

Using Educational Technology to Drive School Improvement



What do Schools Need to Improve?

School improvement has become a rising concern among many school districts. Administrators and educators across the country are evaluating suitable courses of action needed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Many variables contribute to schools failing to meet AYP, but one mounting concern is how to recognize individual student needs and implement appropriate interventions for students that are struggling. Currently, many schools are doing this through Response to Intervention (RTI)—a process used to identify struggling students, provide appropriate interventions, and record data. Additionally, identifying ways to budget resources to maximize student learning while collecting important assessment data has become imperative to achieving comprehensive school improvement.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the School Improvement Grant under section 1003 (g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is used to improve student achievement in Title I schools failing to meet AYP and recognized as needing improvement, corrective action, and restructuring. The grant provides an opportunity to reassess instruction and assessment strategies to improve student performance, achieve overall school improvement, and incorporate educational technology as a device to advance and assess student learning. Districts that have been awarded the grant have a unique opportunity to incorporate twenty-first century technologies as instruments in teaching, testing, and improving academic performance to meet AYP.

Models of School Improvement

In order to receive a School Improvement Grant, the U.S. Department of Education requires applicants to incorporate one of four models of improvement: turnaround, transformation, restart, or closure. Many districts select the transformation model because of its robust reform criteria and ease of implementation. The U.S. Department of Education defines the transformation model as:

1. Developing teacher and leader effectiveness
2. Integrating instructional programs based on student achievement data
3. Extending learning time and creating community-oriented schools
4. Providing operating flexibility and intensive support

Utilizing Educational Technology

Within the transformation model, schools can utilize educational technology as a means to boost school improvement. In today's classroom, educational technology can include computers, interactive whiteboards, wikis, blogs, social networking tools, games, simulations, and many other web 2.0 tools. Recent findings from a National Research Council report concur educational technology is an important contributor to student performance. The report states "Technology-based tools can enhance student performance when they are integrated into curriculum and used in accordance with knowledge about learning." Orchard Software offers extensive instruction, practice, and assessment tools that align with curriculum standards and can be easily integrated to offer excellent learning experiences for students.



Orchard Facilitates School Improvement

Develops Teacher and Leader Effectiveness

Orchard Software assessments allow districts to effectively monitor student growth, helping to determine effective teaching strategies. Based on the assessment results of student performance, administrators can determine interventions for students and appropriate professional development opportunities for teachers. Orchard's extensive performance-based assessment reports allow administrators to track student achievement and test scores on a district-wide level, increasing the opportunities to assess overall effectiveness.

Integrates Instructional Programs Based on Student Data

In addition to supplying districts with a tool to measure teacher effectiveness, Orchard Software also serves as a comprehensive instructional reform strategy. Orchard provides differentiated instruction through various learning games, tutorials, and quizzes while generating individualized student performance data. Orchard aligns to state standards and allows data to be transferred between grade levels, schools, and districts. The flexibility of Orchard data collection serves multiple functions in sustaining a strong instructional reform strategy. It creates an opportunity to monitor student growth across grade levels, and coordinates assignments based on state standards and individual student needs.

Extends Learning Time and Creates Community-Oriented Schools

The transformation model also highlights extended learning time and creating a community-oriented learning environment as necessary steps in school improvement. Orchard meets these criteria by assigning students specific areas relevant to their individual needs, generating continued improvement in core academic areas while focusing on areas of weakness.

Educational technology, such as Orchard Software, drives school improvement by providing:

- **district-wide data collection**
- **motivating games, quizzes, and tutorials**
- **individualized interventions**
- **data management**
- **high-quality, research-based content**
- **standards-based instruction**
- **customizable reports**

Orchard’s accommodation to individual instruction creates additional time focused on academic content while providing an enriching student experience. Orchard also offers reports that can be printed or emailed to parents to maintain positive family and school communication. Districts may also use Orchard’s School-to-Home program, which allows students access to Orchard assignments at home to further extend the connection between school and home learning. Orchard is a great tool for before and after-school programs. Assessments quickly place students of all abilities at their proper instructional levels. Orchard also has programs available for adults seeking to improve their literacy.

Provides Operating Flexibility and Intensive Support

The final component to the transformation model of school improvement is to provide flexibility in operations and sustained support. Orchard Software is an all-encompassing tool for instruction, practice, and assessment that is affordable and easy to use. Orchard provides an effective choice for district budgets while providing a straightforward approach to data management. Orchard makes it easy to implement district, school, and class enrollment changes efficiently and track student progress year-to-year. In addition to affordability and an intuitive management system, Orchard offers complete and ongoing customer support allowing easy implementation and maintenance for any school or district.

Orchard Software and School Improvement

The *Center on Innovation and Improvement* identifies eight core concepts of curriculum and instruction for school improvement described in the *Handbook on Effective Implementation of School Improvement Grants*. Orchard provides individualized instruction and assessment strategies that accompany each school improvement concept.

School Improvement Core Concepts	Orchard Strategy
<p>Align Instruction Vertically to Standards Monitor and maintain alignment between curriculum standards and classroom instruction, and use student performance data to make sound decisions in resources, curriculum, and instruction</p>	<p>Orchard for Your State aligns to individual state standards while maintaining a wide variety of assessment and performance-based records available to teachers and administrators</p>
<p>Differentiating Instruction Accommodate student differences in the classroom, continually assess student progress through valid data, use student data to make instructional decisions, and incorporate grouping strategies with student-centered activities</p>	<p>Students are assigned individualized interventions, and student progress is routinely monitored with district-wide data collection to assess improvement in student achievement and conduct informed instructional decisions</p>
<p>Use Student Data to Drive Instruction Incorporate a district-wide plan for collecting, interpreting, and using data. Identify at-risk students and provide intervention methods, and integrate easy-to-use progress monitoring to track student progress</p>	<p>Orchard provides progress monitoring data to teachers daily through student performance and time-on-task records, increasing the time and efficiency of instruction while identifying at-risk students</p>

“If you are looking for an RTI tool to fully develop an RTI model at your school, Orchard is the tool you need. In the last five years, our poverty level has increased. We credit the use of Orchard with helping to increase the amount of time we are able to spend with at-risk and high-poverty students.”

—**Maurice Sadler**, Principal, Heywood Elementary School, Troy City School District, Ohio

School Improvement Core Concepts	Orchard Strategy
<p>Use Instructional Practice Data to Alter Strategies Base decisions on student performance data and teacher instructional practice data, and develop a district-wide plan for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting instructional practice data</p>	<p>Reports provide information to develop effective decision-making practices, identify demographic performance levels, and offer administrators and teachers control in creating individualized assignments and interventions</p>
<p>Determine Teacher Effectiveness Conduct regular assessment of teacher effectiveness and use this information to improve the quality of instruction for students</p>	<p>Teachers are provided current and daily student data, making it easy to adjust instructional decisions according to student needs</p>
<p>Use Response to Intervention Concentrate on high-quality, research-based instruction for all students and interventions for struggling students, universal screening, progress monitoring, and evaluation</p>	<p>Orchard is an award-winning program offering more than 5,000 lessons and activities with proven results, and extensive progress monitoring reports valuable for universal screening. Orchard is an easy and efficient way to fully implement the RTI model by collecting data, providing individualized interventions, and increasing time-on-task</p>
<p>Choose and Implement Technology Wisely Implement educational technology that aligns standards and curriculum goals, based on scientific research, straightforward implementation, and affordability</p>	<p>Orchard is an affordable program with interactive instruction, testing, and practice activities designed to motivate and engage learners while meeting benchmark standards. Orchard may be purchased for a one-time cost for all students in a building—making it a very wise investment</p>
<p>Use Performance-Based Student Assessments Embrace students’ knowledge, skills, conceptual understanding, and performance capacities, while allowing students to monitor progress and maintain motivation through challenges and learning goals</p>	<p>Orchard provides district, school, and class customizable data collection and reporting. Orchard’s assessment and assignment builder allows for creation of custom assessments and assignments to challenge reluctant learners to reach their potential</p>

Orchard Software— Your Solution for School Improvement

Success Story

When Principal Maurice Sadler joined Heywood Elementary in 2005, the faculty thought it had in place a good universal screening program. Teachers conducted assessments, quizzes, and quarterly tests throughout the year to prepare students for the end-of-year Ohio state test. As the exam approached, they felt their students were poised to perform well because the mastery of content had been monitored closely and their universal screening program had indicated students were on track. When the 2005-2006 results from the Ohio state test came in, the test scores did not reflect what the staff had seen in the screening program. This prompted a need to reassess their school improvement plan.

With Heywood's current universal screening program not working, Mr. Sadler used the summer prior to the 2006 to 2007 school year to research alternative programs that could foster school improvement. Heywood teachers began the new school year using Orchard Software with third grade students in language arts and piloted mathematics and assessment. Three weeks prior to the Ohio state tests, students took Orchard's assessment tests aligned to the Ohio exam and Orchard showed that 95 percent of their students would pass the Ohio test.

“Year after year, Orchard has accurately predicted my students’ achievement on the Ohio state tests. Orchard is better than any other tool we have used as a predictor of how our students will perform—better than curriculum assessments, better than report cards. [Orchard] has allowed us to streamline our resources. Choosing Orchard is an awesome step forward for schools facing school improvement.”

— **Maurice Sadler**, Principal
Heywood Elementary School
Troy City School District, Ohio

When the Ohio state test results were distributed in the summer of 2007, Mr. Sadler found a 95 percent correlation between the Orchard assessment and Ohio state test results.

Each school year, Mr. Sadler added more Orchard programs and additional grade levels, and each time the Orchard assessment results were compared to student performance on the Ohio state tests. Orchard was shown to be an excellent predictor in each instance and by the 2009-2010 school year, Heywood Elementary was using Orchard as the primary component of its universal screening program. Orchard accurately predicted student performance on the end-of-year state exam with a 90 to 95 percent correlation each time.

More Success

In addition to using Orchard as a predictor of student performance, Mr. Sadler developed benchmarks for the year to monitor student progress to ensure students would be on track to meet the end of year goal. In order for students to successfully pass the Ohio state exam at the end of the school year, students needed to achieve the following results on the Orchard benchmark assessments:

End of Quarter 1 September – meet or exceed 30 percent on the Ohio Orchard assessment

End of Quarter 2 January – meet or exceed 50 percent on the Ohio Orchard assessment

End of Quarter 3 April – meet or exceed 60 percent on the Ohio Orchard assessment

End of Quarter 4 June – meet or exceed 80 percent on the Ohio Orchard assessment

If students did not meet these goals, they were identified for Tier II or Tier III interventions using Orchard targeted instruction and traditional classroom curriculum.

Let Orchard be Your Choice for School Improvement

Orchard Software is an excellent tool to initiate and sustain school improvement, meet AYP, and motivate and engage students by using educational technology. Orchard's success is a direct result of many factors including research-based instruction driven by best practices, alignment with state and national standards, instructionally strong and engaging content, diverse assessment and data reporting formats, and ongoing support for students and schools. Orchard Software meets the diverse needs of students, improves data collection, and increases teacher effectiveness. Contact Orchard Learning today to learn more about how Orchard Software can drive school improvement.

To learn more about Orchard Software, contact your authorized reseller, call 1-800-351-1404, or visit www.OrchardSoftware.com

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