

# SkillsTutor

## A Proven Solution for Basic Skills Mastery and Measurable Student Gains

### Executive Summary

- SkillsTutor provides approximately 2,400 online lesson, quiz, and test tutorials to build mastery of core skills in a highly cost-effective manner.
- Struggling K-12 students and adults benefit from academic resources individualized to their needs.
- Since 2000, students nationwide have logged on to SkillsTutor more than 300 million times, with two-thirds of those students registering at least one completed activity.
- Approximately 25 million users are actively using SkillsTutor today.
- Twenty-two Florida school districts use SkillsTutor for basic skills attainment and test improvement.
- Since January 2010, over 36,000 Florida students in 335 schools or attendance centers have logged 316,612 hours of instruction.
- Approximately 33% of the SkillsTutor usage in Florida occurs before or after school.
- During the 2011-12 school year, SkillsTutor content and performance data will be accessible on handheld devices such as the iPod, I Touch, and iPad.
- SkillsTutor usage is consistent with racial, ethnic, and gender demographics in Florida and nationwide.
- SkillsTutor helps students make substantial gains. Cumulative average scores in one Florida analysis show an improvement of 17.8% based on 48,000 pre- and posttest scores in math, reading, and language arts.
- SkillsTutor is a proven and cost-effective tool for schools seeking to comply with state and federal standards in:
  - Achievement testing
  - Educational accountability
  - Response to Intervention
  - Supplemental services
  - Least restrictive environment
  - Student-centered staff development
  - Diagnostic and prescriptive data management

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## Overview

### History of Support for Struggling Learners

SkillsTutor was developed in Fort Myers, Florida and first released in 1984, with an online version following in 2000. After Houghton Mifflin Harcourt purchased SkillsTutor in July 2010, the company became a division of a leading global education company committed to addressing the challenges of education through individualized content and innovative technology.

Throughout its history, the goal of SkillsTutor has been to provide cost-effective individualized resources that help struggling learners build core skills, along with support for the teacher and the curriculum through diagnostic and prescriptive reports customized for each stakeholder.

In response to feedback from school clients, SkillsTutor gradually expanded its original focus on reading, language arts, and math to include algebra, study skills, school-to-work transition, thinking skills, and more. SkillsTutor stays current on the latest basic-skills research and continually incorporates new teaching methodologies to help students succeed.

To date, individual users have accessed the online version approximately 300 million times and completed approximately 200 million lessons, quizzes, and test items.

SkillsTutor enjoys an 86% renewal rate nationwide, indicating a high level of customer satisfaction and loyalty. This is an exceptional rate, showing that even in today's struggling economy, documented student gains, high usage rates, and a commitment to value are important to schools.

A deep commitment to value, along with proven effectiveness, has allowed SkillsTutor to retain customers and build a 25-year track record of helping students achieve.

### Academic Success for Every Student

SkillsTutor provides students with guided review and test simulation of core skills content, serving as a standalone resource for struggling and out-of-sequence learners, as well as an intervention to strengthen broader solutions.

Struggling learners are K-12 students who have difficulty grasping essential skills and academic content at the time of delivery. Out-of-sequence learners are students of any age who have deficiencies in essential skills and struggle to acquire the knowledge they need for graduation or job acquisition, mobility, and retention.

The SkillsTutor approach is student-centered, with content and pacing tailored to each student's individual needs. Its solutions build a solid foundation in basic skills, with an array of instructional styles that motivate different students to engage in learning.

### **Alignment to State and Common Core Standards**

Approximately 2,000 lesson, quiz, and test items are correlated with the common core and state standards, including the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS). The most recent NGSSS alignment was completed in 1999 and a further review is scheduled for March 2011.

SkillsTutor is constantly updated to reflect evolving state and federal standards, maintain current content, and ensure that every student can develop the required skills.

### **Special Populations**

SkillsTutor is available in English with Spanish text and/or audio as an option in most lessons. It supports K-adult learners in regular education, as well as students in the following programs:

- Title I
- Special education
- Response to Intervention
- English as a second language
- Credit recovery
- Alternative education
- Adult basic education
- Homebound and hospitalized
- Interagency coordination
- Staff development
- Employability and work maturity skills
- Supplemental services under NCLB
- Summer school
- GED
- Neglected and delinquent youth
- Job Corp

### **Independent Recognition**

The U.S. Department of Education, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Arkansas Department of Education have all recognized SkillsTutor as the most effective model for online basic skills intervention based on independent studies. Both Missouri and Arkansas were

seeking the greatest return on investment for their most challenged students in terms of cost and achievement gains.

### **Support for Mobile Computing**

SkillsTutor is proud to be an industry leader in mobile computing. Our solution will soon be fully accessible via handheld devices such as the iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad. To bring about positive change in student learning, today's instructional materials must accommodate today's media platforms, since today's digital natives are accustomed to anytime/anywhere access.

Students will be able to access all the features and content of SkillsTutor anywhere that Wi Fi or 3G technology is available. Teachers and administrators will be able access real-time performance data on any student 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### **Data Sharing: Arkansas DOE**

In 2001, the Arkansas Department of Education embarked on an ambitious program to share student data among schools and related agencies responsible for juvenile justice and mental health.

As part of this program, SkillsTutor was introduced to the state's juvenile justice centers and the domicile districts. SkillsTutor is now used in 300 Arkansas schools and all 14 juvenile justice centers, where student testing has shown the following improvements in math, reading, and language arts:

	<u>Pretest</u>	<u>Posttest</u>	<u>Gain</u>
Cumulative Average	67%	77%	15%

Based on this success over a ten-year period, SkillsTutor is now also used in Arkansas for credit recovery and for supplemental services under NCLB.

### **Benefits for Florida Schools**

SkillsTutor has been helping Florida students succeed for more than 25 years and is currently in use in 22 Florida school districts.

#### *Expanding Instructional Time*

Recent numbers show that from August 2010 through mid January 2011 over 36,000 Florida students worked on SkillsTutor in 335 schools or attendance centers. These students logged 316,612 hours of instruction online, working on more than two million standards-based lessons, quizzes, and test items.

This access to basic skills content through SkillsTutor is exponential to the limits of the school day. The school year offers six instructional hours per day for 180 days, for a total of only 720 instructional hours. Independent SkillsTutor usage far exceeds that number.

The data show that students nationwide access SkillsTutor outside the school day 23% of the time, and in Florida 33% of the time. This allows Florida schools and districts to increase instructional time on core skills by 33% with no increase in personnel or operational costs.

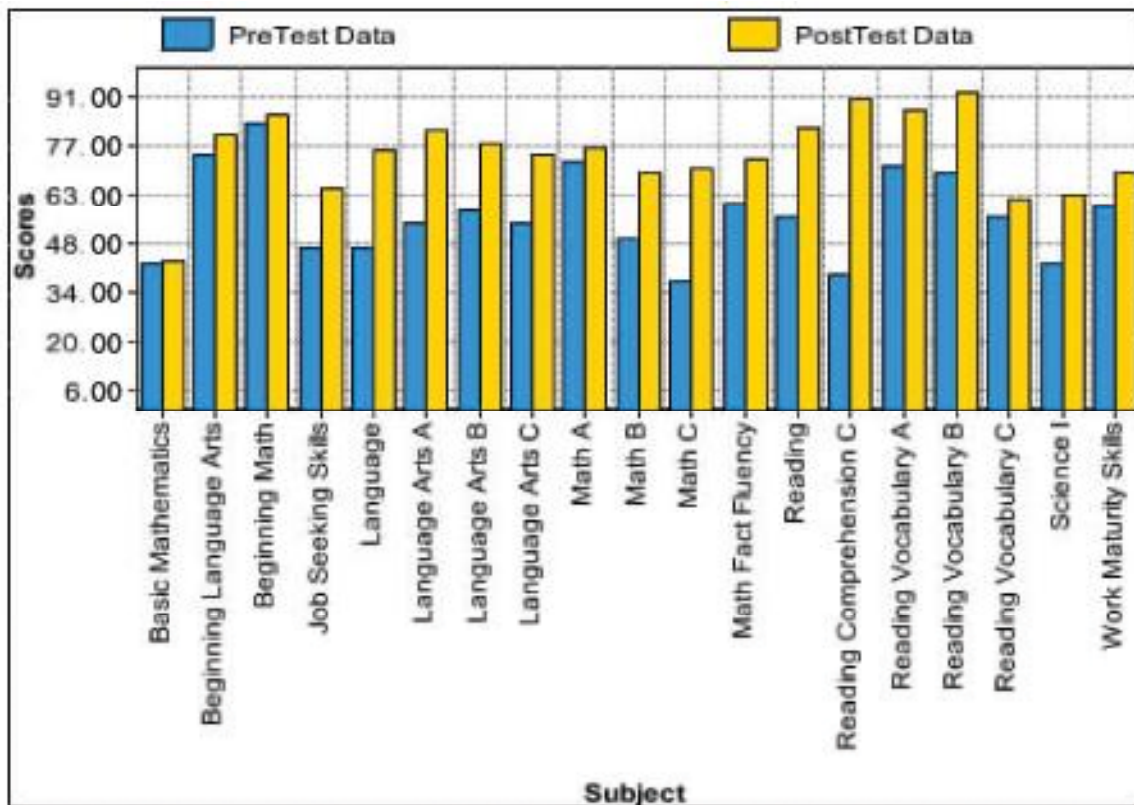
Support for Neglected and Delinquent Youth

Statewide data collected by Florida Schools using SkillsTutor with neglected and delinquent youth show that in the period from December 2009-December 2010, 665 students were registered, with 19,248 activities and 1,946 cumulative hours of instruction delivered to participating schools across the state.

Hillsborough County has used SkillsTutor for many years in its programs serving neglected and delinquent youth. Instruction in both English and Spanish, with the option of a voice toggle, reduces student anxiety. Hillsborough County students have logged significant gains correlated to SkillsTutor intervention. The following data illustrate gains in math, reading, and language arts scores.

*Gains Made by Hillsborough County Neglected and Delinquent Youth*

	Pretest	Posttest	Gain
Cumulative Average	64%	75%	10%



### Flexible Demographic Analysis

SkillsTutor uses a powerful diagnostic and prescriptive system to simplify demographic analysis for schools, districts and states and analyze performance data according to race, ethnicity, or gender.

When a school, district, or state wishes to include sensitive data such as this, SkillsTutor can accommodate that request. For example, SkillsTutor worked with the state of Arkansas to integrate SkillsTutor performance data with the state data collection system, allowing the state to identify racial, ethnic, and gender data sorted by student, building, and district.

SkillsTutor is currently developing the ability for any client to include this type of data in reports and make it available as needed in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

If access to racial, ethnic, or gender data is not available, a standard metric that can be used instead is the rate of Title 1 and free and reduced lunch. SkillsTutor can correlate these programs with schools that have primarily minority or low-income families. The following data is helpful in this analysis:

- The average Florida Title I district receives \$280,000 per building annually.
- The average Title 1 allocation to a building in a district using SkillsTutor is \$268,500 per building.
- On average, 53.5% of students in Florida districts receive free and reduced lunch.
- On average, 55% of students in the 22 Florida districts using Skills Tutor receive free and reduced lunch.
- Assuming that the average Florida district and the districts using SkillsTutor are similar, the racial and ethnic mix should also be similar.

### **Summary**

SkillsTutor is one of the most respected and proven core skills tutorials in the nation, with approximately 25 million active users. Co-founded in Fort Myers in 1984, a special effort has been made to serve Florida students and schools.

The difference between passing and failing is not a mystery—the data show that the margin of error is often less than five questions on a state test. SkillsTutor helps students bridge that gap and move from failure to success.

**SkillsTutor provides Florida districts with a cost-effective and proven solution for basic skills mastery.**

*“After the hundreds of millions of dollars are sorted and sifted, the fact remains that only two actions make a constant improvement in student performance—teach the content you intend to test and provide enough time for students to learn.”*

--Director of Research, U.S. Department of Education, in discussion with SkillsTutor founders