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Efficacy of Online Learning Assessment Tools for COVID-19 Recovery Intervention

Authors	Darling-Aduana, Jennifer;Capers, K. Juree
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The Efficacy of Online Learning Assessment Tools for COVID-19 Recovery Intervention

We partnered with a metro-Atlanta school district to investigate the usefulness of the i-Ready Personalized Instruction platform, a personalized, adaptive online learning platform, aimed at accelerating student learning in the wake of the pandemic. Our focus is on the district's staggered rollout of i-Ready, using detailed administrative data and log data from the online instructional platform. We find that, when districts strategically implement these tools, they can address both pandemic-related learning challenges and long-standing educational disparities.

What did we learn?

For the median student, using i-Ready yielded roughly two additional weeks of instructional growth in math and nearly three weeks in reading. Students who completed around 70 lessons in reading and 50 lessons in math experienced maximum achievement growth.

Students with lower prior achievement, prior disciplinary incidents, those who identify as male, and in lower elementary grades benefited from the use of teacher-assigned (compared to computer-assigned) i-Ready lessons, gaining an average of 3.8 weeks of instructional growth in math and 7.5 weeks in reading.

Although students had differential rates of achievement using i-Ready, students from historically marginalized groups benefited most.

What are the policy implications?

To maximize the benefits of platforms such as i-Ready, districts should allocate funds to support and/or expand their online infrastructure, increase student access, and train teachers on the best practices with these types of platforms. Districts that prioritize investing in schools that serve large historically marginalized populations also stand to more effectively address both pandemic-related achievement recovery and long-standing demographic-related achievement gaps.

Researchers

Jennifer Darling-Aduana
K. Jurée Capers

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What questions did we answer?

1. To what extent was student use of online instructional materials associated with improved student achievement growth in the post-pandemic era?
2. How did student achievement growth vary based on i-Ready usage and the method of assigning instructional materials (teacher-assigned vs. automated system-assigned)?
3. To what extent did students experience differential rates of achievement growth associated with i-Ready usage, by prior performance level, grade level, and sociodemographic identifiers (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, and FRPM eligibility)?

What data did we use?

We use student-level administrative data on student demographics, summative assessment test scores, and log data on i-Ready usage and scores for students in Grades 1–9 enrolled in a large metro-Atlanta school district from SY 2021-22 to SY 2022-23.

Why is this issue important?

The pace of academic recovery has largely lagged across school districts, leading district leaders to seek interventions that will most effectively improve student performance. Online adaptive learning platforms have logistical advantages (e.g., can be implemented anywhere), higher uptake, and lower stigma over other interventions but limited empirical evaluation. These findings highlight the crucial role online interventions can play in helping students meet and exceed their pre-pandemic learning levels.

Want to learn more?

A report is available at
gpl.gsu.edu/gpl-publications

The **Metro Atlanta Policy Lab for Education (MAPLE)** is a component of the **Georgia Policy Labs (GPL)**, a research collaboration between Georgia State University and a variety of government agencies committed to leveraging the power of data to drive policy and programmatic decisions that lift children, students, and families—especially those experiencing vulnerabilities.

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