



## CASE STUDY:

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### **SkillsTutor at Franklin High School Franklin, Tennessee**

Prepared by:

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Franklin High School, Franklin, Tennessee

## **I. Site Description**

Franklin High School is a suburban school in Franklin, Tennessee located twenty miles south of Nashville. The community of Franklin has a total population of 53,190 and is located in Williamson County, which has a population of over 180,000 residents. Less than 5.5% of families living in Williamson County fall below the poverty line.

Franklin High School is one of nine high schools in the county and has a current population of 1,765 students with a faculty of 108. The student population is 91% white, 3.5% Hispanic, 3.3% African-American, and 1.9% Asian. Test scores at Franklin are above the state and national averages and 91% of students at Franklin go on to four-year colleges with an additional 6% attending two-year colleges. Over the past four years 12 students have been named National Merit Scholarship semi-finalists, and in 2000 Franklin High became the first high school in Tennessee to become an affiliate member of the International Baccalaureate Program. For additional background information about Franklin High School see: <http://www.wcs.edu/fhs/>.

## **II. Details of Implementation**

### **Overview**

Ms. Willie Dickerson serves as the principal of Franklin High School and Dr. Christian Niemeyer is the Assistant Principal and the administrator of SkillsTutor on site. Franklin has been using SkillsTutor since 2004. During the 2010/2011 school year, thirteen modules of SkillsTutor were used.

SkillsTutor is used by the majority of teachers at Franklin High School. It has been implemented in a variety of ways throughout the school, driven largely by individual teacher need and the demands of particular disciplines. Many teachers started using SkillsTutor as an initial diagnostic tool to gauge student level and knowledge of a specific area. Once teachers became familiar with the program, use quickly expanded and teachers began using SkillsTutor as an ongoing supplemental tool for skill development, as well as for formative evaluation and remediation. Teachers at Franklin High School have reported finding SkillsTutor extremely easy to use and report greatly valuing the flexibility and customization available with SkillsTutor.

*“I liked the “hint” button when students were working on an assignment in SkillsTutor. It trained them that when you don’t know this, don’t guess, go back and look at the rule. ... Not only the activity itself but the way the program is set up it makes it easy to go back and look at the rule or the example.”*

— Franklin High School English Teacher on teaching grammar in SkillsTutor.

## Usage

From August 1, 2010 to June 10, 2011 the students at Franklin High School completed 66,898 activities in SkillsTutor and spent 432,277 minutes in time-on-task within SkillsTutor. All components of SkillsTutor were used including Language Arts (Grades 3–8), Reading, Writing, Language, Math (Grades 3–8), Basic and Intermediate Math, and Algebra. The majority of activities completed in SkillsTutor were in Writing (21,172) and Language (10,800), and the majority of minutes spent on SkillsTutor were on Writing (116,654) and Algebra (69,460).

## Examples of Use

- **Keeping High School Freshman on Track**  
Franklin High School has a Freshman Academy program designed to assist struggling ninth graders and keep them from falling behind. SkillsTutor is a “major tool” in this program and is used for keeping students academically engaged and on target so that all freshman are able to hit targeted academic goals throughout the year.
- **Honors Classes**  
SkillsTutor is used in honors classes as a review tool so that teachers do not have to take up valuable class time reviewing material that many students have already mastered or should have mastered. SkillsTutor helps strengthen and reinforce these review areas and can be differentiated so that each student receives the proper amount of remediation or review. Teachers often tweak specific sections of the tool in order to expose students to focused materials at specific times during the semester.

- **Review and Practice for Standardized Tests**

A number of teachers use SkillsTutor to practice for standardized tests such as the ACT. Math and vocabulary training were especially useful in the weeks prior to the administration of the ACT in eleventh grade.

- **Remediation for Struggling and Special Education Students**

Special needs staff worked closely with teachers in administering SkillsTutor for students on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) who were in need of specific types of remediation. These students found the immediate feedback especially useful for their learning, and teachers were excited about having an additional tool for students.

*“I like the fact that from any standpoint it is user friendly – very, very, easy to use. At the beginning of the year I can load in the students, load in the teachers and as an administrator I’m pretty much done for the year. Teachers themselves find it the same way. You can put a child on to get a pre-test, find out where the weaknesses are, and then set them up for remediation.”*

— Vice Principal, Franklin High School, Franklin, Tennessee.

### **III. Gains Reported for 2010-2011**

During the 2010/2011 school year pre-test and post-test scores showed significant gains in all subject areas where SkillsTutor was implemented (see last page of this report).

Specifically:

- Gains in Algebra (30%), Math C (21%) and Writing (17%) were areas where the strongest gains were found between pre- and post-test scores. Writing was the area used most by students within SkillsTutor.
- The average gain across all subject areas was 12%.
- Language and Language Arts had consistently high gains ranging from 8%-13%. Math A had the lowest percentage gain of only 2%, but only 21 students participated in this program whereas 710 students participated in the Language and Language Arts programs.

*“You can adapt it any way you want – if you want to, use it as a support system for whatever curriculum you are using in the classroom at that time. With all the education reforms going on the gist of everything is more support and more training and this program is just one of our excellent tools for support.”*

— Vice Principal, Franklin High School, Franklin, Tennessee.

## **SkillsTutor**

SkillsTutor is an online supplemental program that is used to help increase proficiency in math, reading, writing, language, science, and workforce readiness. SkillsTutor provides differentiated instruction, diagnostic testing, prescriptive assignments, and automatic reporting for the K-adult learner. It can be integrated into classroom instruction or used after school with minimal guidance.

SkillsTutor has a flexible and easy-to-use management system that allows instructors to assign lessons by standard and monitor progress while providing real-time usage and performance data. This research-based system aligns to state and national standards including the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE). SkillsTutor is a division of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. For more information, go to [www.skillstutor.com](http://www.skillstutor.com).

