The Challenge:
Southfield Public Schools (SPS), a district located in a Detroit, Michigan, suburb, has faced many challenges in the past decade. Due to economic downturns, there has been a migration of families to other states as parents sought viable income. At the same time, there has been an influx of students who are challenged both socially and educationally. In 2008, SPS leadership, including superintendent Dr. Lynda Wood, was focused on “finding a program that could help teachers more effectively help their students.” Wood elaborated, “We were seeing too many students in high school English and math courses that were actually performing academically at lower grade levels. We needed to provide both remediation and credit recovery delivered in a way that would engage students and provide new opportunities for learning.”

An urban district faced with many economic disadvantages has experienced an influx of students who are challenged both socially and educationally. With a commitment to providing a blended learning solution, Southfield Public Schools has experienced tremendous success by implementing Plato Courseware to target credit recovery, as well as a suite of additional Edmentum products to support its response to intervention needs.

How They Did It:
The downturn in the economy in recent years posed even more new challenges for the district with budgets cut by $90 million in the past seven years. Even in tough economic times, SPS stayed committed to its goals for a blended learning initiative, including ensuring access to quality educational content for all learners and expanding course and delivery options for high school students. With the financial outlook of the district not expected to improve, district leadership, including Wood and director of curriculum and instruction George Chapp, needed to invest in programs that would provide the most impact.

Plato Courseware was selected for both the rigor and flexibility it provides in allowing teachers to assign individual modules to students for remediation. "We purchased Plato Courseware for its rigor and to provide
new learning experiences for our students," said Wood. "Plato Courseware helped our teachers more effectively help our students. As teachers used Plato Courseware, their use of the program continued to expand. The online environment provided the flexibility the district needed to engage students in new ways of learning."

The district's next step was to provide more blended learning options to K–8 students. Knowing that today's students, particularly those in transient populations, need as many options as possible, SPS provides those options. The district invested in additional Edmentum programs for strengthening skills and prescribed curricula in K–8 settings, as well as for support for its response to intervention needs.

"We found that our suite of Edmentum products provided a continuum of education tools and activities that meet the needs of learning at every stage of [the students'] academic development," said Chapp. SPS' adoption of online learning solutions started with Plato Courseware and now includes EdOptions Academy, Edmentum Test Packs with Prescriptions, Study Island, Reading Eggs, and EducationCity.

Each of the initiatives that includes Edmentum programs is truly blended. The district refuses to approach these classes with a hands-off attitude, making sure a qualified teacher is there to support the needs of the students.

"Students benefit from both the online activities within the Edmentum programs but also from the offline, teacher-facilitated support," stated Chapp. "Having a student sit in front of a computer is not learning, let alone engaging."

We purchased Plato Courseware for its rigor and to provide new learning experiences for our students. Plato Courseware helped our teachers more effectively help our students.

Dr. Lynda Wood, Ed.D., Superintendent

Success:
For a district with a number of challenges, SPS' overall graduation rate of 89 percent is quite impressive. "We credit that success to the implementation of sound research-based instructional practices, block scheduling, and Plato Courseware courses for credit recovery and remediation," reported Chapp. The teachers are better prepared as well. "[Study Island’s NWEA™MAP® Link] has truly provided our district educators, for the first time, with a practical tool to align student assessment data with an effective learning prescription."

A major contributor to SPS' impressive graduation rate is the success of its alternative education programs, which boast a 98 percent graduation rate. Marty Bulger, principal of SPS' Southfield Regional Academic Campus (SRAC), engages with students to ensure they are focused on the “3 G’s—Goals, Grades, and
Graduation.” Bulger said, “We work with each student to ensure they have what they need to graduate. Plato Courseware is at the forefront of making education accessible to all students. And what is great is that Plato Courseware continues to evolve to meet students’ needs.”

At SRAC, students have earned 6,300 full credits or 13,800 one-semester credits since they began with the Edmentum programs. In the Saturday School Program, 600 semester credits have been recovered. In the Summer School Program, more than 1,000 credits have been recovered. Finally, with EdOptions Academy providing an online high school, more than 300 one-semester courses have been completed by students from all four of the district’s high schools. Furthermore, Edmentum products are giving hope to students across the district. Chapp said, “Students are highly motivated by the [Study Island]MAP Link assessment [and] can see real hope in graduating high school through our credit-recovery program—largely powered by Plato Courseware. Reading Eggs has also been widely lauded by district teachers for its interactivity and creative use of vibrant colors [and] stimulating visuals to engage students—which is leading to increased, emerging literacy at our earliest grade levels.”

“We found that our suite of Edmentum products provided a continuum of education tools and activities that meet the needs of learning at every stage of [the students’] academic development.”

George Chapp, Director of Curriculum & Instruction

The Future:
Southfield Public Schools is confident that it is equipped to meet any new challenges that come its way, with the effects of Edmentum’s products making an impact throughout the district.

For more information:
Contact 800.447.5286 or visit www.edmentum.com to learn more about Edmentum's online learning solutions.