

## Adaptive Curriculum Case Study: At-risk Students Make Gains with Real-world Lessons

**Besteiro Middle School  
Brownsville, TX**

### Remembering Concepts

In 2007, when Principal Alma Cardenas-Rubio saw Adaptive Curriculum at a technology conference in Atlanta, she knew immediately that this was something she wanted for her school, where almost 75% of the students are at risk.

“What I liked from the start were the real-life scenarios,” says Alma. “Often when we teach something in class, students have nothing to relate it to in the real world. So they forget it. I could see that Adaptive Curriculum would help them remember concepts because it connects to real applications.”

### Building Motivation

Unlike many schools, Besteiro Middle School began its Adaptive Curriculum implementation with the students, not the teachers. “It can be difficult to get teachers to buy in to new

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-Alma Cardenas-Rubio, Principal

### Demographics:

- 42% Hispanic
- 39% White
- 14% Black
- 3% Asian

technology applications,” says Alma, “so, with the exception of one science teacher, we began our implementation with the students.”



For the first year of implementation, before the teachers were trained, students used the program independently in the computer lab. The strategy was to let students explore the interactive Activity Objects and report back to the teachers. “Our students didn’t have to use Adaptive Curriculum,” says Alma. “They were motivated to use it.”

### Fostering Understanding

According to Alma, “Students reported that Adaptive Curriculum helped them understand lessons they hadn’t understood in class. One student told his teacher, ‘I didn’t get it your way, but I got it when I did it in Adaptive Curriculum.’”

It was also very rewarding for students when they were able to show teachers how to do something in Adaptive Curriculum, and it was very motivating for the teachers to see how enthusiastic the students were.”

"When students get online with Adaptive Curriculum, that's the moment they really start thinking and using their brains," says Alma.

"They often mention real-world scenarios that they say helped them understand something, such as the paint rollers in the lesson on Calculating the Circumference of a Circle."



Calculating the Circumference of a Circle

## Extending the Implementation

Teachers were trained over the summer before the second year of implementation. They are now integrating the software into whole group instruction in the classroom, often pulling out sections of lessons to introduce concepts, reinforce instruction, or provide additional practice.

Every student also has access in the computer lab and at home. According to Alma, "Previously, our students did not have much support from parents at home, especially in

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*-Alma Cardenas-Rubio, Principal*

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*-Sixth-grade Student*

math. Now more parents are helping students with math and science, and they are seeing the benefit of the software. Adaptive Curriculum is helping us create an instructional setting at home."

## Improving Test Scores

"Now when students get to the test, they have an image in their minds—something they can remember and relate the question to," says Alma. "And that is reflected in our test scores. Over the last two years, our science scores have gone up six or seven points a year, and our math scores three or four points a year."

Based on its successful implementation so far, the school is planning to move to a campus-wide implementation next year, using Adaptive Curriculum across all grades in labs, classrooms, and homes.

For more information on Adaptive Curriculum:

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