About the school

Urban Promise Academy (UPA) is a small Oakland Unified School district. It is a middle school serving roughly 300 students in the Fruitvale neighborhood of Oakland, California.

The student body is about 87% Latino, 4% African American, 7% Asian, 1% multi-ethnic, and 1% White. 56% Students are English Learners while another 41% are re-designated as Fluent English Proficient students. 90% students qualify for free and reduced lunch, and 7% students are identified as needing special-education services.

The Challenge

Students come to UPA with a wide range of skills, especially in Math. Several of the middle-grade students were still operating at the 3rd Grade level (or below.) Moreover, many of the UPA students have limited English proficiency and too little prior Math instruction.

This school has some of the hardest working students we have come across. However, they were seriously lagging behind when compared to the state average.

UPA required a program that could fill in the existing instructional gaps to help its low-performing students improve their Math scores, and help its ELL students connect with the grade-level concepts.

To summarize, it required a learning program that could

- Provide instruction at all levels to students and help them develop their foundation skills

- Provide instruction in Spanish

PracTutor Solution and Implementation

UPA turned to PracTutor for help.

At first, teachers used it for assigning standards based practice and to analyze class performance. Soon they could see the possibility of using PracTutor for delivering differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction is an integral function of PracTutor; it varies the difficulty level of questions automatically. If a student is observed to be struggling with a question, the following questions would be easier; and if a student performs better than his grade-level, the next questions would be more challenging.

PracTutor also allows students who are not meeting their grade level to work on skills they need to catch up with the rest of class. It was observed, in the case of some ELL students, that teachers chose to start with Grade 1 and 2 questions. This well-designed approach allowed these kids to work at levels they were most comfortable with; furthermore, this eased the pressure on those students, and thus they were able to build skills which otherwise would have been left unattended.

Results Achieved

Results couldn't have been better. In just 6 months, the school noticed a phenomenal growth rate of 43% across all grades. A few groups of students weren't able to achieve proficiency in their respective grade levels, which could be attributed to the lower conceptual fluency with which they started. However, these groups did display considerable progress over the diagnostic 'pre-test' results. Their teachers expect these students to catch up with their peers as they continue building their foundation skills.

Teacher Name	Grade	Total Students	Average PreTest Score	Average Score throughout the year	Growth
Ann-Marie Gamble	6	47	32%	82%	50%
Julia Lehman	6	48	31%	73%	42%
Colette West	6	67	26%	77%	51%
Ann-Marie Gamble	7	12	11%	40%	29%
				Average Growth	43%