Educator Study with ACHIEVE Read & Practice 2018-01

CONTEXT:	Psychology, delivered face-to-face, to 22 students
PRODUCT USED:	The Developing Person through the Lifespan 10th Edition; Kathleen Berger (eBook) with ACHIEVE Read & Practice
STUDY DESIGN:	Mixed methods with descriptive and correlational analyses

PEARL RIVER
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

How ACHIEVE Read & Practice supported student success and was embraced by an instructor who was previously skeptical about digital learning tools

Institutional and course context

Pearl River Community College is a public community college in Poplarville, Mississippi that enrolls about 6,000 students each year. This study was conducted in a Psychology course that is taught face-to-face on campus and had 21 students enrolled. The instructor in this course has fewer than five years of experience teaching and did not use a digital learning tool in the section of this course the previous semester.

Instructor implementation

This instructor replaced the paper textbook that the class had previously been using with the eBook version and the associated Read & Practice product. The instructor assigned 15 activities over the course of the semester. The students were graded on a pass or fail basis and were provide credit only if they passed. Completion of Read & Practice activities made up 35% of a student's overall course grade. Students were provided access to retake quizzes for practice but completion of, or performance on retake attempts were not factored in to a student's grade.

"Read & Practice is the best tool of its kind, it's so easy to use and effective. If I had developed a digital learning tool this would definitely be it.",
instructor

Course Goals and Challenges

In previous sections of this course the instructor reported that it was very challenging to get students to stay on track with reading and to develop strong study habits. The instructor also noted that it was challenging to motivate students to come to class prepared to participate. In terms of course management, the instructor reported that previously implemented publisher-provided digital learning tools were very time consuming and cumbersome for students to use. In fact, this instructor did not use a digital learning tool the previous semester because of their previous challenges and the challenges students faced with accessibility and functionality issues. This semester the instructor was hoping Read & Practice would be easy to use for them and their class and that it would motivate students to complete the reading and assigned activities.

Study Design

This study examined the experience of an instructor with low sentiment toward digital learning tools based on previous experience. The study sought to understand whether her experience aligned with her expectations of it being cumbersome and difficult for students to use. Student outcomes of engagement and academic performance we also examined. Surveys that were refined during pilot tests were deployed to instructors and students at the start and end of the

course, instructors kept weekly logs of implementation and perceptions, a protocol for observing the classroom was used on site visits (adapted from Lane & Harris, 2005), an instructor interview protocol and student focus group protocol were implemented. Product usage data, self-reported prior academic performance data, and records of current academic performance data were collected. Data were matched across sources and descriptive and correlational analyses were conducted.

Results

ACHIEVE Read & Practice was very easy to use for an instructor who perceived publisher-provided digital learning tools to be time consuming and cumbersome for students. In each of this instructor's weekly logs they noted on at least one occasion "ease of use" of the product. The instructor noted in 100% of their weekly logs that they spent less than one minute assigning activities in Read & Practice and at the end of the semester commented, "*It's the easiest tool like this that I've ever used*". This instructor was an avid viewer of the dashboard analytics and spent an average of 30 minutes each week interpreting and gleaning insights from the analytics. Students also remarked how easy the tool was to use. In an open response item on the post-survey, 77% of students included a remark about "easy to use" or "ease of use".

Students persisted in the course and were highly engaged in ACHIEVE Read & Practice. In this study activity completion was used as a proxy for classroom engagement and persistence. Completion metrics suggest that 90.5% of students retained in the course with an average completion rate of 76%.

"The best part of Read & Practice is the easy access to the textbook and the ability to try again if you got a question wrong", student

Students took advantage of all of the features available in Read & Practice and found benefits in each. The feature of Read & Practice that students were most vocal in their feedback about was the ability to "jump" right to the section of the eBook that they needed to review in order to correctly respond to the quiz question that they were getting incorrect. More than half of the students who responded to the post-survey commented on that feature supporting their success. Students also noted that their ability to retake quizzes supported their success as well. However, less than half of the students (41%) in the class indicated that they had retaken a quiz this semester.

Activity completion rate by student
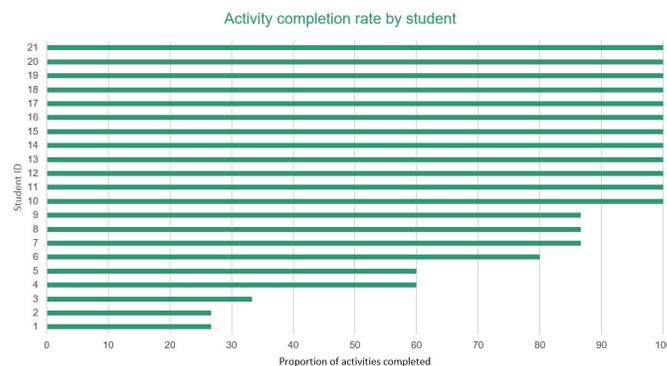
The functionality in ACHIEVE Read & Practice has changed the way an instructor will assess their students to promote quizzing for practice. This instructor provided students credit for completing the quizzes, not based on their performance and they remarked that the students were not particularly motivated to improve their performance. Anecdotally, they also determined that re-taking quizzes benefitted engagement and performance (which was confirmed in this research) and they wanted to influence students to retake quizzes in the future. The instructor has decided that for future students grades for Read & Practice quizzes will be based on their performance on the quizzes and the highest score received among all of their retakes will be recorded as their performance. They noted, "*The most beneficial part of Quiz Plus was that students have the ability to retest each quiz and improve their performance. This will be especially beneficial when I base their grades off of their best performance on the quizzes as opposed to...pass/fail. I think that will motivate students to perform better on the quizzes, and thus in class*".

Insights for Optimization

This instructor provided very detailed feedback on the usability and user experience of the analytics dashboard and the gradebook. While they found the features to be helpful, there were modifications that would make it ideal. The instructor participated in three interviews of iterations of the dashboard to ensure that the feedback is being implemented as intended. In response to the iterations they commented, "*I was able to talk with some of the Read & Practice folks about the feedback that I've been providing. It's nice to see that these surveys actually matter...this is going to end up being a great product*". The additional feedback this professor has provided on the dashboard has been implemented and has helped develop the mobile analytics capability for instructors.

Note: These results are part of a larger implementation study of ACHIEVE Read & Practice across multiple institutions in a larger ACHIEVE Read & Practice implementation study. To access the full report and results please visit http://www.macmillanlearning.com/catalog/page/learningscience