USA District Like Mine (Charter) Math Outcomes Analysis 2018/19

Grade Levels: 3, 4, 5
ST Math Program: Gen-5
Analysis Type: Z-score of math proficiency
Treatment-Years: 2018/19
Baseline-Year: 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19, 2020/21, or 2021/22
Subgroup: All

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Abstract

This analysis evaluates grades using ST Math from charter schools in the USA in 2018/19. It identifies those grades with nominal or better implementation of the ST Math program, and matches them to randomly selected, similar math-performance comparison grades. The nominal ST Math users are an aggregation of 29 grades, consisting of grades 3, 4, and 5 at 23 charter schools, with an average baseline z-score of -0.13. Refer to Figures 2 and 3 for the math performance and demographic distributions. They were matched to 29 similar, randomly selected control grades at 28 charter schools that never used ST Math. Grade-wise growth in math proficiency was evaluated (i.e. growth in same grade, same school, from Baseline to 2018/19) on the mean z-scores of percent Proficient or Advanced (see Section 3.1). Grades 3, 4, and 5 aggregated showed an ST Math effect of 0.51 z-score points.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This is a quasi-experimental analysis at the grade-mean level. Entire grades represent the units of analysis, and outcome measures are the multi-year changes in grade-mean z-score of Proficient or Advanced. The treatment grades used the ST Math program for 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 years, beginning in the 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, or 2018/19 school year, respectively. The study hypothesis is treatment grades using ST Math will outperform similar matched control grades, using their "business as usual" conditions of instructional content and professional development. The control grades were selected to have similar demographic and math attributes (See Figures 2 and 3) to the treatment grades during the baseline year (2012/13, 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17, or 2017/18), and did not use ST Math in 2018/19. The treatment grades' selection pool was all charter schools using ST Math in grades 3, 4, and 5 in the USA. The control grades' pool was all charter schools not using ST Math in grades 3, 4, and 5 in the USA. This study method measures effectiveness of the ST Math program when nominally implemented.

1.2 Program Description

Spatial-Temporal Math (ST Math) is game-based, instructional software for K–12 students, created by the MIND Research Institute (MIND). The purpose of the program is to boost math comprehension through visual learning. The ST Math software games begin without language or symbol abstractions by posing math problems as purely visual puzzles. In this way, three objectives are accomplished: i) language proficiency prerequisites to engage with the program are minimal, ii) non-mathematical distractions (e.g. back-stories for word problems) are minimized or eliminated – thereby reducing load on working memory, and iii) the actual math in the problem can be represented clearly, simply, and unambiguously. Interactive, animated visual manipulatives provide informative feedback on student solutions. A score of 100 percent on a game level comprised of 4-12 puzzles is required for progression through the levels. Failure requires a re-play of the level, via a new quasi-random set of puzzles. In this way, progression is self-paced.

Besides the self-paced progress made by students in their one-to-one environment, the program is designed to be referenced by teachers during their regular math instruction. It is supplemental to core or basal math instruction and instructional materials. As the great majority of grade-level math standards are covered in the ST Math digital curriculum, completion of 100% of the entire ST Math curriculum (i.e. completing every Game) is required to cover all grade-level math standards. Teachers receive initial training, either face to face or through self-guided online instruction. The training covers account startup, as well as math learning and growth mindset goals, the pedagogical approach to learning in a visual experiential game, monitoring and intervention of the student 1:1 game play, and connecting of ST Math content to classroom content and pacing.

For students to achieve nominal progress through the program, there is a recommended time-on-task requirement of 90 minutes per week over about 30 weeks. Consistent application of 90 minutes per week throughout the school year is normally sufficient to result in a grade's average ST Math content coverage exceeding 50% by year-end. In this study, we include grades that have achieved 40% or more content coverage (Progress) by April 15th.

This is a passive study with no experimental setup or extraordinary communications to any schools. All schools in this study therefore received normal program implementation support through the year from MIND support managers. This support includes bundled startup services of approximately 2-4 hours of training either in-person or online, access to live webinars, regular online and push reports on

usage and progress, email/phone helpdesk, and proactive monitoring for gaps or issues by MIND support representatives.

MIND Research Institute initiated, funded, and exercised editorial control over this study.

2 Data Collection

Since this analysis uses grades as the unit of analysis, and states publish grade-mean state standardized test scores, the data for student math outcomes is collected from each state education agency's research files (retrieved from state websites). The treatment students use ST Math student accounts served by MIND. Student ST Math usage data is aggregated to grade-level means by MIND.

2.1 Treatment Grades Pool and Selection

The Treatment grades pool originated with all grades using ST Math from charter schools in the USA. From these schools, every grade that had used the ST Math program only for the year 2018/19 was identified. They comprise the Treatment grades pool for this evaluation of multi-year usage.

2.1.1 Enrollment Filter

Because the analysis uses grade-mean data, such as grade-mean scale scores or grade-mean proficiency level percentages, it is necessary that the program also be a grade-wide treatment, with the great majority of students in each grade receiving treatment. Otherwise, the grade-means reported by the state of 100% of *tested* students would not be valid measures of a smaller fraction of *treatment* students. MIND's site implementation requirement is that an entire grade, including all teachers and all classes within that grade, use the ST Math program. We validate how closely this is the case for each individual treatment grade by comparing the number of ST Math student accounts at a grade level to the reported enrollment at that grade level. We discard from the Treatment pool any grade with a ratio of ST Math student accounts to reported grade enrollment lower than 85%.

2.1.2 Content Coverage Filter

Furthermore, the outcomes measure is a summative year-end test, i.e. the standardized math assessment of that state. The math assessment thus covers all the math standards for that entire grade level. Meanwhile, the ST Math program curriculum (arranged into Learning Objectives) is also aligned to each state's math standards. To infer that the ST Math content is having a valid effect on student outcomes on the summative assessment, we discard any grade with grade-mean of ST Math Progress for its students lower than 40% by April.

Progress is a percentage, and is defined as Levels completed by the student, divided by the total number of Levels in the grade-level curriculum. Note that student achievement of at least 40% progress in ST Math is accomplished primarily by teacher assignment of computer session time to students. With sufficient time on task, students make progress. The program helps them self-pace through providing real-time informative feedback for each puzzle.

2.2 Control Grades Pool and Selection

The control grades are randomly selected from a control pool of charter schools in the USA. Though they are randomly selected, they are also matched to be similar to the Treatment grades' math attributes and demographics during the baseline Baseline year. The matched attributes include:

- grade-mean z-score of percent Proficient or Advanced
- percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch at the school-level (using the demographic data from MDR).

The method of matching used is propensity score matching, via the "matchit" program in R, with "mahalanobis" as the distance measure.

3 Data Analysis

The set of all grades using ST Math from charter schools in the USA is evaluated for Enrollment percentage and Progress percentage parameters. A filtered Treatment set (TRT) of all ST Math grades with $\geq$ 85% Enrollment and $\geq$ 40% Progress is identified. State math assessment data is tabulated. A matching set of Control grades based on baseline year state math assessment is selected.

Changes in math performance, i.e. the difference in math performance of a grade from a baseline year to the final year, are evaluated and tabulated. Statistical tests of the significance of the difference in math performance changes between Treatment grades and Control grades are performed. Finally, a grade-by-grade disaggregation is performed.

3.1 Z-scores

In order to analyze across all states with different math assessments, a new z-score of that test's math proficiency is calculated. For each year being analyzed, by grade, a z-score takes the difference of the grade mean percent proficient and the mean of all percent proficient statewide for that year, and then divides it by the standard deviation of all percent proficient statewide for that year. Here is a fictional example to illustrate the calculation of a z-score for the 2015/16 exam:

School A, Grade 3, Percent Proficient: 70
Average across all schools statewide, Grade 3: 50
Standard deviation across all schools statewide, Grade 3: 20
Z-score=((School A, Grade 3, Percent Proficient)-(Average across all schools, Grade 3))/(Standard deviation across all schools, Grade 3)

$$\text{Z-score}=\frac{70-50}{20}=1$$

The z-score is calculated for every grade across all years being analyzed, using the full state data set of schools for the averages and standard deviations. The use of z-scores is a valid statistical method to normalize any dataset and to enable analysis across otherwise uncomparable exams. In this report, we only analyze z-scores.

3.2 Percentile Ranking

These newly calculated z-scores can then be converted into a percentile ranking. Each percentile ranking shows the grade's performance relative to the others in that year and grade. For example, for a specific grade 3, a percentile ranking of 50 shows that this grade 3 performed at the average of all third grades in the state for that testing year.

3.3 Final Treatment and Control

3.3.1 ST Math Grade-Aggregated Implementation ($\geq$ 85% Enrollment Grades Only)

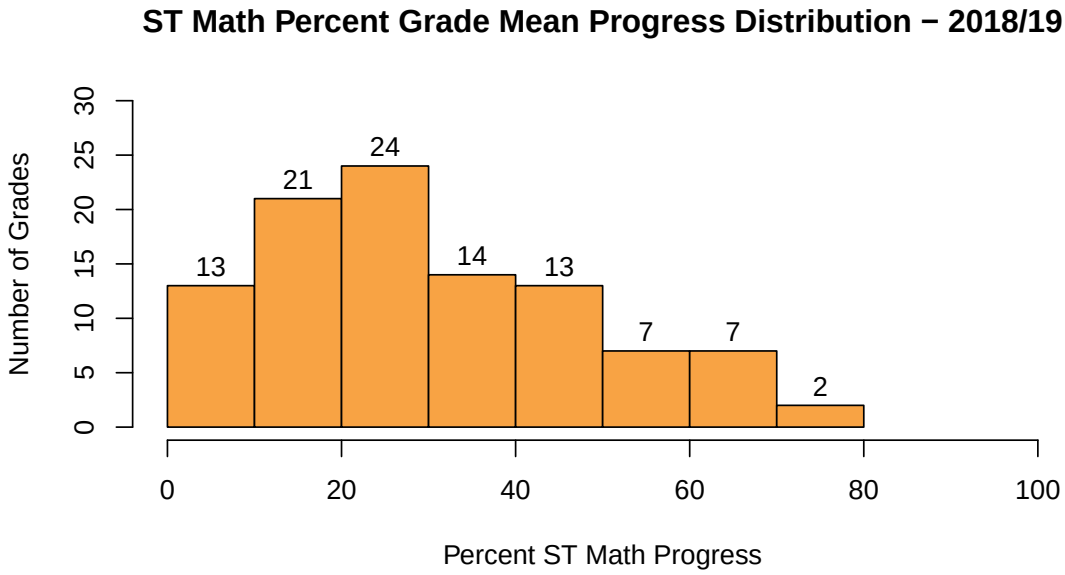

Figure 1: Histogram of ST Math Percent Progress for $\geq$ 85% Enrollment Grades 2018/19

For all ST Math grades with Enrollment $\geq$ 85%, Figure 1 shows the frequency distribution of grade-average Progress percentage through the program. Note that we will only be using grades with $\geq$ 40% Progress as the Treatment Group.

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics of the Progress distribution. Table 2 shows the number of remaining treatment grades after applying enrollment and progress filters.

	Min.	Max.	Average	S.D.
ST Math % Progress	2.0	72.4	30.4	17.8

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of ST Math Percent Progress for >= 85 percent Enrollment Grades

Grades with >= 85% Enrollment:	101
Grades with in addition >= 40% Progress:	29

Table 2: Number of ST Math Grades with >= 85 percent Enrollment and with >= 40 percent progress

3.3.2 Filtering Treatment and Controls

Table 3 shows the total number of grades in the Treatment pool, the number of grades that exceeded the 85% Enrollment figure, and also the 40% Progress filter. Other rows in the table indicate counts of numbers of students (2018/19 from state testing count) and counts of number of schools represented. The number of matched Control (CTRL) grades, students, and schools is also shown.

	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Total
ST Math Using Grades	84	62	54	200
ST Math Using Schools	84	62	54	103
ST Math Students	5762	4178	3750	13690
ST Math Grades (Enroll >= 85%)	40	37	24	101
TRT Grades (Enroll >= 85% & Prog >= 40%)	11	10	8	29
TRT Schools (Enroll >= 85% & Prog >= 40%)	11	10	8	23
TRT Students (Enroll >= 85% & Prog >= 40%)	981	932	677	2590
CTRL Grades	11	10	8	29
CTRL Schools	11	10	8	28
CTRL Students	826	948	496	2270

Table 3: Treatment Pool Filtering and Controls: Counts of Grades, Schools, and Students

3.3.3 Match of Controls to Treatment

Figure 2 shows the density plots of the baseline z-score of percent students at state assessment Proficient or Advanced (left plot) and the percentage of students needing free or reduced lunch (right plot) for treatment grades overlayed on control grades, showing the closeness of the match obtained between Treatment and Control sets of grades in the baseline year.

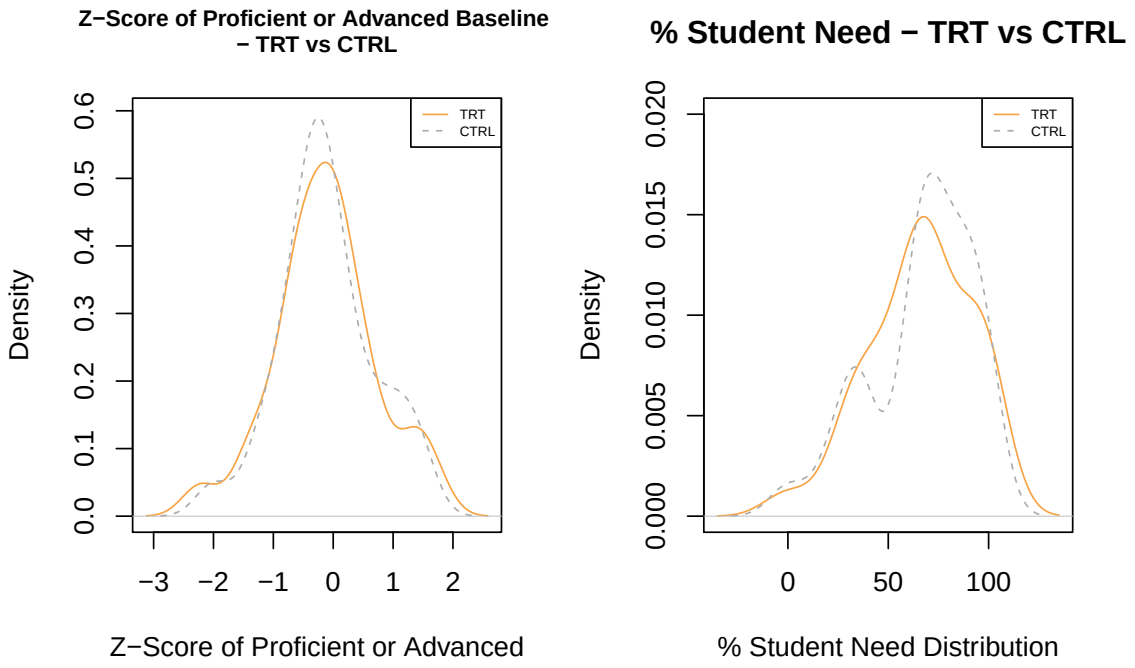

Figure 2: Baseline Year Density Plots Showing Math Scores and Percent Student Need Match between TRT and CTRL - Baseline

Table 4 shows the difference of the means of Treatment versus Control in the baseline year, with accompanying p-values, for mean z-score of percent Proficient or Advanced and for percent of students receiving free or reduced lunch. The large p-values show the differences between the Treatment and Control grades are not statistically significant.

	Mean(TRT)	SD(TRT)	Mean(CTRL)	SD(CTRL)	Estimate	P-Value	Effect Size
Z-Score of Proficient or Advanced - Baseline	-0.13	0.86	-0.11	0.79	-0.01	0.95	-0.02
Percent Free or Reduced Lunch	65.83	25.48	66.62	26.01	-0.79	0.91	-0.03

Table 4: Matching TRT and CTRL

3.4 Grade-Aggregated Analysis

Table 5 shows for both Treatment (TRT) and Control (CTRL) aggregation across grades of z-score distributions. The far right column also shows the average ST Math Progress for the TRT set.

	# Grades	# Schools	# Students	Z-Score	Percentile	ST Math Per Comp.
TRT.Baseline	29	23	2033	-0.13	45.93	–
TRT.18.19	29	23	2113	0.10	52.62	53.54
TRT.Delta	–	–	–	0.23	6.69	–
CTRL.Baseline	29	28	2191	-0.11	46.21	–
CTRL.18.19	29	28	2270	-0.40	37.41	–
CTRL.Delta	–	–	–	-0.29	-8.79	–

Table 5: All Grades Together Growth

Figure 3 shows the changes in mean z-scores of percent Proficient or Advanced for the grade-aggregated Treatment and Control sets.

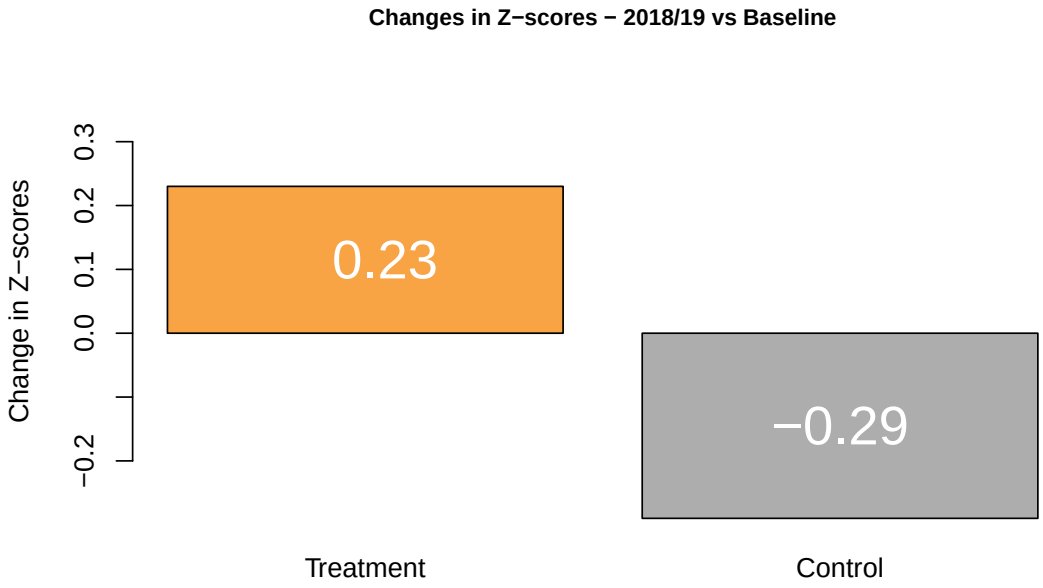

Figure 3: Changes in z-scores (See Section 3.1) for Grade-Aggregated TRT and CTRL datasets between Baseline and 2018/19

Further, Table 6 shows the statistics for the *differences* in changes between TRT and CTRL (Treatment - Control) for these same z-score changes as in the above figure. [1]

	Estimate	P-Value	Int.Low	Int.High
Z-Score	0.51	0.02*	0.08	0.94

Table 6: Statistics for the Differential Changes in Math Scores Growth (TRT - CTRL)

Finally, Figure 4 shows the changes in mean percentile ranking between TRT and CTRL.

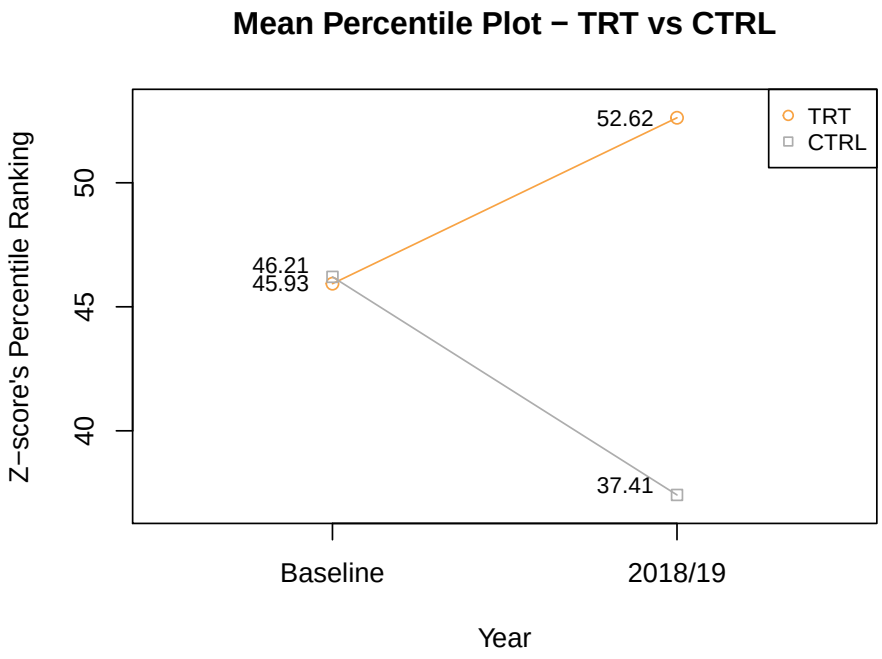

Figure 4: Changes in Percentile Ranking for TRT and CTRL Datasets between Baseline and 2018/19

[1] * statistically significant p<0.05

3.5 Grade-Level Analysis

3.5.1 Grade Level Result Tables

The following tables (Table 7, 8, and 9) present a disaggregation of results by grade level. The far right column in each table also shows the average ST Math Progress for the TRT set.

	# Grades	# Schools	# Students	Z-Score	Percentile	ST Math Per Prog.
TRT.Baseline	11	11	813	-0.08	46.82	–
TRT.18.19	11	11	842	0.10	52.82	52.15
TRT.Delta	–	–	–	0.18	6.00	–
CTRL.Baseline	11	11	827	-0.07	46.73	–
CTRL.18.19	11	11	826	-0.42	37.00	–
CTRL.Delta	–	–	–	-0.35	-9.73	–

Table 7: Grade 3 - Yearly Math Performance and Counts for TRT and CTRL Datasets

	# Grades	# Schools	# Students	Z-Score	Percentile	ST Math Per Prog.
TRT.Baseline	10	10	720	0.08	51.90	–
TRT.18.19	10	10	757	0.31	59.20	58.44
TRT.Delta	–	–	–	0.23	7.30	–
CTRL.Baseline	10	10	868	0.07	51.90	–
CTRL.18.19	10	10	948	-0.31	40.60	–
CTRL.Delta	–	–	–	-0.38	-11.30	–

Table 8: Grade 4 - Yearly Math Performance and Counts for TRT and CTRL Datasets

	# Grades	# Schools	# Students	Z-Score	Percentile	ST Math Per Prog.
TRT.Baseline	8	8	500	-0.45	37.25	–
TRT.18.19	8	8	514	-0.15	44.12	49.32
TRT.Delta	–	–	–	0.30	6.88	–
CTRL.Baseline	8	8	496	-0.40	38.38	–
CTRL.18.19	8	8	496	-0.48	34.00	–
CTRL.Delta	–	–	–	-0.08	-4.38	–

Table 9: Grade 5 - Yearly Math Performance and Counts for TRT and CTRL Datasets

3.5.2 Grade-Level Analysis of Changes in Z-scores of Proficient or Advanced

Figure 5 shows the changes in the grade-mean z-scores of students for the TRT and CTRL datasets, disaggregated by grade:

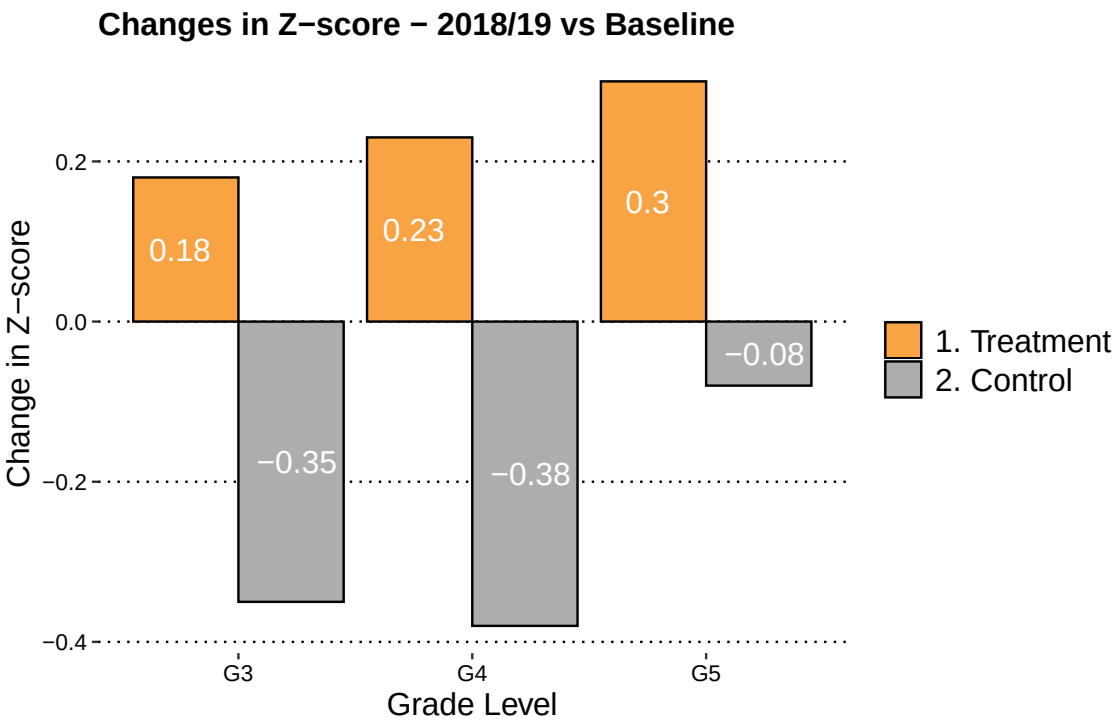

Figure 5: Changes in Grade-Mean Z-score (See Section 3.1) for TRT and CTRL Datasets between Baseline and 2018/19

Table 10 shows the statistics for the differences between TRT and CTRL (Treatment - Control) for these same z-score changes as shown in Figure 5.

	Estimate	P-Value	Int.Low	Int.High
Grade 3	0.53	0.12	-0.14	1.20
Grade 4	0.61	0.15	-0.25	1.46
Grade 5	0.38	0.41	-0.57	1.32

Table 10: Statistics for the Differential Changes in Z-scores (See Section 3.1) Growth, (TRT - CTRL)

4 Effect Size

The following table shows the effect sizes for z-score of Proficient or Advanced.

	Z-Score of Proficient or Advanced Effect Size
Grade 3	0.69
Grade 4	0.72
Grade 5	0.47
All Grades	0.65

Table 11: Cohen's d Effect Size

5 Findings Summary

USA grades 3, 4, and 5 using ST Math from charter schools for the year 2018/19 averaged 26% ST Math Progress. 46/200 grades (23%) averaged covering more than 40% of ST Math content. Statistically significant differences were found in this analysis for grade-aggregated results. Looking at Table 6, a statistically significant differences was found for grade-aggregated z-score, with an estimate of 0.51 points favorable for the ST Math treatment set.

6 Confounders

Despite best efforts in minimizing confounders to the results of this analysis, there still remain a few input variables that could be significant in affecting differences of state test score outcomes between the Treatment and Control sets. One issue is the lack of randomization of grades chosen to receive the ST Math treatment. Instead of randomized selection, Treatment grades are self-selected. Self-selection can be an indication of districts or schools with a focus on math, an appetite for change, and with a spotlight on math training. Furthermore, not all grades using the ST Math program are chosen for analysis. Each grade must pass two specific filters to be considered for the Treatment set: the first being an enrollment filter of at least 85% of students in each grade using the program, and the second being a progress filter of at least 40% of the program completed on average by students in that grade. These filters might indicate relatively high-functioning schools with a team of relatively effective teachers in that grade, thus resulting in better instruction overall. A mitigation of this possible confounder is our selection of treatment groups on the grade level, rather than the teacher level, so there is no cherry picking of teachers: the full range of teachers in each grade is included. Moreover, the specific teachers may often be the same in the baseline year as in the current year, so the Treatment growth is not due to teacher differences. Finally, a possible confounder lies in the "business as usual" conditions at the matched control grades chosen for each analysis. It's unknown whether these control grades used other programs that could affect the comparison of the two sets of grades.

7 Lists of Schools

7.1 Treatment Schools

The following table lists the treatment schools and grades (after 85% enrollment and 40% progress filtering) used in the analysis.

PID	IID	State	District	School Name	GRADE
4949343	ASC7AS	CA	ASCEND	ASCEND	5
10016651	ACH7EK	CA	Achieve Charter School of Paradise Inc.	Achieve Charter School of Paradise Inc.	3
11708716	HEA0RU	CA	Healdsburg Unified	Healdsburg Charter	4
11455086	INN73X	CA	Innovations Academy	Innovations Academy	5, 4
11132313	KIP6Y3	CA	KIPP Raices Academy	KIPP Raices Academy	4
4949848	WAT7C3	CA	Pajaro Valley Unified	Watsonville Charter School of the Arts	3
114481	IMP73D	CA	South Bay Union	Imperial Beach Charter	5
114493	NES73Z	CA	South Bay Union	Nestor Language Academy Charter	4, 5, 3
11720051	WEB78A	CA	W.E.B. DuBois Public Charter	W.E.B. DuBois Public Charter	5
12101434	LEA0RU	FL	PASCO	LEARNING LODGE ACADEMY	5
406686	BEE5HU	LA	MOREHOUSE PARISH	BEEKMAN CHARTER SCHOOL	3, 4
11918351	BRI5ER	LA	NA	BRICOLAGE ACADEMY	3
407343	JOH5ER	LA	ORLEANS PARISH	PHILLIS WHEATLEY COMMUNITY SCHOOL	4
407525	SAM5ER	LA	ORLEANS PARISH	SAMUEL J. GREEN CHARTER SCHOOL	4, 3
408385	MCD5ER	LA	ORLEANS PARISH	KIPP MORIAL	3
10914039	LAN5ER	LA	ORLEANS PARISH	LANGSTON HUGHES CHARTER ACADEMY	3
10914211	ART5ER	LA	ORLEANS PARISH	ARTHUR ASHE CHARTER SCHOOL	4
11560007	KIP5EX	LA	ORLEANS PARISH	KIPP CENTRAL CITY	3
4814566	BOS0RS	MA	Boston Collegiate Charter (District)	Boston Collegiate Charter School	5
4143824	SIL053	MA	Haverhill	Silver Hill Elementary School	4, 3
11816832	CRO0RT	MO	CROSSROADS CHARTER SCHOOLS	CROSSROADS - CENTRAL STREET	5
10008989	AFE0V4	NY	NEW YORK CITY GEOGRAPHIC DISTRICT #19	ACHIEVEMENT FIRST EAST NEW YORK CHARTER SCHOOL	4
12031229	SCH0RS	UT	Scholar Academy	Scholar Academy	3

Table 12: Treatment Schools (TRT Dataset)

7.2 Control Schools

The following table lists the control schools and grades (matched control grades to treatment grades) used in the analysis.

PID	State	District	School Name	GRADE
10753964	CA	Alder Grove Charter School 2	Alder Grove Charter School 2	5
10981989	CA	Aspire Port City Academy	Aspire Port City Academy	5
10980612	CA	Delta Elementary Charter	Delta Elementary Charter	4
10912160	CA	Higher Learning Academy	Higher Learning Academy	5
70718	CA	Inglewood Unified	La Tijera K-8 Charter School Academy of Excellence	3
10015712	CA	King-Chavez Arts Academy	King-Chavez Arts Academy	5
77534	CA	Los Angeles Unified	Calahan Street Elementary	3
77986	CA	Los Angeles Unified	Topeka Charter School For Advanced Studies	3
11562768	CA	Magnolia Science Academy 7	Magnolia Science Academy 7	4
11127069	CA	Pioneer Union Elementary	Frontier Elementary	4
11558092	CA	SD Global Vision Academy	SD Global Vision Academy	4
10004531	CA	Twin Rivers Unified	Creative Connections Arts Academy	5
11820211	FL	BROWARD	EVEREST CHARTER SCHOOL	5
4757231	LA	EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH	J. K. HAYNES CHARTER INC.	3
407927	LA	NA	ALICE M HARTE ELEMENTARY CHARTER SCHOOL	3
4370314	LA	NA	DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING CHARTER SCHOOL FO	3
10914077	LA	NA	WILSON CHARTER SCHOOL	4
407264	LA	ORLEANS PARISH	EDWARD HYNES CHARTER SCHOOL	3
407367	LA	ORLEANS PARISH	LAFAYETTE ACADEMY	3, 4
407915	LA	ORLEANS PARISH	HARRIET TUBMAN CHARTER SCHOOL	4
4895376	LA	ORLEANS PARISH	JAMES M. SINGLETON CHARTER SCHOOL	3
11452383	LA	ORLEANS PARISH	SUCCESS PREPARATORY ACADEMY	4
4287456	MA	Barnstable	Barnstable United Elementary School	4
3047722	MA	Barnstable Community Horace Mann Charter Public (District)	Barnstable Community Horace Mann Charter Public School	3
4367202	MA	Sabis International Charter (District)	Sabis International Charter School	5
4925696	MO	UNIVERSITY ACADEMY	UNIVERSITY ACADEMY-LOWER	5
5096157	NY	NEW YORK CITY GEOGRAPHIC DISTRICT #17	EXPLORE CHARTER SCHOOL	4
11468277	UT	Hawthorn Academy	Hawthorn Academy West Jordan	3

Table 13: Matched Control Schools (CTRL Dataset)