

## Educator Study with Achieve for Calculus Fall 2021



<b>COURSE:</b>	Calculus, delivered face-to-face
<b>PRODUCT USED:</b>	Achieve for Calculus Book: Calculus Early Transcendentals, 4th ed. by Rogawski, Adams, and Franzosa
<b>STUDY DESIGN:</b>	Implementation study with descriptive and correlational analyses

### How Achieve for Calculus supports student academic performance in an average-sized Calculus classroom at a four-year university

#### Institutional and Course Context

Penn State University is a public four-year college offering bachelor's, master's and Doctorate degrees. The institution serves over 74,000 undergraduate students. The instructor who partnered with us on this study taught 121 students across two sections in a face-to-face formatted instruction. He has taught for more than ten years. The instructor reported being somewhat comfortable implementing digital tools in this course.

#### Instructor Implementation

The instructor used Achieve throughout the Fall 2021 semester. During this study the instructor assigned homework assignments and LearningCurve adaptive quizzes.

*“We've found it works well for us and what we want to do.”* — Professor Roberts

#### Course and Digital Learning Goals

This instructor's primary motivation for using Achieve was to increase efficiency as well as provide more available resources

and lessen expenses for their students. They also noted they hoped to learn more about how best to use the resources available in Achieve to efficiently increase student learning.

#### Study Design

This study examined whether use of Achieve was related to student outcomes. In addition, information about instructor and student perceptions of Achieve was gathered. Achieve usage was documented through analysis of platform data. Student learning data were collected at the end of the semester via course records shared by the instructor. End-of-semester surveys were used to gather data on instructor and student perceptions of the product, along with student engagement. Data were matched across sources, and descriptive and correlational analyses were conducted.

#### Results

**Achieve is engaging.** The instructor reported that students were moderately engaged in their class. Students also reported they found Achieve engaging. They added that Achieve helped them prepare for class.

- 94% reported being engaged in the course this semester.
- 58% reported being actively engaged in classroom discussions.
- 61% reported the pre-lecture activities within Achieve as engaging.
- 77% reported the homework within Achieve as engaging.

**Achieve encourages active learning.** The instructor reported observing a more than typical amount of active learning in their course.

Students reported active learning.

- 88% reported engaging in active learning in the course this semester.
- 76% reported that Achieve helped support their learning.
- 65% reported pre-lecture activities in Achieve helped them stay on track during class discussions.
- 71% reported pre-lecture activities in Achieve helped them actively learn in the classroom.

**Achieve is easy to use.** The instructor reported that Achieve was easy to use and they were comfortable using Achieve in virtual classroom environments.

Students reported Achieve was easy to use and to navigate.

- 97% reported they were comfortable using Achieve.
- 97% reported that Achieve was easy to use.
- 81% reported feeling very confident using Achieve.
- 59% reported they would recommend taking a course using Achieve to a friend.

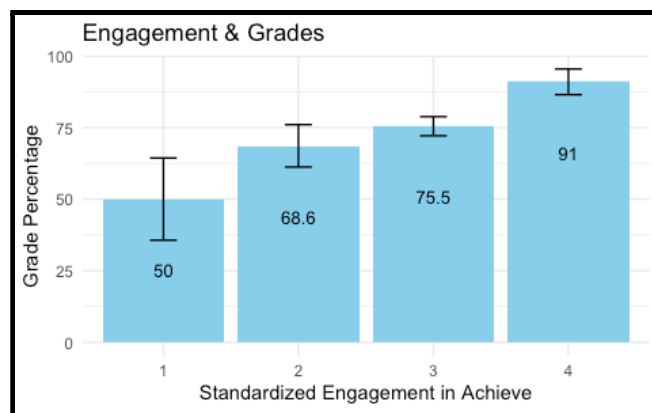
**Achieve supports student comprehension of classroom material.** The instructor reported that the tools within Achieve helped them understand where their students had gaps in their knowledge and also enhanced their pedagogical framework.

Students reported comprehension of material.

- 71% reported that Achieve was effective in supporting their learning over the semester.
- 79% reported that using Achieve helped them gain a better mastery of the course content than courses without Achieve.
- 87% reported that homework within Achieve helped fill gaps in their knowledge.
- 84% reported that homework within Achieve fostered deeper insights into the class content.
- 81% reported the pre-lecture activities also helped fill gaps in their knowledge.
- 85% reported they often comprehended the material.

*“It allowed me to assess my understanding of the material and helped me improve my knowledge.” —Student*

**Student engagement in Achieve appears to be related to student academic achievement.** Activity completion in Achieve is shown below. Here students are grouped by completion of the overall class median (mid-point). The median was equal to 47 and 79 assignments across two class sections. The graph below shows activity completion in Achieve was significantly related to student achievement. There was a statistically significant relationship between how many activities students finished within Achieve (as a percentage of how many were assigned in the course) and their final grade in the course. This relationship remained significant even while controlling for students reported high school GPA,  $p < .01$ . The graph below shows the relationship between activity completion and final grade. This graph indicates that the more activities students completed, the better they performed in the class overall.



*Note.* The standardized engagement levels are defined as follows:  
0 = no activities completed,  
1 = less than 50% of the overall median completed,  
2 = 50%-75% of the overall median completed,  
3 = 75%-100% of the overall median completed,  
4 = greater than the median.

### Insights for Optimization

The instructor and students provided insightful feedback on features of Achieve. The instructor suggested improving the interface, noting that it was a little “clunky”. They also noted that general refinement and bug fixes would help improve the features of Achieve.

Students mentioned they would benefit from more explanations of the correct solution after getting a problem wrong. They also mentioned they wanted better integration of the e-book within the homework, noting they’d benefit from being able to be directed to specific related sections of the book. They also suggested that video explanations would be helpful. They also

mentioned more resources, such as a question or help center, would be helpful. Finally, some students expressed that clearer instructions and more targeted feedback would be particularly helpful during problem solving.

Overall, the results of this study have generated valuable recommendations for the Achieve product team. The positive results support that Achieve has positive outcomes on students' achievement and warrant a larger quasi-experimental study to determine the magnitude of the effects.

## Insights for Instructors

One of the most important insights is how students and the instructor reported that homework, and specifically the feedback provided in homework assignments, reinforced learning. Students also reported that Achieve was easy to use and helped them better understand class material. Therefore, instructors in similar educational contexts might consider implementing pre-class materials and homework in Achieve to increase overall student performance.

## Study Limitations

Although the data are rich and the findings important for product optimization and insights for instructors, they are specific to this course and cannot be generalized to all instructors who use Achieve. The results are also descriptive and correlational and should not be used to infer causation.

## Ethics and Data Privacy

Prior to data collection, this study and the associated consent forms and instruments were reviewed and approved (found exempt) by the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO). HumRRO is an accredited (00009492) third-party Institutional Review Board organization with no affiliation with Macmillan Learning. Macmillan Learning seeks third-party review to eliminate any bias in the decision of the exemption. The data in this study, which are provided by the instructor and consenting students, are initially identifiable. However, once a random identifier is generated identifiable data are destroyed. Data are provided in secure storage locations, and access is permitted only to the primary investigator in the study. For full details of our data handling and storage privacy procedures, contact [marcy.baughman@macmillan.com](mailto:marcy.baughman@macmillan.com).

## Acknowledgments

At Macmillan Learning we are committed to developing learning solutions that help instructors and their students to achieve their full potential. We go about this by co-designing with students, collaborating with leading educators and learning

scientists, and partnering with colleges and instructors to research effectiveness and efficacy and share insights for success.

Our goal is to help advance teaching and learning by enabling evidence-based decision making and to contribute to research into educational technology. To these ends, we take a comprehensive approach to measuring the effectiveness and efficacy of the digital learning tools that we produce. This report represents one study that makes up the larger body of efficacy research into Achieve. We thank the incredible instructor and their students who partnered with us on this research: Joseph Roberts - Penn State University.