

Educator Study with ACHIEVE Read & Practice 2018-01



CONTEXT:	Psychology course, delivered online, to 35 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

How ACHIEVE Read & Practice supports student success and saves an instructor time in an online course at Seminole State College of Florida

Institutional and course context

Seminole State College of Florida is a large, public institution conferring two- and four-year degrees with programs offered face-to-face at one of four Seminole County campuses and also online. The institution serves over 30,000 full- and part-time students. This course was taught completely online to 35 students in a semi self-paced manner. Students met synchronously once a week and were asked to keep up with their reading and assignments throughout the week. This instructor has been teaching for more than 15 years and has been teaching this course for about the same amount of time. This instructor had used digital learning tools in the past and is extremely comfortable implementing them.

Instructor implementation

This instructor replaced the digital learning tool they had been using with ACHIEVE Read & Practice. The instructor set their online course up in five modules and students were expected to complete a set of Read & Practice assignments at the end of each module. On average, students were expected to complete about six Read & Practice assignments every week. However,

the instructor assigned all of the activities in the beginning of the semester so some students (about 10%) completed assignments for multiple modules before they were due.

Course Goals and Challenges

In previous sections of this course that this instructor taught they spent about five hours per week preparing for the course. They reported that a substantial amount of this time was spent setting up the publisher-provided digital learning tool that they were using. They also noted that they found it challenging to diagnose the needs of their students and tailor their lesson plans to the unique needs of their class. They further noted that they found it extremely challenging to help students develop better study habits and stay on track with the assigned reading. They were hoping for a solution that would reduce the time they spent preparing, while also giving them visibility into how their students were progressing, which is critically important - especially in online courses.

*“ACHIEVE Read & Practice is a powerful online study tool for students and it takes far less time --than comparable tools-- for faculty to setup and use.”,
instructor*

Study Design

This study examined whether the use of ACHIEVE Read & Practice affected instructor course preparation and influenced student preparedness for class, engagement and retention, and overall academic performance. 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

Use of ACHIEVE Read & Practice saved this instructor time in course preparation without forfeiting any of the benefits of their previously used digital learning tool. Prior to using Read & Practice this instructor spent between 3-5 hours preparing for their course each week. While using Read & Practice this instructor reported spending “no time at all” each week setting up the activities and remarked that the amount of time spent was “not burdensome at all”. At the end of this study this instructor asked to use Read & Practice for another semester noting having no desire to have to go back to the previous tool they were using because it was so burdensome to set up.

The instructor was able to monitor student engagement and performance more often and effectively than they had with their previous digital learning tool. With their previous digital learning tool this instructor noted that they were unable to diagnose student needs or tailor their lesson plans to the individual needs of the student. Using Read & Practice this instructor strongly agreed that the analytics provided in Read & Practice helped them know which students were struggling and strongly agreed that the dashboards helped them know which topics were difficult for which students so that classroom instruction could be focused.

Students perceived ACHIEVE Read & Practice to be easy to use and believe that it helped them perform better in the course. Students were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed that Read & Practice was easy to use (scale 1 = “strongly disagree” to 4 = “strongly agree”). The average rating was 3.56. Similarly, when a subset of students were asked to share their experience using Read & Practice, 80% mentioned ease of use as part of their experience. Students were also asked to rate how strongly they think the activities helped them prepare for their assessments and the average rating was 3.3. Overall, this class had a 73.5% completion rate of all of their assigned Read & Practice activities and a 77% retention rate in the program. One student noted “*My test scores reflect how this program helped me*”.

“Last semester I hardly got a B for my Psychology class, because it was hard to understand the assignments. While this semester [using Read & Practice] I had an A throughout the course.”, student

ACHIEVE Read & Practice helped students develop better study habits. In the beginning of the semester students were asked to rate how strongly they agreed that they used good study habits outside of class and there was an average rating of 2.89 (scale 1-4). At the end of the semester students were asked to report the extent to which they agreed that Read & Practice helped them develop effective independent study habits and there was an average rating of 3.33 (scale 1-4). Evidence of effective study habits would be that 67% of students voluntarily retook quizzes for practice.

Insights for Optimization

This instructor provided insightful feedback on how helpful it would be if grades could be easily exported or if the program could integrate with their campus learning management system. Before the end of the semester Macmillan Learning developed a grade export capability. Also, the product now has an ongoing plan of LMS integration. Students suggested that some additional features, like a search function and a notepad, might enhance the product. Both features are being researched.

Insights for Instructors

In the study of this course, one of the critical findings was that the instructor saved a significant amount of time preparing each week by setting up all assignments in the beginning of the semester, then students were able to self-direct their study throughout the semester.