



A State-of-the-Art Virtual School Offering in Ontario, OH

Ontario Local Schools - Ontario, OH



Lisa Carmichael
Superintendent



2100 Students, Grades
pre-K to 12



84% Caucasian
6% multiracial
5% African American
33% economically
disadvantaged
8% students with
disabilities

The Challenge:

Ohio is one of the most competitive states in the country when it comes to charter schools. This is particularly true for those that offer online programs, which have enrolled over 50,000 students statewide. Many of the state's online schools have recently grown as much as 25 percent per year.

Ontario Local Schools, a 2,100-student district in northern Ohio, serves an area with more than 125 students opting for online schooling, representing more than 5 percent of their total student population. Ontario Schools' superintendent, Lisa Carmichael, saw no reason why her high-performing and dedicated team could not establish their own online offering.

"I wanted to create an in-house opportunity to acquire some of the students who choose an online school option," Carmichael said.

Citing affordability and ease of use, Ontario Schools selected Edmentum to provide the foundation of its new online program.

In Ohio, school districts face strong competition from charter schools, particularly when offering online programs. Seeing this competition, Ontario Local School District partnered with Edmentum to begin its own online initiative in an effort to reacquire the nearly 10 percent of its total population lost to other online programs.

How They Did It:

Starting in the fall of 2017, Ontario Local Schools began offering a tuition-free online public school serving students in grades 6–12 to students wishing to complete their education through a virtual program. From the beginning, Ontario Online Academy sought to differentiate itself from the other online programs available to students.

To close any “digital divide” that may exist, students are issued a Chromebook with which to complete their coursework, eliminating a barrier to entry for those prospective students who may not have consistent access to a device. This is also a way for the district to make sure that the technology being used stays uniform and optimally configured.

Students are assigned a mentor teacher who partners with the certified online instructors to make sure that they are properly supported throughout the coursework, as well as to help them set goals for success. Students also have access to the district’s guidance counselors for any scheduling needs.

Because the Ontario Online Academy is a district program, students also have access to the extracurricular activities provided by the brick-and-mortar schools, including sports and clubs. When finished, Ontario Online Academy students earn the same Ontario Schools diploma as the other students in the district.

“We have one student who trains 10 hours per day for the chance to

participate in the Olympics,” reported Carmichael. “Our new online program offering has provided her a great alternative, and she can still earn an Ontario diploma.”



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Success:

The 2017–18 school year was Ontario Online Academy’s first year in operation. The goal was to serve 15 students, but once word got out about the district’s offering, the program ended up enrolling 25 full-time students.

Carmichael offered this advice to other schools and districts considering the benefits of opening an online academy of their own: “It’s important to market your program. I felt that it was my job to educate our community by telling them about our new online academy. Invest in the time upfront to market a new program.”

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The Future:

The implementation of Ontario Online Academy was different from other programs in that the comprehensive nature of Edmentum's solutions, Courseware and EdOptions Academy, allowed the district to offer courses at all high school levels from the beginning. Now, Ontario Online Academy is expanding to middle school.

"We will be offering a new summer school opportunity to approximately 40 middle school students," said Carmichael. That will bring the total number of students served by Ontario Online Academy to about 80 in just its first year.

For more information:

Contact [800.447.5286](tel:800.447.5286) or visit www.edmentum.com (/) to learn more about Edmentum's online learning solutions.