

# Case Study

## McIntyre Comprehensive Academy

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

### *RISE Academy Addresses a Teacher Shortage with Standards-Based Online Courses*

#### Overview

Founded in 2018, RISE Academy is an alternative education program designed to help under-credited high school students earn a diploma and enter college or the workforce. In its first year, the program served 13 students who were two grade levels behind and looking to get back on track for graduation. At the start of the school year, Principal Sabrina Johnson was faced with a daunting problem: She lacked the financial resources to hire enough highly qualified, state-certified subject area teachers.

#### MCINTYRE COMPREHENSIVE ACADEMY

##### DEMOGRAPHICS:

Black:	91%	Free/Reduced-Price Lunch:	83%
Hispanic:	7%		
White:	2%		

To address this challenge, Johnson decided to offer digital learning courses. “I realized that there was an opportunity to address the teacher shortage and help get students caught up and graduated. We needed to find an online learning provider that could provide highly qualified, Alabama-certified teachers who could deliver rigorous courses in English, mathematics, social studies, and science.” RISE Academy selected Edgenuity Instructional Services because of its explicit, interactive online instruction as well as its ability to deliver targeted, personalized academic support to students. “We were searching for rigorous, standards-based lessons and courses that would be as demanding as the instruction students would receive if they attended a traditional high school,” Johnson said. “I was impressed that Edgenuity courses required students to express what they know in different ways and apply challenging concepts to new settings. I also was blown away by the support Edgenuity’s staff offered. It was truly personalized and transparent from the beginning.”

#### Personalized Learning

The RISE Academy program provided a structured day to help students master content. When students arrived at the brick-and-mortar school in the morning, they started with 15 minutes of whole-group instruction in reading, math, or social studies from a school staff member. They then attended four 90-minute periods in computer labs, where they worked in online courses (one course per period). Students worked on courses that were customized by the Instructional Services teams to meet their individual needs, without reducing the rigor of the course itself, which allowed students to cover content quickly without sacrificing any quality.

While in the computer lab, a business education teacher and one other certified teacher monitored student performance, as did the virtual instructor. If an on-site teacher or virtual instructor noticed a student falling behind, they could collaborate to help motivate the student and get them back on track.

After the fourth period in the computer lab, students attended mentoring programs or assemblies that gave them the opportunity to socialize and interact with their classmates and teachers. Students who needed additional credits to graduate could complete up to two additional courses in an after-school program during the spring semester.



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SABRINA JOHNSON, PRINCIPAL | RISE ACADEMY

## Instructional Services: Accelerating Success

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Students were also supported by Edgenuity virtual teachers, who used data from the Edgenuity learning system to set academic goals and address students’ unique learning needs. Edgenuity virtual teachers offered online office hours, where they could conduct demonstrations, reteach topics, and answer questions. Teachers regularly connected with students to provide motivation and to proactively check to see whether they were struggling with content or staying on pace. If students were struggling, virtual instructors met with students to set small goals to get them back on track. Setting expectations and holding students to them helped ensure that students understood the importance of setting and meeting their goals. School counselor Holley Dunn noted, “Virtual teachers would constantly e-mail district teachers, staff, students, and parents alike to share progress and accomplishments. The strong relationship between Edgenuity virtual teachers and students was critical to our program’s success.”

In its first year as a part-virtual program, RISE Academy learned some valuable lessons. Classroom teachers’ roles have changed from instructor to facilitator, learning to monitor and manage students. It was important for both the classroom teachers and the virtual instructors to provide meaningful feedback and celebrate success in its many forms. **One big success for RISE Academy during the 2018–2019 school year was that all 13 of its students graduated.** After the first-year success of the program, the RISE Academy program is expanding to include more virtual courses.