

Making Credit Recovery More Personal in Waldoboro, Maine

Medomak Valley High School - Waldoboro, ME



Harolyn York
Student Achievement
Center Instructor



550 Students
Grades 9 to 12



Courseware
EdOptions Academy



The Challenge:

Some students do not thrive within the traditional high school model. They may face learning difficulties, scheduling challenges, illnesses or injuries, or a combination of these and more.

In previous generations, such students would often drop out when really all they needed was an alternative approach to learning and the right support system. Even just one teacher willing to listen is often enough to keep an at-risk student walking through the door, but what's the next step to make sure that student continues to progress?

Small rural schools often lack the resources to provide alternatives, yet they are just as likely to be asked to serve at-risk students as large urban districts. Such is the case at Medomak Valley High School in Waldoboro, Maine, where less than 50 teachers help guide 550 students through the same rigorous, state-approved curriculum that larger schools follow.

“Our #1 focus has been to decrease our dropout rate,” says Harolyn York, lead instructor at Medomak Valley’s Student Achievement Center, which provides credit recovery, elective options, and houses the district’s virtual high school program. “How do we keep these kids here?”

For students at risk of dropping out, having just one teacher willing to listen to their concerns and empowered to provide alternatives can make all the difference. Such is the case at Medomak Valley High School in rural Maine, where an alternative learning strategy including Courseware and Ed Options Academy is helping students make meaningful connections, build community, and successfully cross the graduation finish line.

How They Did It:

The Approach

Since 2007, Medomak Valley's Student Achievement Center has utilized Edmentum Courseware as a way for students to recover course credits that have been lost along the way, enabling them to catch up and keep up with their peers.

"But over the years, we have evolved," explains Ms. York. "We cannot provide a large course catalog of electives, so many students are earning first-time elective credits here because they have found a course in Courseware that suits their interests and goals."

"We also, once in a while, have a couple of go-getter students who decide in September that they want to graduate early and work toward that goal through Edmentum Courseware."

The Student Achievement Center also offers alternatives and enrichment for the school's day treatment program, for special ed students and a way for suspended students to keep up with what is going on in class while they are serving their time. Usually, Ms. York is able to provide the in-person support to serve as teacher-of-record for students' online courses through the Student Achievement Center. However, if a student wants to take a course that the staff does not have the credentials or bandwidth to oversee, the Student Achievement Center relies on EdOptions Academy, which pairs the same digital curriculum Courseware offers with state-certified teachers for an accredited, fully-virtual solution.

Implementing Edmentum

Roughly a quarter of Medomak Valley High School's population uses the Student Achievement Center over the course of a semester. The center can serve 85 students at any one time using the school's fleet of Chromebooks and EdOptions Academy courses.

When the Student Achievement Center first rolled out its virtual program, teacher buy-in was difficult to win, but the program now enjoys support at all levels of the district.

"We can make a flex assignment to incorporate the teacher's perspective in the course, so everyone still has a role in the student's learning," says Ms. York

Due to the school's rural location many students come and go from the roster during the course of a school year. Often, those students' first stop is Ms. York's lab.

"If a student comes to school in the middle of a quarter, we can find out where they are academically. They are then able to get up to speed and enter the traditional classroom in the new grading period."

“Our #1 focus has been to decrease our dropout rate...
How do we keep these kids here? [Courseware] has
saved many students from dropping out.”

Harolyn York
Student Achievement Center Instructor

Success:

Over the 2017-18 school year, including summer school, students at Medomak Valley High School earned more than 181 credits toward graduation, including more than 100 full-year courses, with Edmentum Courseware and EdOptions Academy.

But what strikes everyone on campus is how their blended learning approach has allowed the staff to make deeper connections with students.

“Many times, students just want someone to listen to them. That’s not always possible in the traditional classroom, but I connect with students every day,” says Ms. York. “There are always students who say they are close to giving up, but being able to provide this alternative to them makes a difference. We are keeping students from dropping out.”

Students are also connecting with each other.

“Only in my room can you see a student learning Russian sitting next to a student trying to bring their math grade up from a 50 and they are helping each other. It’s a real community environment.”

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The Future:

If they had it to do over again, Medomak Valley would have spent more time engaging teachers on the possibilities afforded to them by Courseware and Ed Options Academy. Those that have taken the time to learn how the programs can supplement and enrich their own instruction have been the largest source of growth for the Student Achievement Center. The flexibility of the system keeps yielding new and innovative ways for teachers to reach every student.

For more information:

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