SURRY VIRTUAL ACADEMY

The goal of Surry County Schools is to provide students with additional opportunity, flexibility and convenience to earn high school credits in an online environment. We offer students a quality education through the use of online, interactive course content delivered through Haiku, our Learning Management System. We know that many students need the freedom and flexibility that online learning can provide, including access to their course content and instructional support from their teacher.

In an effort to provide students with additional scheduling options and the opportunity to personalize their education, Surry County Schools launched Surry Virtual Academy in the fall of 2013. After obtaining feedback from our stakeholders, a course list was developed that would best meet the needs of our students. The sixteen course sections that were implemented would provide students with the flexibility to earn Career and College Promise course credits, participate in other learning opportunities, meet personal and family needs, and to graduate early.   It also allowed us to expand the availability of courses to students at all campuses. The Surry Virtual Academy provided an option for recovery of course credits which gives us another tool to meet the needs of our at risk students, who are in danger of dropping out of school.

A key to the success of Surry Virtual Academy was the involvement and preparation of our stakeholders. Our teachers were trained to build and deliver online course content. Our teachers work diligently to establish relationships with their students and consistently provide one on one support to ensure their success. Our students utilize the same Learning Management System for their online courses that is used in their blended and face-to-face classrooms; this makes the transition to online courses much easier. Policies and procedures are consistent for both our traditional courses and online courses which ensure that students understand the expectations for academics and behavior. Informational sessions and additional resources were provided to answer questions of our parents.

Surry Virtual Academy observed a great deal of success during the first semester of implementation. There were 122 course enrollments with 99 course completions which resulted in an 81% course completion rate.   Our initial course pass rate was 78% which has now increased due to personalized

education plans implemented by teachers to provide students with the opportunity to earn the course credit. We also had 86% of our students pass the end-of course exams.   Surry Virtual Academy's course enrollment has increased substantially for the Spring semester with 188 course enrollments.

We believe that the success of Surry Virtual Academy is the result of the relationship that our teachers develop with their students and the ability to provide one-on-one support to ensure academic achievement. The ability to work as a team with our Central Office personnel, our school administrators and counselors, as well as our teachers provides students with the best chance for success in an online environment.

As a Local Education Agency, we are able to provide virtual learning opportunities to our students that meet the same rigorous standards as our face-to-face instructional classes. We are able to personalize and work with students to insure academic success. We can adjust the pacing in our courses to meet the individual needs of our students and their life circumstances. Our virtual courses are taught by our own highly qualified teachers who meet the standards set by our system and our local community. Our school system has oversight of the curriculum developed to meet the course standards and we can insure that we are meeting our community norms and standards.

Allowing a virtual charter school to deliver curriculum and instruction to students in our district undermines our attempts for rigorous academic instruction. There is no local control over the curriculum or oversight over the personnel selection. Both of these are negative impacts if we as a local education agency are required to accept coursework and credits from a virtual charter school. As a school system, our community holds us responsible for the academic success of our students and for the relationships developed between teachers and students. We are not comfortable with endorsing relationships, even in a virtual environment, with individuals that we do not know and supervise.

The majority of students need a well-rounded educational experience in order to be prepared for the global challenges of tomorrow's world. A virtual charter school cannot provide a student with a well-rounded educational experience that allows a student to choose a combination of options for course delivery and peer interaction. A virtual charter school will duplicate services already available to students through the work of the NCVPS and the local LEAs. This duplication of services will siphon off needed resources from local education agencies as we further develop our own virtual opportunities. Virtual coursework offered through a local education agency allows students an opportunity to maximize their educational experience by combining virtual learning, face-to-face learning, extra-curricular activities, and additional academic challenges that are offered in the traditional public schools.