



CASE STUDY

York County School

Comprised of 19 schools, York County School Division is an award-winning school system serving more than 12,500 students in the heart of the Virginia's historic triangle, situated between Virginia Beach and Richmond.



BACKGROUND

Covering the heart of Virginia's "historic triangle" between Virginia Beach and Richmond, the York County School Division (YCSD) administers 19 schools with more than 12,500 students, from kindergarten through high school. York County stands apart from other districts of this size in its array of diverse specialty programs that are usually seen only in larger metropolitan school systems. YCSD students can access multiple magnet school programs and receive enriched instruction in fine arts, math, science and technology. High school students can also access a prestigious two-year International Baccalaureate college preparation program that teaches students to think critically and independently. High school students also have access to a full slate of courses through the York County School Division's innovative Virtual Learning Program, a program hosted and designed in partnership with Remote Learner (now a Learning Pool company). This blended online program helps York County achieve its mission to engage all students in gaining the skills and knowledge needed to make productive contributions in the world. Students with accessibility needs or schedules that make it difficult for them to attend traditional classrooms are welcomed into the Virtual Learning Program. The program is administered by Reginald Fox, who serves as principal of York County's Virtual High School (VHS).

THE CHALLENGE

YCSD first came to Remote Learner (now a part of Learning Pool) in 2007, seeking a learning platform that could deliver an extensive selection of high school courses in a blended learning environment. The virtual school had to meet a number of requirements. The solution had to be built on an open-source platform. Students had to be able to participate actively in online discussions, track messages and submit course assignments. Teachers had to be able to post regular announcements and easily handle student submissions and marking. All users needed to have access to instant messaging and synchronous online class meetings with file sharing, live audio and an electronic whiteboard. And all this had to be conducted in a safe and secure learning environment that protected student privacy while allowing for instructor oversight over their interactions.

“Our instructional model is interactive and engaging as teachers and students follow a sequential approach. Announcements are posted to provide clear instructions for the lesson; the lesson may include an introduction including objectives, a variety of lesson activities to navigate, explore, research, and use critical thinking skills to complete assignments,” Fox said of the Virtual High School’s online education model. “Additional resources may include multimedia activities, textbook and other supplementary material. Students access a range of assessments designed to demonstrate their mastery of the subject.”



THE SOLUTION

Working closely with YCSD, Learning Pool's team paid close attention to the educational and functional requirements needed for the online high school. With technical support as well as consulting and design advice from Learning Pool, YCSD was able to meet all these requirements with its Stream LMS. In the years since its first deployment, Learning Pool's team has continued to update and refine York County's larger digital learning environment to ensure it is the best it can be.

Don Hazelwood, YCSD's Account Manager at Learning Pool, said two recent updates had been particularly notable. In 2017, the school's site was moved to highly secure Amazon Web Service hosting and updated with Learning Pool's own Altitude theme. Altitude provides a modern, intuitive interface.

"Moving to AWS has been extremely helpful in alleviating downtime issues we have had in the past, and Altitude was an immense improvement over their previous theme. This has been a serious improvement over their previous look and feel," he noted.

THE RESPONSE

“Learning Pool staff are always available and ready to serve their clients. The York County School Division’s Virtual Learning Program offers high quality online courses and experienced staff. Students demonstrate mastery of the content as they gain 21st century skills with real world experiences. The VHS has been recognized state-wide as a unique provider of virtual instruction”

Reginald Fox
YCSD

THE RESULTS

Today, YCSD's Virtual High School employs 32 teachers, who present 75 different courses that blend online and offline learning experiences for more than 350 students. The school boasts a 92 percent course pass rate. Fox was impressed by Remote Learner's design and consultation process as well as the results.

"Learning Pool and its Stream LMS offers the opportunity for our students to interact and communicate within a safe environment. Because of the professional services and products provided by Learning Pool, the school division is able to offer an online experience to every student through the use of the learning management system. We meet the goal of providing a virtual and blended learning experience for students," Fox stated.

Learning Pool's partnership with YCSD is ongoing, as York County continues to upgrade and expand its virtual learning programs. Recently, Learning Pool was asked to design a summer school element for the Virtual High School, as well as an on-demand staff training site.

"Because of the professional service and product provided through Learning Pool, we were able to organize virtual courses and online professional development in Moodle to provide online experiences for both students and staff," Fox noted. *"Learning Pool staff are always available and ready to serve their clients. We are very satisfied and grateful to have a partnership with a professional team at Learning Pool."*





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