CLASSROOM, INC.
REPORT ON GROWTH AND IMPACT
2015

Shavonna G., student, Chicago, IL
Classroom, Inc. is a nonprofit that helps students in high-poverty communities develop literacy and leadership skills. By creating digital learning games and curriculum set in the professional world and supporting educators in creating student-centered classrooms, we invite students to take charge of their learning.
Dear Friends,

I joined Classroom, Inc. in June 2012 because I saw an opportunity to do things I couldn’t do in 30 years of publishing. I wanted to build on the organization’s proven approach to literacy and leadership. I knew that Classroom, Inc.—with a 20-year track record of success working with teachers in high-poverty communities—was uniquely equipped to help teachers “change the game” for their students.

I also knew I had a lot to learn. I spent a great deal of time listening—to teachers, principals, students, and other leaders in education. I spent time listening to our donors, an inspiring group of passionate people. We all agree that literacy is the gateway to opportunity in our knowledge-driven society. And we know that our industrial age, one-size-fits-all education system too often fails students by not helping them build the skills they need to succeed in a global, information-based economy.

One of the most important themes to emerge from those talks was that of continuous learning. Our students need tools to help them develop their own abilities and identities as lifelong learners. If teachers are to completely change the way they teach, they will require tools and supports to help them adapt, learn, and succeed. At Classroom, Inc., we never stop learning. Our rigorous evaluation and feedback cycle ensures that we are continuously improving our games, curriculum, and support.

Your commitment to our shared vision has fueled our work, and has enabled thousands of teachers across the country to help students build the literacy and leadership skills that serve as their gateway to opportunity. As you will read, over the past two years, we have accomplished a great deal together.

And we’ve only just begun.

Best,

Lisa
SUCCESS BY THE NUMBERS
2015-2016

Program
Reach

1,300

teachers participated in professional development workshops, conferences, online trainings, and intensive coaching sessions

110

School Partnerships

36

Cities

Impact

Reading & Writing

Students playing *After the Storm* successfully closed the achievement gap in reading, **exceeding expected growth (1.6 points in one school year) by 160 percent**. Students who started the program reading at a level below national norms made significant learning gains and completed the program at a reading level higher than national norms.

**Closing the Gap**

*The national norm group gained 1.6 points in one school year on the Reading Level Indicator, while Classroom, Inc. students gained 2.6 points, or 1.6 times the national norm, in the same time period.*

Students successfully transferred the skills they built through *After the Storm* to other ELA assessments. In fact:

9 out of 10 teachers reported improvements in students’ performance on non-game reading and writing tasks and assessments, noting growth in areas such as:

88%

Reading Comprehension

94%

Informative Writing
**Decision-Making, Problem-Solving, and Persistence**

In addition to making major academic gains, students who used After the Storm also improved their 21st century skills:

- 84% of students said that the game helped them build persistence when faced with problems.
- 100% of educators reported improvements in students’ problem-solving and decision-making skills.

**Career Awareness**

After the Storm helped students link schoolwork to the world of work:

- 89% of teachers reported that the game helped students connect reading, writing, and verbal communication skills learned in school to real-world careers.
- 83% of teachers saw growth in students’ leadership skills.
- 89% of educators reported gains in students’ ability to manage different responsibilities.
- 89% of teachers noted improvements in students’ understanding of the connection between school and careers.
- 89% of educators reported improvements in students’ communication skills.

**Organizational Highlights**

- $8 million campaign concluded
- $1 million NY Life Foundation grant
- 100% of board members supported the organization through time, talent, financial support
A New Approach to Literacy & Leadership

In just two years, our expert team of game designers, researchers, and educators created, piloted, and disseminated two new learning programs to thousands of teachers and students. Unlike other instructional programs designed for middle school, our programs address literacy, engagement, and career awareness simultaneously.

Each program includes:

- Learning Game
- Project-based Curriculum
- Educator Support

What I loved most about this program was the sense of pride and leadership students felt in playing this game. Students who had IESPs [Individualized Education Services Learning Programs] were able to play the game like any other student because it was tailored to their academic ability. This was definitely a program that helped with differentiated learning for all students who participated.”

—Janine Aponte, Educator at St. Lucy’s School, Bronx, NY
Closing the Reading Gap

Middle school students of all levels and backgrounds experience tremendous growth from our games and curriculum.

Over the last year, our in-house research team pored over results from classrooms across the country that used After the Storm. What we found was remarkable: students who used the game made statistically significant reading gains, greater than what is expected in one year.

Students who used After the Storm jumped ahead of their peers and exceeded expected reading growth by 160%

Changing Reading Behaviors

- **Transferring Learning:** After playing After the Storm, students improved in other non-game reading and English Language Arts tests.
- **Motivation to Read:** 86 percent of students reported that playing the game helped them understand the important role that reading plays in academic success.

"After the Storm changed students’ reading behavior!"

—Ginger Estes, Educator at Daviess County Middle School, Daviess, County, Ky
SUPPORTING TEACHERS IN THE CLASSROOM

“We love that students can’t just skim through and get by. Students are reading closely and are deeply engaging with their employees and varied texts to accomplish their work.”

— Ginger Estes, Educator at Daviess County Middle School, Daviess, KY

Making Writing Gains in Kentucky

In spring 2015, Daviess County Middle School teachers Ginger Estes and Sara Appleby used *After the Storm* to help their seventh grade ELA students build critical reading and writing skills. Educators received extensive remote support from Classroom, Inc., including online educator training sessions and continuous communication with Professional Learning and School Support Coaches via email, phone, and text. Teachers implemented the program for 80 minutes per week. As part of the Gates Literacy Courseware Grant, nonprofit research institute SRI International conducted a study of Classroom, Inc.’s Kentucky program, comparing classes that used *After the Storm* with those that did not. The study concluded that, compared to the group of students that did not use the program, those who used *After the Storm* showed statistically significant gains in the “Conclusion” aspect of writing, meaning that students were able to make more accurate claims about what they read after using the program. Additionally, the study showed positive trends in the other five writing aspects evaluated, including Introduction, Relevance and Significance, Coherence and Sequencing, Language and Word Choice, and Written Conversations. Students who used *After the Storm* showed larger writing gains in all areas—in fact, scores of students in the comparison group decreased between pre-and post-assessments, while those of students who used *After the Storm* increased.
Becoming Leaders in Tarrant, Alabama

This summer in Tarrant, a small suburb of Birmingham, Alabama, students in grades 5-9 became leaders. Through a partnership with the Creative Exchanges Initiative, Classroom, Inc. offered its newest learning games, *Community in Crisis* and *After the Storm*, to Tarrant City Schools students. As students experienced taking on the roles of Director of a community service organization and Editor-in-Chief of an online magazine, they honed their career readiness and leadership skills. “One of the best impacts we’ve seen on the students,” reflects Thomas Kozack, a Tarrant City Schools educator, “is that they’re further encouraged to take academic leadership. They are taking responsibility for their own learning, and that’s something that will benefit them all through middle school, into high school, and beyond.” And students like Laquisha agree. “I feel like I’ve learned to communicate better, I’ve learned that I do have a voice and an opinion, and I speak for what I think is right,” she says proudly.

Teaching the Teachers: Leveraging Data to Reach Struggling Learners in Chicago

Classroom, Inc. has a long history in Chicago, working with over 10,000 students in neighborhoods on the city’s south and West Sides over the past decade. In summer 2015, we intensified our data collection and dissemination efforts to make the sharing of information among principals, administrators, coaches, and students even easier. **Weekly Administrators’ Reports** provided site coordinators, principals, network leaders, and Chicago Public Schools program administrators with insight into students’ pace, skills, standards addressed, and successes and challenges, while **Friday Exit Tickets** offered students the opportunity to journal about their learning and performance and teachers the chance to write direct responses to students. In addition, during **Weekly Friday Conferences**, teachers shared dashboard information with individual students and teams, using this data to identify areas of strength and growth. Ultimately, these practices helped Classroom, Inc. provide Chicago students with personalized, effective programming to support their individual learning needs and goals.

Three out of four teachers surveyed reported that *After the Storm* helped them become more effective at using technology in their classrooms.
Location of Classroom, Inc. Schools Based on Overall Poverty in New York City*

1 to 4 Schools

- More than 30% in Poverty
- 25–30% in Poverty
- 20–25% in Poverty
- 15–20% in Poverty
- 10–15% in Poverty
- Less Than 10% in Poverty

* Percent of People Living Below the Federal Poverty Level. The Census Bureau’s Federal Poverty Level (Threshold for a family of three including two children was $18,498 in 2012) Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008–12 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau, Poverty Thresholds, 2012.

Map provided by the New York Women’s Foundation
Making After School Count: Maximizing Engagement in the Bronx

In school year 2014-2015, 11 students in Ashley Levins’ seventh grade class at the Bronx School for Law, Government and Justice used After the Storm as part of their after-school program. For Ms. Levin, working with Classroom, Inc. educational coach Abran Maldonado was essential to ensuring that she and her students were on track to meet their goals. “We can work together to plan activities that really bring home what I need in the classroom,” she explains. “So together we’re able to engage more kids.” Kimberly Felder, the school’s Director of Community Partnerships says that partnering with educational coaches provides teachers with a critical support network. “If there is an issue or if there is a question,” she explains, “they don’t have to figure things out alone.”

I enjoyed the real world problem solving, and the students getting into higher order thinking conversations with each other. Normally that type of talk has to be lead by me, but with this program it happened naturally.”

—August Serewko, Educator at Our Lady Queen of Martyrs, New York, NY

Bringing Education Technology to New York City Catholic School Classrooms: Helping Catholic School Educators Maximize Technology

Classroom, Inc. ran a series of workshops for Catholic school educators on using game data to improve student mastery of Common Core State Standards. Participating teachers also learned how to leverage student data from Classroom, Inc. games to structure lessons, and how to select game episodes to target specific standards. At the conclusion of the workshop, 100 percent of teachers reported that the session was “effective” or “highly effective” at helping them create plans that respond to formative data. Teachers also reported learning how to blend lessons with gameplay, use Classroom, Inc. materials to better support students’ needs, and leverage assessment data to identify and target areas of student weakness. “For years I’ve been going to training regarding using data,” explained Janine Apont, an instructor from St. Lucy School in the Bronx. “This professional development is the first time I’ve gotten a recipe, not just a list of ingredients.” Nancy Mullen, an educator from Our Lady of Guadalupe Academy in Elizabeth, New Jersey, also offered a glowing review of the experience: “This is one of the best professional development sessions I’ve had in over 20 years of teaching.”

Our programs are used in a variety of educational settings, including school day, after school, and summer school.
Chicago, IL “My students were so motivated to play this program. They didn’t view it as work and constantly asked to play it.”

St. Anthony, ID “The students were able to clearly identify the social science principles they learned. They learned critical thinking and problem solving from the experience of being the director, the one in charge of all the decisions made.”
**Newark, NJ** “The support of Classroom, Inc.—the books, the curriculum they have researched and implemented—make a difference in my job as an educator. They are a blueprint that allows me to follow, add, or subtract any ideas, and the students benefit.”

**Bridgeport, CT** “I think Classroom, Inc. is an excellent program that teaches important content and life skills. The program is well designed and the fact that it is computer-delivered appeals to students.”

**Daviess County, KY** “The program was a great supplement to our curriculum. I like how the program required students to rework activities if they were not successful the first time. The writing prompts were in direct correlation to our writing standards.”

**Milwaukee, WI** “The program allowed me another opportunity to connect with children and get them to think outside of the box. It exposed them to things they might not encounter on their own, or even in their household or community.”
Building Our Next Game: Vital Signs

Set for release in spring 2017, Vital Signs, the third game in Classroom, Inc.’s award-winning Read to Lead suite of literacy learning programs will focus on medicine, one of the most vibrant growth industries in the current economy. Vital Signs will bring medicine and wellness to life for students as they read and play their way through the experience of running a community-based medical clinic. Students will take on the job of the medical director of an innovative family clinic in Port Douglas—the city introduced in the first two Read to Lead games, After the Storm and Community in Crisis. In this role, they will respond to the medical needs of the diverse patients who visit them each day as they help their community develop a culture of health. As they play, students will improve reading achievement, attitudes, and behaviors; build their awareness of careers in the medical field; increase their understanding of vital community health issues; and develop leadership skills, such as critical thinking, persistence, and communication, that are essential for success in school, college, and career.

Delivering Educator Support On Demand

At Classroom, Inc., we know that educator support is key to student success. That’s why we provide teachers with the coaching and resources they need to use our programs successfully. In school year 2016-2017, Classroom, Inc. will make its support services even more accessible with the launch of its online educator toolkit. This collection of lesson plans, instructional videos, webinars, curriculum, modules, and printables will give teachers 24/7 access to the materials they need to help their students thrive.
Expanding Our Reach Online

To reach our goal of delivering programs and support directly to teachers online, we are launching a digital platform that will include:

- **Free games and curriculum**, to reduce barriers to access
- **Modular games**, to give educators flexibility in how they use our programs and resources
- **An ongoing, constantly growing educator toolkit**, to provide teachers with videos, lessons, documented best practices, and other resources that they need to effectively use our programs
- **Distribution Partnerships with BrainPOP and First Book**, to help us expand our educator community. We will continue to work with BrainPOP, the educator resource website used by more than 20 percent of schools across the country, and First Book, which sells books and curricula at reduced cost to the 150,000 Title I schools and CBOs in its network.

Making Data-Driven Decisions

Data is at the heart of our work, informing how we design our programs, coach our educators, partner with our schools, and support our students. A continuous data collection and evaluation process ensures that we are always designing games and programs that meet the needs of the students, teachers, and schools that we serve. Here’s a look at the kind of data that will shape our work over the next year:

- **Game Data**: Data from our games will help us to improve instructional models and test and roll out new game features.
- **Teacher Surveys & Focus Groups**: Feedback from teachers will enable us to strengthen our educator support, build strong school partnerships, and identify and address gaps in teachers’ knowledge.
- **Student Surveys**: In addition to telling us what students enjoy and where they struggle, surveys provide insight into how our programs shape students’ leadership skills, attitudes toward reading, and college and career readiness.
- **External Validated Reading Assessments**: Standardized assessments like the Reading-Level Indicator and Scantron Performance Series help us evaluate how our programs impact student reading achievement.
Classroom, Inc. is grateful to partner with outstanding schools across the country to transform education through game-based learning.

**Bridgeport, CT**
- Cesar A. Batalla School
- Florence E. Blackham School

**Hartford, CT**
- Thelma Ellis Dickerson’s Jumoke Academy

**Stamford, CT**
- Westhill High School

**Palm Beach, FL**
- Forest Hill Community High School
- Glades Central Community High School

**Chicago, IL**
- Charles P Steinmetz College Preparatory
  - High School
- Chicago Academy High School
- Chicago Vocational Career Academy
  - High School
- Christian Fenger Academy
  - High School
- David G. Farragut Career Academy
  - High School
- Edward Coles Model for Excellence Language Academy
- Edwin G. Foreman High School
- Ellen H Richards Career Academy
  - High School
- George H. Corliss High School
- Harlan Community Academy
  - High School
- Manley Career Academy
  - High School
- Nicholas Senn High School
- Orr Academy High School
- Oscar Depriest Elementary School
- Paul Robeson High School
- Thomas Kelly High School
- Wells Community Academy
  - High School
- Wendell Phillips Academy
  - High School
- William J. Bogan Computer Technical High School

**Owensboro, KY**
- Daviess County Middle School

**Martinsville, NJ**
- Boys Club of New York at Camp Cromwell

**Mount Vernon, NY**
- Mount Vernon High School

**New York City, NY**
- All Hallows High School
- Ascension School
- Bronx High School for Writing and Communication Arts
- Bronx School for Law Government and Justice
  - An Urban Assembly School
- C.S. 211X
- The Bilingual Magnet School
- Cobble Hill School of American Studies
- Cypress Hills Community Center/Directions for Our Youth, Inc.
  - NYC DYCD
- Divine Wisdom Catholic Academy
  - Bayside Campus
- Divine Wisdom Catholic Academy
  - Douglaston Campus
- Food and Finance High School

**Frederick Douglass Academy**
- Frederick Douglass Academy III Secondary School
- George Washington Carver High School
- High School for the Sciences
- High School for Medical Professions
- High School of Sports Management
- Holy Rosary School
- I.S. 034 Tottenville
- I.S. 096K Seth Low
- I.S. 181 Pablo Casals
- I.S. 206X Ann Mersereau/
  - Good Shepherd Services
- I.S. 219X New Venture School
- Immaculate Conception School
- Incarnation School
- J.H.S. 194Q William Carr/YMCA of Greater New York /NYC DYCD
- J.H.S. 194Q William Carr/
  - Beacon Center/YMCA of Greater New York
- J.H.S. 210Q Elisabeth Blackwell
- J.H.S. 218K James P. Sinnott
- John W. Lavelle Preparatory Charter School
- Joseph Miccio Community Center/
  - Good Shepherd Services/NYC DYCD
- Knowledge and Power Preparatory Academy International High School
- Medgar Evers College Preparatory School
- Mount Saint Michael Academy
- Our Lady of Mount Carmel - Saint Benedicta School
- Our Lady Queen of Martyrs
- P.S. 100X Isaac Clason/Aspira of New York, Inc./NYC DYCD
- P.S. 107Q Thomas A Dooley
- P.S. 134Q Hollis/NYC DYCD
- P.S. 205X Fiorello Laguardia
- P.S. 261K Philip Livingston/YMCA of Greater New York/NYC DYCD
- P.S. 317Q Waterside Children’s Studio School/Bergen Beach Youth/NYC DYCD
- P.S. 32O State Street
“Students have gained a sense of their place in the world, and that’s given them a sense of self confidence, it’s given them a sense of mission, it’s given them an eagerness to learn more.”

— Cathy Parrill, Creative Exchanges Initiative founder

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<th>SCHOOLS &amp; PARTNERS</th>
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Sacred Heart School, Bronx
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Saint Helena Elementary, Bronx
Saint Luke's School, Bronx
Saint Pancras School, Queens
Saint Rose of Lima Catholic Academy, Queens
Santa Maria School, Bronx

South Bronx Academy for Applied Media/Good Shepherd Services
The Urban Assembly Unison School
Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change
Unity Center for Urban Technologies
Young Women’s Leadership School/Queens Community

**Ossining, NY**
Ossining Children’s Center

**Rochester, NY**
Enrico Fermi School No. 17
James Monroe High School
Mary McLeod Bethune School No. 45
Northeast and Northwest High School/ Douglass Campus

**Louisville, OH**
Saint Thomas Aquinas High School

**Warren, OH**
John F. Kennedy Catholic School, Lower Campus

**John F. Kennedy Catholic School, Upper Campus**

**Oklahoma City, OK**
Francis Tuttle Technology Center

**Stillwater, OK**
Meridian Technology Center

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Your contributions have helped thousands of students across the country access cutting-edge digital learning programs that help them develop literacy, leadership, and college- and career-readiness skills.
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