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A Successful Implementation of Ignite by Hatch™ in Pre-Kindergarten Classrooms in one Large U.S. School District

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This case study details the implementation of *Ignite* by Hatch, a digital learning platform, during the 2020-2021 school year in a large suburban school district. The main purpose of this study was to identify the impact of growth in children at the pre-kindergarten level who engaged in remote learning with the utilization of *Ignite* as a supplemental, remote learning tool capable of benefitting students in both remote and in-person environments.

This district enrolls a total of roughly 100,000 students with 100 schools that house pre-kindergarten and/or preschool classrooms. Of the approximately 5,000 children in the pre-kindergarten level (classes of 4-year-olds) in this district, approximately 75% of children were exposed to the digital learning software. It is important to note that this school district is primarily composed of Title-I schools with a high population of black and Hispanic children; the majority of the students in this school district are children of color.

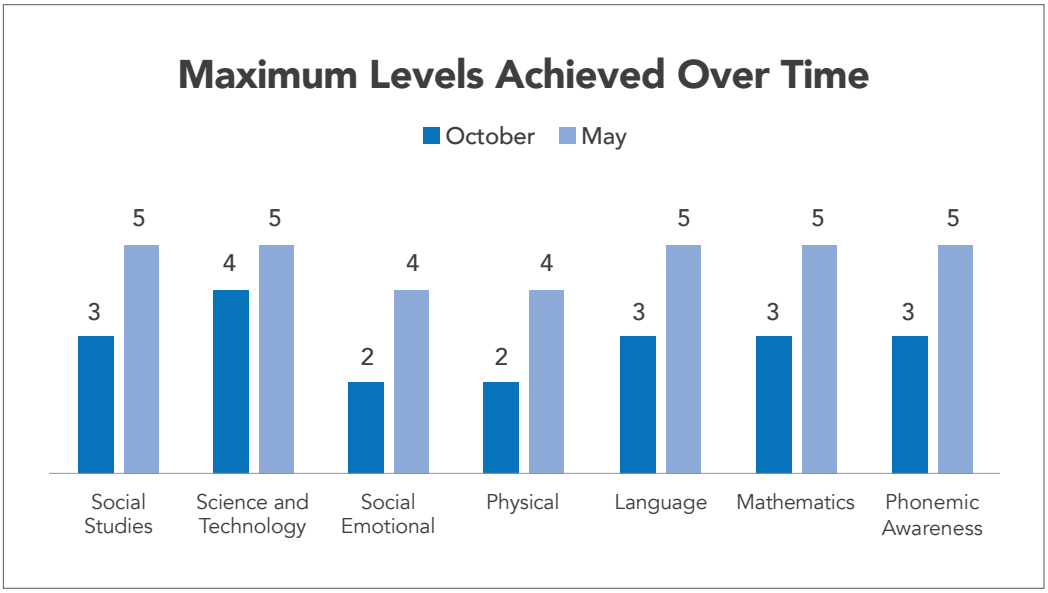
Ensuring children remained connected and active in the learning process during a time in which school closures were rampant was the challenge *Ignite* remediated for this district. The purpose of connected learning, in this instance, was twofold – to help with the displacement of children from the classroom to the home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to address the amount of time children in preschool spend learning outside of the classroom, even when their learning is not interrupted by a pandemic. By design, connected learning ensures that learning can occur asynchronously, no matter the time or place. Connected learning affords children access to learning regardless of disruptions like repeated absences due to illness, family moving, or other issues incited as a result of the pandemic. As such, for this study, children engaged with the over 200 learning experiences that *Ignite* offers both at home and in the classroom environment.

The product developers at Hatch understand research shows success in early-learners is best facilitated through play-based situations. As such, *Ignite* offers an adaptive learning environment with emphasis on social-emotional development, mathematics, and literacy. Curricular experiences cover the seven developmental learning domains: Physical, Social Emotional, Science and Technology, Mathematics, Language, Literacy, and Social Studies. As children engage with the Ignite digital experiences, a personalized avatar, uniquely designed by each child, accompanies their journey. As children successfully complete experiences, they are invited to continue personalizing their avatar buddy from a large variety of accessories and clothes. Indeed, *Ignite* offers fun, engaging methods that propel children through a progression of curricular goals that lead them toward school readiness.

For the purposes of this case study, teachers engaged in training and professional development prior to implementing *Ignite* in their programs. The model of a pre-test and post-test study was adopted to measure impact of implementation and overall student growth with the focus drawn to whether children were able to demonstrate kindergarten readiness at the completion of their 4-year-old pre-kindergarten school year. Researchers collected data from student progress reports in the month of October, and again in the month of May. Because of a high volume of school closures and re-openings, children interacted with *Ignite* both in the classroom and at home, allowing for a true connected learning model.

When comparing children's performance levels in the fall semester to their performance levels in the spring, it is apparent that the implementation of *Ignite* helped to facilitate strong levels of growth across all seven domains of developmental learning. The majority of children in a four-year-old program are expected to reach Level 4 by the end of the school year with Level 5 activities matching the skills necessary for kindergarten children. When reviewing the results, it is apparent that most children in the study were able to demonstrate at

least one level of growth and reach kindergarten readiness levels by the end of their pre-kindergarten school year.



Product developers of *Ignite* posit that 30 minutes of play per week with the *Ignite* platform equates implementation of the product with fidelity. When implemented with fidelity, research has shown that three levels of growth can occur in as little as three months. At the beginning of the 2020 school year, children experienced high levels of inconsistency; some school locations closed while other locations remained open in either full or hybrid capacity. Teachers were unsure as to how much in-person class time they would have with students, impacting their lesson planning in drastic ways. As such, the implementation of *Ignite* in this particular case study did not occur in the most ideal fashion. However, even with a less than perfect implementation, *Ignite* made a profound impact upon children who engaged in its experiences, showing accelerated growth by one level at minimum, and in many cases, by more than one level. These results in an extremely contentious school year position *Ignite* as a powerful tool for supplementing curriculum across all curricular domains in an engaging, impactful way.

Researchers maintain despite the fact children engaged with *Ignite* in the varying lengths of time and engagement levels, and not all teachers integrated the experiences into their instruction at the same time or in the same method, positive findings emerged. Given the fact no child learns in the same way as another, and all classrooms are characterized differently dependent upon their own diverse abilities and needs, these findings indicate *Ignite* supports growth in all students no matter their ability or demographic. The implementation of *Ignite* in this large, suburban pre-kindergarten program shows *Ignite* has the power to transform student growth in a dynamic way. Even though the teachers and children in this case study were faced with difficult variables in the form of school closures and connectivity, most children in the district advanced at least one level across the academic year. Furthermore, researchers maintain that the vast majority of children engaged in *Ignite* (while at home at the end of the year) had achieved a level that was at or above the expected level for their age. This, in conjunction with the finding that children's experience pass ratings increased in correlation with increasing levels of play, support the strong impact that *Ignite* has when implemented in the pre-kindergarten demographic. These levels of growth are even more profound when one considers the high volume of uncertainty that characterized the 2020-2021 school year for children across the country. It can be inferred that in a typical environment, without a global pandemic at play, children would have experienced even higher levels of growth and accelerated learning across all domains through engaging with *Ignite*.