

Wilson Elementary District – eLearning Since 1993 Poorest District, Highest Academic Performance



In December 2005 we had an opportunity to show one of Arizona's prize jewels to a Cisco Fellow, Mimi Fletcher who is supporting New Tech High School development in North Carolina. Technology director Betty Olivier and Principle Cynthia Campton of the Elementary School (5-8) toured us within a classroom and science laboratory followed by a delightful conversation with Betty Olivier.

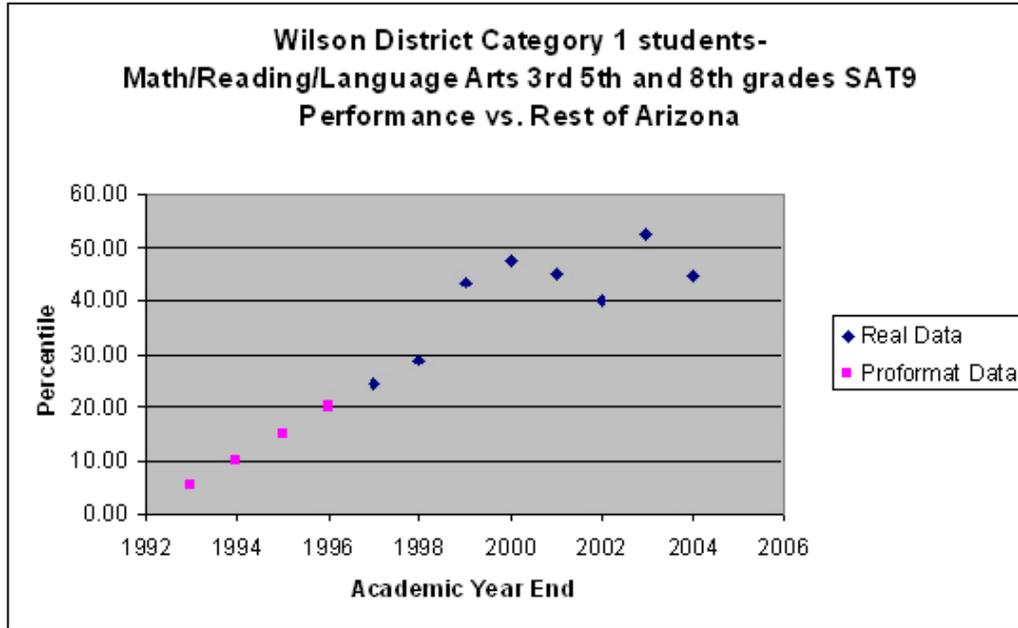
Wilson is a small two school (K-4 and 5-8) district of 1500 students, just north of Sky Harbor Airport. Academically it rates in the top three among the 13 feeder districts to Phoenix High School District. What make this really interesting is that Wilson is has the next to highest poverty-disadvantaged rating of all districts in Arizona. Their English Language Learner rate bumps up to seventy percent. So what is their secret?

In 1992, well ahead of just about any school in the nation, secured unique funding and installed a networked computer in every student's desk. Yes, I said in the desk (it's a rough neighborhood). A local architect designed an interlocking desk system to fit the classrooms. Each desk has a viewing window on the surface and a lockable keyboard tray and mouse. One master-mentor teacher was hired for each school of about 50 teachers each. They installed digital curriculum in math, reading, science and other subjects. Keeping the books on the desktop surface along with the monitor-under-the-window, they developed a highly effective hybrid eLearning environment. Teacher retention increased and student academic performance soared from worst in Arizona in early 1990's to best in class for Phoenix.

Full digital curriculum and teacher professional development integrated with one-to-one computing and the best of legacy education is the current gold standard for eLearning. The question that I am continually asked is how eLearning boosts academic performance. Two answers arise from research of Benjamin Bloom and many others. The first is that 1:1 human tutoring will invariably boost a "C" student to "A" level performance. The second is time on task where you double the time spend you learn twice as much. The expected effect factor for current eLearning technology and pedagogy is 0.4.

The numerous times I have visited Wilson District over the past 15 years I have yet to see a teacher sitting at her desk or lecturing. She has been coaching students and working with small teams. Students are continuously engaged on their work and studies. The results are well documented.

Wilson District's Stunning Academic Success

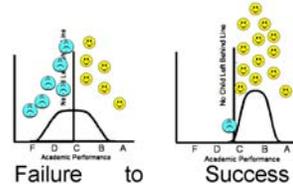


In the tradition “legacy” education (lecture, recitation and seat work) the student’s mind is engage in learning for only a fraction of the time. Also students receive only one minute per day (average) of direct teacher coaching. Formative assessment of paper tests and essay grading is separated by hours and days from the learning process. The interactive aspect of eLearning continuously engages the student. Automated formative assessments and a high level of teacher engagement provide guidance as the learning takes place. Student time-on-task and “tutoring” soar. Wilson student academic performance is best in class, and is a model for Arizona.

Cheers! Ted



Transforms Academic Performance
An Effect Factor of 0.4 = 10 Percentile Points



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