



District embraces virtual learning for families seeking alternatives

Wauwatosa Virtual Academy gives students a second chance

Five years ago, the Wauwatosa School District in Wisconsin discovered that families were enrolling their students at online programs outside of the district and realized they needed to innovate to meet the growing educational needs of the students in the area.

“The Wauwatosa School District is committed to serving all students. We were seeing for some students a traditional school setting wasn’t the best option for success and that these students were enrolling in online programs,” said Dean Heus, principal of Wauwatosa Virtual Academy (WVA). “We knew we could meet that non-traditional need ourselves so the district set out to create an online academy that could ensure these students had a chance to graduate, achieve success, and be equipped for their futures.”

Since its inception in 2013, the academy has been a success, bringing the change that students and families have been searching for. “We have seen less students who want to pursue online learning leaving the district. We now look beyond our borders to be a steward of education,” said Heus, who also serves as administrator of education at the children’s hospital, behavioral health program, juvenile justice center, and GED program.

Virtual learning offers another path

WVA is a part of the “resiliency story” for hundreds of full-time online middle and high school students statewide who need a different path to education.

One such student, a college-bound senior, was asked not to return to his traditional high school due to a behavioral issue. He met with WVA administrators and was given the opportunity to earn a diploma in 2017. The student had a twin brother and the family was determined that one sibling would not graduate without the other, even if they were enrolled at different schools.



Wauwatosa Virtual Academy in Wisconsin

helps meet the learning needs of both the district and the state by providing full-time virtual learning opportunities to 185 middle and high school students.

“If you are willing to work, we will work with you,” Heus told the student. “His education path may not have been what he imagined a year before, but this is a part of his resiliency story. The student earned his diploma, participated in our cap and gown graduation ceremony, and went on to college.”

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We’re a program specifically developed for students who are not giving up, who are desperately trying something different. I’m categorically convinced that there are students who would not have graduated without online learning.”

Dean Heus, Principal

Leading the way with digital technology and local talent

In the 2017–18 school year, WVA served 210 students in grades 6–12 statewide, including 185 full-time enrollments. The school uses a combination of online and in-person interactions to provide students academic, social, and emotional support.

Using the power of digital technology, WVA replaces the distractions and obstacles that can occur in conventional middle and high schools with a flexible, online curriculum. Students are taught by licensed teachers specially trained in online learning and the online curriculum gives students a comprehensive list of courses to pick from.

Locally, the school has an administrative assistant, a part-time special education teacher, a full-time teacher, and a part-time school counselor, who have all been at the virtual academy from day one. This team provides the holistic support students need. Students are able to meet in-person with a teacher during office hours at neighborhood libraries two days a week for personalized help outside the classroom.

Dare to change.

Digital learning removes limits and gives us the freedom to provide education anytime and anywhere, empowering us to overcome our most difficult challenges.

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