

Success Story

Pioneer Work and Learn Center

VASSAR, MI

Grades: 9–12
Reach: 170 students
Model: Online curriculum in adjudicated youth facility
Goal: Help students earn credits
Impact: 26 students graduated in 2018

Technology Reduces Behavioral Problems

Behavioral issues, special education requirements, and a transient population are all commonplace in adjudicated youth facilities, so Wolverine Human Services has partnered with Edgenuity® to help address these issues when it comes to educating their youth. With the help of MyPath™, students are tested and enrolled in an individualized learning path (ILP) within 5 to 10 days of arriving at the facility. That way, students can begin work right where they left off at their previous school.

OVERCOMING A DIFFICULT PAST

The students who come through Pioneer Work and Learn Center, one of the Wolverine Human Services sites in Michigan, have had inconsistent schooling in the past, and even though students are of similar age, their abilities can be vastly different. John Robison, an English teacher at Vassar, even compared his classroom to a one-room schoolhouse and emphasized how challenging it can be to give everyone individualized instruction. But, with the ILPs in MyPath, educators can provide students shorter courses to help fill gaps in their learning. These shorter courses are worth a quarter credit and help students feel a sense of accomplishment that gets them motivated. “We try to build them up, and these classes give us the opportunity to do that,” says Robison.

“Most of our kids have had terrible experiences; they’ve failed everywhere and were often the worst kid in school,” says Principal Chuck Fabbro. He believes the way to overcome the past is by building strong relationships, and Edgenuity has helped facilitate relationship building by reducing behavior problems that are so common with this student population.



Fabbro explains that in a traditional classroom, “if one kid is struggling, they could hold the class hostage and create mayhem.” But now, if one student is struggling, they can get the individualized help and instruction they need without holding up or slowing down the rest of the class

CELEBRATE STUDENT SUCCESS

Principal Fabbro and his team aligned their curriculum to that of the local public school district, which is powerful for students. “We had 26 students graduate last year, and their diplomas say Vassar High School—nothing about the alternative education program,” says Fabbro. This small but significant difference helps give these students a fresh start when they apply for jobs after they’re released from the program. Fabbro explains that it cuts down on discrimination because a diploma from Wolverine Human Services immediately identifies an applicant as a “problem,” but a diploma from Vassar does no such thing.

Students also print out class completion certificates to bring to court because education is especially important to judges. Along with monthly course completion celebrations with popcorn or ice cream floats, Vassar educators created a bulletin board and a success list, which have helped motivate students. “When they can track their advancement on the Edgenuity progress report, that helps light the fire,” says Robison.

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And the success is catching. Melissa Avery, principal at the secure center in Saginaw, works closely with Vassar since students are often transitioning between the two facilities. “Our kids love Edgenuity,” explains Avery. “Edgenuity allows us the flexibility to meet the student’s individual needs,” so they aren’t disengaged by material they have already mastered. Students quickly realize that their education is tied to their privileges and length of time required in the facility, “so it becomes one of the biggest aspects of their life,” says Avery.

INSPIRING RESULTS

As students come into and out of the programs at Wolverine Human Services, the flexibility of the MyPath ILPs allows them to fill past learning gaps and prevent lost time during their adjudication. These shorter courses help educators encourage students and give them a sense of accomplishment while still maintaining rigor and fidelity. “This helps me spend my day teaching kids instead of handling behavior problems,” says Robison, and it “makes me feel like I am doing the right thing as an educator.”

