

FLVS Case Study



The Florida Virtual School (FLVS) is an established leader in developing and providing virtual K-12 education solutions to students all over Florida, the U.S. and the world. A nationally recognized e-Learning model and recipient of numerous

awards, FLVS was founded in 1997 and was the country's first, state-wide Internet-based public high school. Today, FLVS serves students in grades K-12 and provides a variety of custom solutions for schools and districts to meet student needs.

The Challenge

FLVS authors and maintains tens of thousands of online content pages. As a leader in online course publishing for the secondary market, FLVS serves thousands of virtual learners and teachers. In this market, the average course lifecycle is about five years before complete revision, but there has always been a need to incorporate new functionality and enrichment into volumes of existing content. Previously, this process involved a complete overhaul of and reworking of legacy content.

FLVS faced an economic and philosophical challenge. With a budget of about \$6 million dedicated solely to content development, and a lengthy list of new courses waiting to be produced, how could resources be best allocated to target the necessary revisions within legacy materials and deliver new content? Guided by a drive to best address the needs of their learners and clients, FLVS's first step was to understand which course lessons worked well, and which did not meet the mark. Assessments and teacher feedback provided some of these answers, but this information was not providing the direct insight into their content that FLVS was looking for. They needed a way to consistently discover and document what lessons resonated positively with their students and which lessons did not. What FLVS needed was a system to measure and report on student reaction to the lessons delivered.

FLVS needed a tool that was simple to use so it would encourage student involvement. More traditional survey attempts in the past did not generate the



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desired participation rate. FLVS initially wanted to only place the evaluation tool on the final page of its lessons and they wanted the ability to choose which courses needed to be rated.

The Solution

FLVS worked with long-time partner Ucompass.com, Inc. to help implement a solution for gathering student feedback. Ucompass.com's Octane platform, a revolutionary system to enrich legacy learning content with interactive tools and functionality while capturing results, was implemented.

The Octane system contains a variety of tools and components that content publishers can implement to enrich their content and add feedback mechanisms. One of these tools, the Octane Rating Tool, was initially implemented for four courses that the FLVS development team selected. Not only were student ratings accumulated and retained, but also the identity of the students was captured to safeguard skewed reporting from random ratings.

Before January 2011, FLVS knew that one of its courses was already in need of some attention. Students in this course were not performing well, and teachers were challenged to get students through the material successfully. Work had already begun to revise the course content. The strategy put in place during this revision was to embed interactive elements directly within the html page rather than link to new windows. The rationale was that students did not want to navigate outside course pages.

The Results

A decision to implement the Octane Ratings tool into the selected course content was made in January 2011. The injection was readily activated within the Octane Portal and provided a way for administrators to view the ratings detail in real-time, as well as export data reports. Students were asked to rate each lesson in the course. After two months, 12,136 lesson ratings were submitted for the first selected course. Ratings were compiled and evaluated within the course, and each lesson rating was compared to the average ratings within the course on a scale of 1 (Poor) to 5



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(Excellent). The variance from the course average was computed for each module or section and the results were tabulated.

Table 1

Lesson	Rating Count	Average Rating	Average Variance
Zero	74	3.068	(0.32)
One	101	3.208	(0.18)
Two	142	3.014	(0.37)
Three	179	2.799	(0.59)
Four	90	2.989	(0.40)
Five	134	2.769	(0.62)
Six	103	2.699	(0.68)
Seven	52	2.827	(0.56)
Eight	70	2.857	(0.53)

Suspensions within the development team were confirmed. Module 5 with a rating of -0.264 was the least valuable section in the eyes of the students. There were 1,384 unique ratings submitted for that section.

In April, the development team had completed its revision of this module. The only real difference in the lesson pages was that the revision required students to scroll longer on the page in order to get through the required materials. The interactive sections were placed directly on the page, and the ratings tool was reset.

After one month, another Octane ratings report was generated. Did the changes made impact learner ratings? There were 925 ratings for the new format (see Table 2). The results were disappointing. Every lesson was rated lower than before. The variance from the average course rating also became more negative. Student opinions of the lesson change indicated that this was a change for the worse, and the original assumptions of the development team were not accurate. The failure of the original lessons to meet FLVS's course expectations was apparently unrelated to the opening of new windows. It appeared, in fact, that students did not like having to scroll through longer pages.



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Table 2

Lesson	Rating Count	Average Rating	Average Variance
Zero	89	3.191	(0.19)
One	147	3.333	(0.05)
Two	152	3.250	(0.13)
Three	276	2.844	(0.54)
Four	134	2.194	(0.19)
Five	242	2.888	(0.50)
Six	99	2.192	(0.19)
Seven	102	2.255	(0.13)
Eight	143	2.930	(0.45)

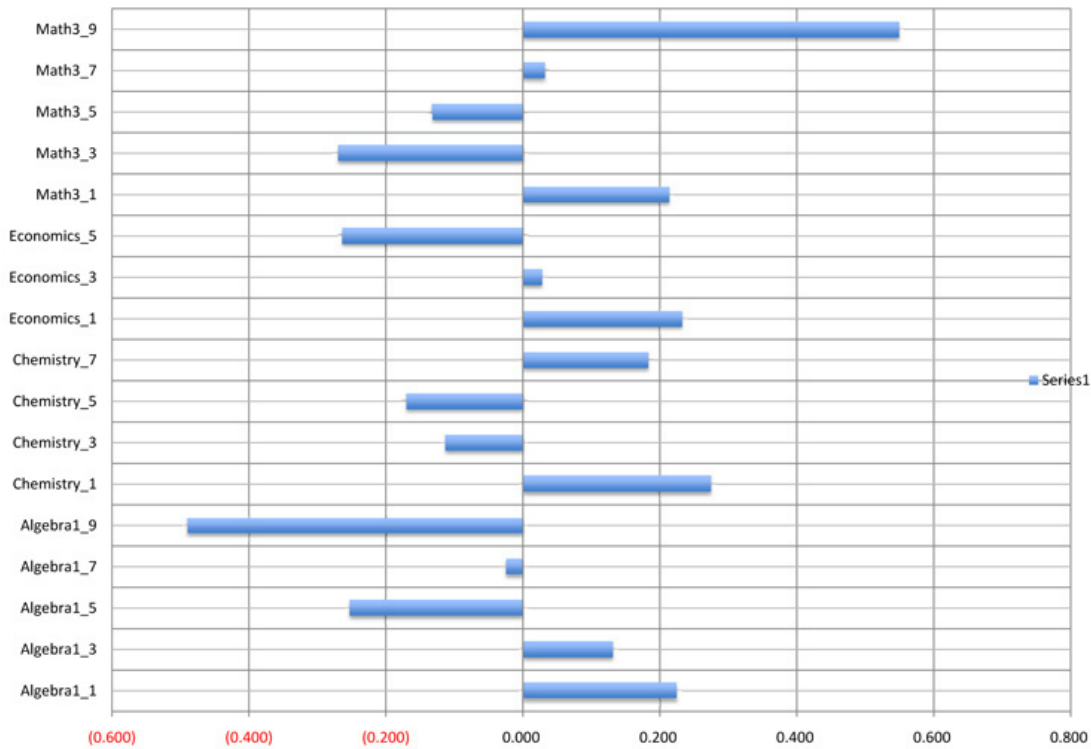
Prior to the Octane Ratings tool, it would have taken a year or longer to get any feedback on the implemented course changes. FLVS is now able to change single lesson pages and monitor student reaction immediately. In an effort to better analyze the engagement level of students, Ucompass.com has taken steps to expand the Ratings tool to further enrich the lessons that are already in place, and provide even more feedback to FLVS.



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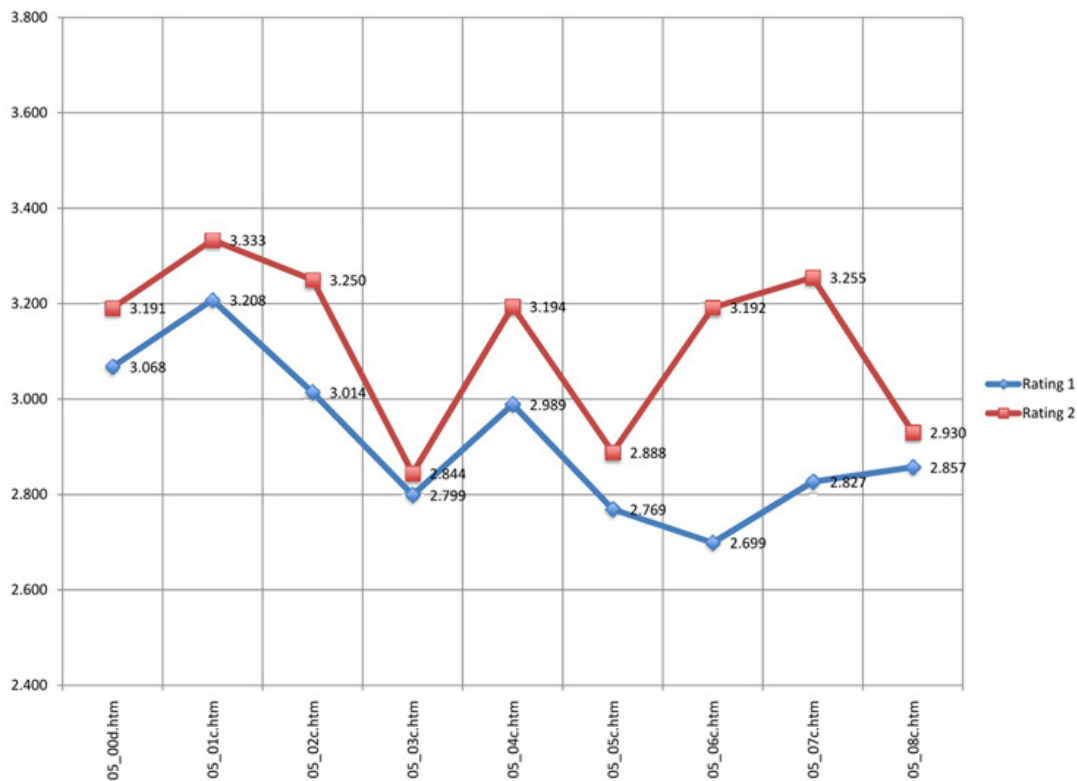
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Original Lesson Ratings By Section (Initial Four Courses)



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Ratings Comparison



Rating 1 - Ratings after changes were implemented

Rating 2 - Initial rating of lessons

Moving Forward

FLVS genuinely cares about the effectiveness of its courses. They are driven to improve, and are not afraid to look into the mirror and admit their shortcomings. The original ratings tool is being enhanced and expanded to gather more information.

Functionalities to be added include:

- Reason checklist - why students rate a lesson above or below a three
- Comment box - opportunity for students to leave free commentary
- SETS - Student Engagement Tracking System - to track all student time and activity in a lesson

FLVS is leveraging Octane to further enhance its student feedback process and to add more functionality into its legacy content to enrich the student experience.



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