Success Story
Acceleration Academies
FLORIDA, SOUTH CAROLINA, AND WASHINGTON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Goal</th>
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<td>K–12</td>
<td>Reengage students and increase graduation rates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Model: Initial credit and credit recovery</td>
<td>Impact: Nearly 300 graduates in 4 years</td>
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<td>Time Period: 2014–2018</td>
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Virtual program helps increase graduation rates

Many students don’t succeed within the confines of a traditional school structure, and one alternative program has filled this need by partnering with local districts to reengage students and increase graduation rates.

VIRTUAL SCHOOL IN ACTION

Acceleration Academies is a unique organization that partners with school districts to reengage students that have not met with success in the traditional high-school setting. By working directly with school districts, Acceleration Academies connects with individual students and encourages them to reenroll in school by offering a unique path to graduation. Students, or graduation candidates as Acceleration Academies calls them, work out of a rented space located right in their community. This work space is open 12 hours a day and is equipped with computers, teachers, and career and life coaches. A team of professionals works with each student to develop a graduation plan, which takes into account their age, transcripts, and life factors outside of school such as family and work commitments. After the plan is created, graduation candidates receive constant support to help them stay on track and accomplish their goal of graduating. Once students and parents realize that this is a different avenue to earning a high school diploma, they are excited to participate.
SAVING KIDS’ LIVES

Each site serves about 250 students, and the professionals working there prioritize convenience for the students. They realize how important it is for the graduation candidates to stay on track, so they set very specific guidelines and follow up if a student doesn’t meet them. If a student doesn’t come to the learning center at his scheduled time, a paraprofessional will reach out to him. If another student does poorly on an assessment, a teacher will step in to provide small-group instruction to help her out. Margie Sharp, Chief Academic Officer at Acceleration Academies, says, “We try to build motivation, accountability, ownership, and responsibility,” through the wraparound supports created for graduation candidates.

“I’ve gotten my pride back.”

After spending her career in public education, Margie can see the difference that this organization makes for students. She does not take this job lightly, and says they are “saving kids’ lives” by helping them earn their high school diploma. In their four years of operation, Acceleration Academies has helped over 300 students graduate, and one major way they’ve seen success is through retention strategies. After developing a graduation plan, they enroll the student in a class he or she finds engaging and interesting. Administrators have found that if students can successfully complete the first class, they are more likely to stay in the program through to graduation. One student said he “couldn’t cut it in high school” because the teacher wouldn’t stop to answer his questions. After completing his first class through Acceleration Academies he said, “I know I’m not stupid anymore. I’ve gotten my pride back.”

PARTNERING WITH THE RIGHT PROVIDER

Edgenuity’s customized reports have helped in this unique implementation. Educators and administrators have been able to slice and dice the data in different ways than traditional schools do, which helps them identify successes and intervene when students are falling behind. By celebrating every course completion and providing rewards for meeting career, college, social, and emotional goals, graduation candidates are staying engaged and motivated through graduation and beyond. They even honor students with a special Acceleration Academies graduation ceremony with all of the pomp and circumstance of any high school graduation. Successful students come on stage and tell their stores, which has an amazing impact on the students and launches them to prosperous careers and lives.

By offering students different options, Acceleration Academy is reengaging struggling students and leading them to a high school diploma. Edgenuity provides the structure from which skilled educators can customize an individualized learning path for each and every student, and create a way for them to succeed.