Frequently Asked Questions about Summit Learning

Q: Is there any proof about if Summit Learning is effective?

- Students at Murdock Middle School have participated in the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment for the first time this year. Students were assessed in mathematics and reading in both the fall (September) and the winter (January). When ranking MMS student's growth among the levels of growth observed across all matching peers within the NWEA norms study (same grade, starting score, and Weeks of Instruction before testing), students in grade 7 were in the 81%ile in math and 71%ile in reading. Students in grade 8 were in the 82%ile in math and the 99%ile in reading. In grade 7, 58% of students met or exceeded their projected growth in math and 62% in reading. In grade 8, 61% of students met or exceeded their projected growth in math and 78% in reading. Typical or average growth is considered to fall at the 50%ile. The percentages noted above reveal that in the span of three months, our student have demonstrated above average growth.

    Teachers report that during project time and personalized learning time, their students are more engaged and their participation in group discussions has increased significantly.

- Classroom behavior referrals for disruption, disrespect, defiance/non-compliance and inappropriate language has been cut in half from 8.1% to 4.7% over a seven-month comparison.

- What we're seeing in Murdock parallels what schools implementing Summit Learning are seeing across the country. Schools are seeing improvements in student achievement and engagement. On average, Summit Learning students achieved an academic year's worth of growth in math and reading. And students who started the furthest behind made the biggest academic gains, based on NWEA MAP data.

- In addition to analyses of NWEA MAP data, Summit Learning schools are reporting progress in a variety of ways based on additional metrics that matter to them. For example:

    - At Rancho Minerva Middle School in Vista, CA, students in the Summit Learning Program are making big gains on annual state tests. Twice as many students scored at or above proficient on state tests compared to the previous year. That's the strongest growth among the five middle schools in the district. Summit Learning also is helping Rancho Minerva students stay more engaged and excited about school. Among sixth graders, there has been a 30 percent reduction in discipline referrals due to behavior.

    - At Blackstone Valley Prep in Rhode Island, which introduced Summit Learning in the 2015-16 school year, more students are ready for college. Eleventh-graders scored an average of 108 points above the state average on the SAT, and they are 91 percent more likely than a typical Rhode Island 11th grader to be college and career ready in both literacy and math.

- These proof points form some of the many reasons behind why the number of Summit Learning schools continue to expand. This school year, 93 percent of schools remained in the Program, and of those that had the ability to expand to more students, 81 percent did. Nationwide, more than 300 schools, 2,400 teachers, and 54,000 students joined the Summit Learning Program for the 2017-2018 school year, making it the largest personalized learning network in the country. Educators like us truly believe this is what is best for students and are showing their support by voting with their feet.

- This is not a new approach. It is backed by established learning science that goes back decades. In fact, every single element of Summit Learning is grounded in what science tells us about how students learn best - from the student outcomes, to the design choices made in order to achieve those outcomes. The Science of Summit is a whitepaper that dives into the research that underpins the Summit Learning approach and Summit's principles for school design, rooted in the science of learning.

- Developed over the course of 15 years, Summit Learning is the foundation of Summit Public Schools' success in its own schools. It is based on collaborations with nationally acclaimed learning scientists, researchers, and academics from institutions including the Harvard Center for Education Policy Research, the Learning Policy Institute, and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, among others.

- Summit Public Schools rank among the best in the nation. They've won awards for school design, including being selected as one of ten schools to win the XQ Challenge in 2017. And Fast Company named Summit one of the most innovative organizations in the country. More importantly, Summit produces phenomenal results for its students. Ninety-nine percent of Summit graduates are accepted to at least one four-year college and Summit students complete college at double the national average. Through Summit Learning, students enter adulthood with a deep understanding of how they learn best and a clear vision for achieving purpose and wellbeing in life.

Q: Is Summit Learning in accordance with Massachusetts state law in how it collects our students' data?

- Yes. Summit has designed the Platform to be compliant with all applicable federal laws, like FERPA, and applicable state laws, including Massachusetts law. Summit is a signing member of the Future of Privacy Forum's Student Privacy Pledge and voluntarily complies with COPPA.

- Summit recognizes that personalized learning will only succeed if students, teachers and parents trust the technology that makes it possible. That's why Summit is committed to protecting student data.

- Summit protects student privacy by limiting the information it collects to what is needed to operate and improve the Platform and by following strong policies to guide data access, retention, and destruction. You can learn more about Summit's commitment to student data privacy at their [Privacy Center](#).

- Specific to Massachusetts law around providing access to student records, the Summit Learning Participation Agreement is the type of agreement that is referred to in Massachusetts Department of Education Law and Regulations, 603 CMR 23.02. Because Summit supports students and teachers, this law permits Summit to act as "authorized school personnel". By definition, authorized school personnel are not third parties.

Q: Is my student's data safe with Summit Learning?

- Summit Public Schools — which operates the Summit Learning Platform nationwide — is a nonprofit school organization that operates schools across California and Washington state. Protecting student data privacy is the top priority for both Summit and our district.
  - Summit is a signing member of the Future of Privacy Forum's Student Privacy Pledge. Summit also voluntarily complies with COPPA and has designed the Platform to be compliant with FERPA.

- Summit has access only to a limited amount of student information that our school (or the student) shares with them, and Summit only uses that information to provide and improve the Summit Learning Platform.
  - Summit uses student information to provide professional development and coaching to schools. Engineers use Platform data to troubleshoot technical issues and make improvements—like new features and improved navigation.

- Summit puts strict limits on who can access student data, and Summit also requires all third-party providers to comply with its privacy and data security policies, ensuring that partners have the same protections in place that Summit does.

Q: Why does Summit not require parental consent for using my student's data, unlike other education providers such as Google G Suite?

- Working closely with over 300 schools, Summit heard feedback directly from them that they have established processes for making instructional decisions—such as adopting a textbook series or curriculum—to meet the needs of their students. The Summit Learning Platform is a teaching and learning tool that includes a comprehensive curricula in English, Math, Science, Spanish, and Social Studies—as well as all the tools and learning resources students and teachers need for the school year. We want to respect each school's process. Therefore each school's leadership and teaching team will determine whether to use Summit Learning on behalf of their community.

- Summit's approach is similar to what other education providers have adopted, including Google. For example, Google offers many "Core Services" that do not require parental consent, and they state that schools can provide consent for these services on behalf of parents - similar to the Summit approach. It is only for select "Additional Services" that they require school administrators to get consent from parents. You can read more at the following advisory: https://support.google.com/a/answer/6356509?hl=en

Q: Has all of the content in the Platform been vetted to make sure it is appropriate for our students?

- The Summit Learning curriculum was developed by teachers. It is a collection of meaningful projects, concept units, and playlists of content and assessments, all available on the Summit Learning Platform.

- The Platform includes links to thousands of external education resources—from websites to videos—that the Summit team works hard to vet. These resources are selected because they provide valuable supporting information or extra detail to help a student understand a focus area, or help them study a topic for a content assessment.

- Every teacher using the program can and is encouraged to customize content, projects, and resources within the Platform to fit their local context and the needs of their students. Therefore, the curriculum Summit provides is not the curriculum every child experiences because it will have been customized by their teacher.

- See how teachers and students in a Summit Learning school use content in the Platform to support their learning in this article. This article describes how Summit Learning schools add and make changes to the curriculum in the Platform.

Q: With Summit Learning, do students spend most of their time on the computer?

- With Summit Learning, students spend the majority of their time working with their classmates and teachers on real-world projects in the classroom. They may access the Platform to track their progress or understand their next checkpoint; then, they spend Project Time working on the project.

- There is no set amount of screen time. Instead, students are empowered to use the Platform as a tool to support their learning, enabling them to access content in a way that meets their learning style and showing them their progress towards their goals.

- This article from the Hechinger Report describes how teachers—not computers—are at the heart of Summit Learning. And this article from Education Next explores what Summit Learning looks like in the classroom.

- Below is an example of a typical student's day. For this example, we will name our student Jane.

  - On a typical school day, Jane reports to her mentor class after stopping at her locker. During this block, Jane will set her goals for the day and if it is her scheduled day she will meet with her mentor for a minimum of 10 mins. During the meeting with her mentor, they will review her goals and plans from the previous week and discuss any plans for goals not met, and then talk about the upcoming week. Her mentor will help her prioritize what she needs to work on this

week, review her progress on current projects, and set goals for the next week. Jane also has space during mentor time to talk about anything that may be going on with her outside of school, such as her interests, things that are stressful, or extracurriculur activities. During this initial block, when Jane is not meeting with her mentor, she can work on a Focus Area or Project independently or with a partner as needed. After mentoring, Jane reports to her homeroom where she can eat breakfast and listen to the daily announcements.

For Jane, her next period is Science Project Time. During this class time, Jane's teacher begins with a class discussion on Fossil Fuels and plastics and plays an informative video which is paused to allow for more class discussion. After the discussion, Jane works with her partner to use relevant, credible sources to identify a negative impact of plastics on the environment and develop a question about how to reduce the negative impact through engineering.

After Science, Jane transitions to her math classroom where it is time for Personalized Learning Time (PLT). She begins by setting a specific math goal she would like to accomplish during PLT. Jane works on her math focus areas and any math projects. The teacher holds a series of workshops during class, which students can rotate through like stations. The math teacher analyzes data about student progress from her class to identify the concepts that her students need more support with, and creates custom workshops around those concepts, such as how to graph a line using the slope-intercept form or solve equations with the distributive property. After PLT, Jane returns to her mentor's classroom and then heads to lunch.

After lunch she has specials, which is art this quarter.

Her last two classes are Geography Project Time and ELA Project Time. In Geography Jane and her small group are working on their "Shark Tank" project. Her group has to develop an invention to solve a problem they face in their daily life. Today her group is reading about women in Africa that have developed their own small business and are expected to answer questions about their reading. Before reading, the students review the questions they will be expected to read. Then, each student takes a paragraph to read aloud to the other members in the group. Her teacher has paper copies of the reading available for any students that do not want to read on their Chromebook, and hands one out to Jane. Once the reading has been completed, Jane's group discusses what was read and answers the questions together citing evidence from the reading in their answers.

Her last class of the day is ELA Project Time. Jane's class is continuing their reading of *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Dramatization) as a whole class, with student volunteer actors. Students have taken out the textbook where the play is located and the packet where they have been asked to complete the Scene Journal entry. Before class is over, Jane and the group of students she sits with share their journal summaries and reflections. During the last five minutes of the day, Jane returns her Chromebook to her mentor's classroom and retrieves her belongings from her locker.

Q: Is Summit Learning too difficult for students, causing them stress and anxiety?

- Students learn, grow, and achieve by being challenged. Summit Learning often presents challenges to students that, in the end, help them grow. In the past, students were able to obtain high grades by participating in class, doing their homework, and passing assessments. Their grade might be an A in a class, but it doesn't mean that the student has mastered the content or has the skills necessary for higher level thinking. Now all the things they do are done to help them demonstrate mastery of learning and they are required to pass with a minimum of an 80%. Gone are the days where students cannot study or do bare minimum studying and pull easy As or Bs in classrooms. Skills based grading is a better measure for students and parents to see exactly where strengths and weaknesses lie within each

individual student. This can be stressful for students, but the long-term goal is that acquiring these skills now will only benefit them in the future.

- Through the Summit Learning Platform, students can see exactly what they are expected to learn throughout the year in all their classes. For some students, this transparency can seem overwhelming at first. That's why teachers work one-on-one with students to set realistic short-term goals and break down large projects into smaller tasks. Over time, students begin to take ownership of their learning, using information from the Platform and feedback from their teachers to develop and achieve their goals.

- Research shows that there is often a perception gap between how parents believe students are doing and how students are really performing. (For example, this 2017 study from Learning Heroes shows how 9 in 10 parents believe their child may be at or above grade level, but student performance data shows only about 1/3 are performing at grade level.) As educators, we want to build a community where parents are deeply involved in and have a thorough understanding of their child's education. Summit Learning helps us to do this and close that perception gap through the mentor relationship - now, every parent knows their child has a mentor that knows them deeply, and together they can understand the child's strengths and challenges and how to provide support.

   - In fact, in a Summit Learning survey of Murdock Middle School students in the fall, nearly half of all students across 7th and 8th grade report that they have seen a significant improvement in being able to learn things on their own, compared to how they felt at the beginning of the year.

- And stories from students back up the data from the survey. This story is from a current 7th grader at Murdock Middle School:

   - *"At the beginning of the year I thought Summit wouldn't help anyone and no one would like it. It took me a little while to get used to the platform but the more I used it, the more I started to understand. When I started to pass content assessments, I got more confident and started to understand how to be more self-directed. Now, when I get stuck or need help I know I can ask my teachers for help and I feel like I have more choice in my education. My mentor talks to me about life, helps me reduce any stress I may feel and helps me feel more confident. I don't feel alone because I have an adult I can go to. He helps me set goals and make my plans for the week. In PLT I can work in groups and with a teacher during a workshop. If I'm struggling with something we are leaning I can work in a small group with my teacher. If I understand what we're learning I'm able to move forward at my own pace. In Project Time my teachers are teaching what we are learning in a Focus Area and we do a lot of group projects. Last year I used to depend on my teachers all the time because they were the ones giving me all the information I needed to learn. I never had to learn anything on my own. My grades were not good but now I have all A's and B's. Last year I could have done better but never wanted to fix my work for a better grade. I didn't really care about my grades and when I got my work back it would go straight into the trash. I'm not very organized so I lost a lot of my papers last year. This year I take doing homework more seriously because it's easier to use the platform than what I had to do last year."*

Q: Do students have time during the school day to complete their work?

- When students were asked if they have enough time during the day, the majority of students responded they do. They recognize that one of the most important parts of their day is using their PLT and mentoring time effectively. This includes staying on task, not "slacking," and asking the teacher for help when they need it.

- Teachers also play a critical role in making sure students are able to complete their work. Students who have fallen behind complete Student Improvement Plans with their mentor. This gives the student a

step by step guide to assist them in completing any missing assignments. Mentors will also check in more often with students who are behind.

- We also provide opportunities for all students to receive additional help from the teachers. Afterschool sessions and the February break session have all been voluntary. These sessions also provide time to students who do not have internet access at home a place to work when needed.

Q: Can Winchendon's internet network handle the demands of having all these students on the computer at one time?

- It is our goal to provide the best possible educational experience for our students. That includes making sure our infrastructure can support student access to the internet as needed - we added an additional access point the first week of school, and closely monitor internet capacity. Since the beginning of the school year, our internet has only gone down three times, and for no more than an hour total. Our teachers also have back-up class materials in case there are any internet issues during class, to make sure that nothing is impeding the learning experience for students.

Q: Many of Winchendon middle school students do not have access to the internet at home. How are they supposed to complete their class work and stay on task when they have so much online work to do with the Summit Learning Program?

- With Summit Learning, students spend the majority of their time working with their classmates and teachers on real-world projects in the classroom. We recommend students work 30 to 45 minutes at home a few nights a week, and teachers work hard to make sure that students have the time and support they need during the school day to complete their work.

- We understand that not all of our students have access to the internet at home. According to the results of a recent survey of our students, we believe less than 10% of our 7th and 8th grade students don't have access to the internet at home. We keep the school open after school with computers and internet access for students that need it. If there are any assignments sent home, they are printed out for every student.

Q: How has the role of the teacher changed with the implementation of Summit Learning in Winchendon? Are teachers still teaching, or is the student learning mostly on the computer?

- Teachers are an integral part of the entire experience, from leading projects to coaching students and guiding them through content in class. In a Summit Learning classroom, instead of standing at the front of the classroom and providing direct instruction for an hour, a teacher may do several different activities depending on what their students need. They may teach content knowledge via direct instruction to the entire class, create small group workshops to help a group of students who have the same question, or provide targeted interventions 1 on 1 when a student has an issue with a subject. I've included below examples from several of our MMS teachers:

- Mr. Coleman: Social Studies

  - *Each day during our Personalized Learning Time, I guide students through two separate content areas or skills. I enjoy these periods because I get to work closely with a group of students who have acknowledged that they need some assistance in that specific area. I love that my students are becoming such strong self-advocates. A huge benefit to these workshops is that students who are have already mastered that material are free to advance onto other subjects, and don't need to wait for the rest of the class. My small groups look nearly identical to a traditional classroom, as we take notes together, investigate examples, and answer questions together before advancing onto other material. During project time, students are focused on completing projects to show their understanding of current event concepts. Here, I am able to work closely with students to refine and focus their projects. Recently, I have been able to work with groups of*

students on their Shark Tank economics projects, discussing what solutions they can come up with to challenges they face in their daily lives.

- Mr. Herrick: Science

    - *This year for science class my students have been busy getting their hands dirty and exploring science through inquiry-based and problem solving based projects. The majority of these projects are hands-on lessons that do not involve a computer. For example my 7th grade classes started the year by exploring how clues in the geological record tell the story of the earth's past. They applied their understanding of how geoscience processes shape Earth's surface to illustrate a series of comics that explain the process of how their chosen geologic formations came to be. Some of the topics taught in class include what materials make up the earth, how energy cycles and shapes the earth, how the materials undergo chemical and physical changes, how much time it takes for these processes to occur, types of weathering that affect the earth's surface, erosion and deposition, types of erosion, etc. Currently students are exploring how human activity draws on natural resources and how these materials impact society. These are real world problems they will continue to study into college and beyond. By the end of this project each group will have designed their very own solution to reduce the impact of plastics on the environment. I strive to create a classroom that is full of inquiry-based and problem-solving based science projects. Each group of students brings a unique skill-set to the table to produce some amazing results and then we reflect and learn from the process! All of these projects require me to be a very active part of my classroom and teach a myriad of different skills and science content. Using data to inform my teaching has made me a better teacher. Rather than teaching everyone the same thing at the same time, I can now use data provided by the platform to better teach smaller groups of students exactly what they need. I teach groups of students by holding 10-15 minute workshops centered around the theme of the day, which is geared towards completing their project. Each workshop helps a certain group of students get exactly what they need to be successfully. No two students are alike and now I have quality data to be able to pinpoint my teaching to help specific individuals.*

- Mr. Bolick: Special Education

    - *As a special education teacher my role has changed in a variety of ways. Since I have the special education students I provide services in class and in my mentoring group I have greater chunks of time to gain insight into how each student learns best and the supports needed to help them each day. Through mentoring I have made much stronger relationship with all my mentees. The platform allows me to quickly look at their progress(daily, weekly, and overall) and their work, form targeted groups and prioritize their next steps in class. I spend way less time chasing down lost/incomplete assignments which frees up more instructional time within the class. During project time, utilizing data from the platform, I am able to coordinate with the content teacher to guide students through checkpoints or help them revise them. During Personalized Learning time, most days, students who are significantly below grade level attend a small group to address these gaps.*

- Mrs. Rodgers: ELA

    - *My role as a teacher has changed this year because I am no longer just a teacher in the classroom. I am also a mentor, a facilitator, a coach, a guide. There are so many more aspects of "teaching" in the work that I do now as opposed to last year, and with that, I can help students in new and more involved ways. With this new teaching and learning, the students are able to access more this year than ever before, getting to more content and therefore practicing more relevant skills that will help them be successful now and in the future, whatever that may look like. The data available to me to help my students is much more vast, and I can make use of this very visible data more easily than before, using it to target areas of need, create and implement*

strategic interventions, and help students seek challenges. In Project Time, this might mean doing a whole class teaching or reading like I would do last year, and then breaking out into different groups to work on a project, whereas other days I might have students start with checkpoints they're on, making groups accordingly to help those students where they are so I can maximize my time giving feedback and the students' time working. In Personalized Learning Time (PLT), this could mean some students work on content ahead of the proposed timeline, some work on current content in focus area workshops with me, and some students have individual plans that their mentors have created with them to get them back on track.

- Mrs. Cote: Math

  - *Teaching in my classroom has changed a lot from what I am used to, but not in a bad way. In the past it was lecture, note taking and students helping to solve problems, what we call a traditional classroom. If you were to walk into my classroom this year you would see me teaching a short lesson and students working together to solve problems related to what they just learned. Students work together sharing solutions and methods to solving problems. My job has changed some, in that I walk around and keep the conversations going by adding to their conversations and asking questions that will lead to answers. I help students who are struggling one on one or in small groups. My job is no longer to just lecture and make sure students are taking notes, but to make sure students are actively learning. I have seen more "ah ha" moments this year, which makes me smile, as I know the students are making connections with the small lessons and struggling a little with problems. I enjoy my new role guiding students through real life problems and watching them help each other. There is a lot more teacher/student and student/student interaction. I know many people do not really understand the program and are being told that teachers do not teach, but I can tell you at the end of the day I am exhausted from moving from student to student, from group to group helping them make connections. It is all worth it when they are happy about their accomplishments!*

- These examples show how teachers are teaching in ways that help students develop critical-thinking skills, not just memorize content. Most of their time in the classroom is spent teaching cognitive skills through real-world projects - using their expertise to help students apply their knowledge to the world around them.

- In addition to teaching content and projects, Summit teachers also mentor students and help coach them towards their personal goals. Summit Learning is designed to help teachers develop strong relationships with students to truly understand their passions, interests and aspirations and how they can help them achieve those goals. These relationships are at the heart of great teaching.

Q: Since the Summit Learning Program was developed in California to align with California standards, does it also align with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks?

- The Summit Learning curriculum was developed by teachers for teachers. Teachers can customize content, projects, and resources within the Platform to fit their local context and the needs of their students.

- Both California and Massachusetts adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for ELA and Mathematics in 2010. All curriculum taught at MMS aligns to these standards. In addition, teachers have incorporated curriculum they have taught previously to cover the additional standards that Massachusetts incorporated into the Frameworks. California and Massachusetts have also both adopted the Next Generation Science Standards. Our science teachers have worked diligently to identify which science standards are taught in each grade using the suggested time line provided. Teachers have reviewed all units and projects in all subject areas to ensure alignment. If teachers feel a standard is not covered to the degree they feel necessary, they have made revisions as needed. All of the Geography

and Word History curricula has also been aligned to MA History standards as well as the MA Literacy Standard.

Q: Do Winchendon students receive the 1:1 mentoring and targeted instruction as promised with Summit Learning?

- As part of the Summit Learning Program, all students have a mentor who acts as their advocate both inside and outside of the classroom. Each teacher has a group of mentees, ranging from 16 students to 19 students. Mentors strive to meet with every mentee at least once per week for at least 10 minutes. This time allows teachers to develop strong relationships with students to truly understand their passions, interests and aspirations and how they can help them achieve those goals. Many mentors have a set schedule of which students they meet with on a particular day. Student's mentors also act as a liaison between the families and the other teachers.

- During Project Time and PLT, teachers support groups of students with common needs using a small group workshop model. Teachers use data from the platform to create targeted intervention workshops and provide direct instruction in the specific areas a student may need.

Q: How are students with 504s and IEPs supported with Summit Learning?

- The Summit Learning Program was developed to support diverse learners, and it is ideal for this because teachers are able to easily personalize the work that students are doing and the content they are working on. It is also built to allow teachers to provide the necessary scaffolds and interventions for any student.

- All students on IEPs and 504s are supported in accordance with their plans. Inclusion students receive instruction in the classroom which is led by co-teachers: a general education and a special education teacher. Students that require small group services outside the classroom receive direct instruction from their special education teacher during Project Time and/or PLT. This year, students on IEPs and 504s are also learning more about their plans, including what accommodations work best for them and how to advocate for themselves.

- Teachers have received extensive training and coaching in various intervention methods and accommodations. These interventions can be based on academics, behavior and student focus and motivation. Teachers work together to monitor student progress and provided interventions as needed.

- This Summit Learning blog post shares the experience of one teacher and parent whose student has a 504 plan and is a Summit Learning student.