so students can master the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL).

> "*i-Ready has a been a big piece of the puzzle for us, but we would not be where we are—or poised for where we are headed—without our administrators, teachers, and parents. It's a collaborative effort all around.*"
>
> **—Dr. John B. Gordon III**

What They Accomplished

Working around the challenges caused by the pandemic, the district's new leadership team has successfully put sustainable practices and programs in place to help support—and raise—student achievement. And, student achievement is already being realized. The district's students are scoring higher than the state average in reading relative to the Virginia SOL as reported by Virginia School Quality Profiles from the state department of education. In math, the percentage of students performing Mid On Grade Level or Above raised 11 points when comparing students' fall 2020 *i-Ready Diagnostic* to the spring 2021 assessment. *i-Ready Diagnostic* data also showed the percentage of students performing One or Two Grade Levels Below decreased during this time as well.

% of Students Performing Mid On Grade Level or Above

+11

Fall 2020   Spring 2021

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