



CASE STUDY

# Building the Path to Success with a Focus on Unit Recovery

Highland High School, Antelope Valley School District, California

## Challenge

The low pass rates for 9th grade students taking Algebra I and Biology created significant barriers to on-time graduation.

## Goals

Administrators at Highland High School (HS) focused on achieving the following goals:

- Increase the 9th grade pass rates for Algebra I and Biology.
- Raise achievement levels on state assessments.
- Increase on-time graduation rate.

## Solution

In the fall of the 2012–2013 school year, Highland HS expanded the use of Apex Learning Comprehensive Courses for credit recovery to also include targeted remediation. During the 2013–2014 school year, they broadened their program again and introduced Apex Learning Tutorials to assist with the targeted remediation program.

## Results

In the spring of the 2012–2013 school year, the number of 9th grade students failing Algebra I and Biology was cut in half. By the end of the first semester of the following school year (2013 – 2014), the percentage of 9th grade students passing Algebra I and Biology increased from 65 percent to 91.5 percent, representing an increase of 26.5 percentage points.

9TH GRADE ALGEBRA I AND BIOLOGY PASS RATES UP

**26.5%**

### District Profile

District: Antelope Valley Union High School District

Enrollment: 3,235 students

Location: Palmdale, CA



## Developing the Plan

When Steve Ford joined Highland HS as principal, his primary goal was to increase student achievement levels on state assessments and improve graduation rates. During the fall of 2012, approximately 35 percent of 9th graders were failing Algebra I and Biology. As part of a three-year improvement plan, Ford focused on helping students recover credits and creating a targeted remediation program designed to address the alarmingly low pass rate.

“Tutorials combine all of the resources we were creating, and present them in a student- and teacher-friendly, engaging platform.”

### Steve Ford

Principal  
Highland High School

## Identifying What Works

Ford collaborated with his staff to expand the use of Apex Learning digital curriculum for credit recovery to also include targeted remediation. The extensive supports and scaffolds incorporated into the courses make the rigorous content accessible to students of all levels of academic readiness. To support their remediation needs, teachers sequenced course units to coincide with Algebra I and Biology topics covered in class. When students showed signs of struggling, teachers would assign the Apex Learning unit on the same topic. “While this method required up-front time to prepare the course content, it proved to be incredibly effective,” said Ford. “By the spring of 2013, the number of 9th grade students failing Algebra I and Biology was cut in half.”

When Apex Learning released Tutorials in the fall of 2013, Ford and his staff were quick to implement them as a key part of the school’s targeted intervention program. The unique structure of Tutorials allowed teachers to easily provide students with instruction targeting their individual needs. “Tutorials provide us with an efficient way to implement a rigorous instructional resource for use with our intervention and remediation program,” said Ford. “Tutorials combine all of the resources we were creating, and present them in a student- and teacher-friendly, engaging platform.”

## Going Beyond the One-Size-Fits-All Approach

Ford attributes students’ success to the teacher-facilitated instructional approach Apex Learning digital curriculum provides. Students are given a map of exactly what they need to do, and they are able to move as quickly or as slowly through the material as needed. This enables the teacher to work one-to-one with students to facilitate learning. “It became apparent that if we want our students to be successful, we have to focus on creating a culture where the students are asking questions, making connections, and solving problems,”

explained Ford. “Apex Learning Comprehensive Courses, and now Tutorials, provide the platform to move us in the right direction.”

## Contact

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Using Apex Learning digital curriculum has enabled teachers at Highland HS to shift their instructional approach. “Teachers no longer deliver a one-size-fits-all classroom lecture,” said Ford. Teachers are empowered to provide every student with instruction tailored to their needs, allowing them to take control over how they learn. “I see more teachers working with students in small groups and one-to-one. They are engaging students in conversation, asking them to explain what they are learning. This is an important shift.”