

Best Practices for Virtual Program Success

Edgenuity Instructional Services has partnered with schools and districts across the country to provide virtual instruction. The following best practices are common across our most successful implementations. Be sure to consider each item as you plan for your own program.



Define Your Academic Goals:

Which students should enroll in your virtual program? Those seeking honors courses? Those on short-term medical leave? Those trying to recover credits? Are students expected to complete their online courses in a semester, school year, or other defined period? Clearly defining your goals will enable you to set the appropriate policies and ensure you have the right evaluation metrics to measure the success of your program.

Defining these goals will also help you gain an understanding of which students will be the most successful in your program. Based on that assessment, you can craft prerequisites or requirements for participation, if applicable. For example, if you are creating an honors or acceleration program, you may want to establish a minimum GPA.

If you are planning to use the program for alternative education or credit recovery, evaluating which students are more independent and organized can make a huge difference in your program's success. Requiring students to attend an orientation meeting, take a pre-test, or get a sign-off from a guidance counselor can also help ensure that students who are enrolling take their choice seriously.



Identify School/District Mentor(s):

Selecting the right mentor(s) is integral to the success of your program. The mentor could be a guidance counselor, paraprofessional, lab facilitator, program administrator, vice principal, or a person hired specifically for this role. Mentors will be responsible for partnering with Edgenuity's virtual teachers, motivating students, using data to monitor progress, and much more. The ideal mentor is innovative, flexible, energetic, and compassionate, yet tough.

He or she should:

- Be invested in the program's success
- Act as an advocate for the student
- Address challenges as they arise
- Build a relationship to understand each student's purpose, goals, learning style, and needs
- Have honest conversations with students and families about whether the program is the right fit



Determine Student Expectations:

- How many days per week will students be expected to log into their course?
- How many hours each day or week should students expect to study?
- How long will students have to complete courses?
- Do students possess communication, time management, and self-motivation skills?

At a minimum, you should clearly define attendance policies and how much progress is expected each day or week. Students and families need to understand that online courses mirror the rigor and structure of classroom learning. This is particularly important if students will be working from home without daily, face-to-face interaction with a teacher or mentor.

Your program should also define actual consequences for students failing to meet these expectations. For example, students who regularly miss one or more periods of school would expect to face some disciplinary action with a principal or vice principal. Students in your virtual programs should expect similar consequences if they do not regularly meet expectations.

ESTABLISH ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

- What is your program's add/drop window?
- Will students be able to start courses at any point or only at designated times in the school year?
- Will students be allowed extensions if course work is not complete by the end date?
- How many times can students retake a quiz?
- What are your passing thresholds for assessments and for the course?
- How do you define, and punish, cheating?
- Can students take assessments at home or only on-site?

Administrators, mentors, students, families, and our virtual teachers must all be aware of these policies in order to ensure students can be successful.



Promote Your Program:

Guidance counselors, back-to-school night, your school's course catalog, flyers, and e-mails to parents are all ways to share information about your program. Be sure to clearly articulate policies up front so that students and families are aware of expectations for success from the onset.

Additionally, be sure to explain to families why you are offering a virtual program. Often when presented as simply another option, students tend to assume that virtual learning is easier than traditional learning. By tailoring your message to identify a specific reason or need for your program, you have a greater likelihood of attracting students who have a vested interest in this solution.

ENROLL STUDENTS:

You will need to decide how to enroll students in your program using either a school/district course request web page or via counselor enrollment. Edgenuity can also support you via manual enrollments if neither option works for your program. Your Edgenuity Partnership Advisor can help you decide which option is best for you.

HOST A STUDENT ORIENTATION:

Even though students have grown up with technology, do not assume they intuitively know how to learn virtually. Require students to attend an in-person orientation to receive log-in information, understand your policies and procedures, meet the mentor, learn about time management skills, and more. An orientation is particularly important for those students who will complete their courses at home.



Commit to Professional Development:

Administrators, mentors, and counselors will need orientation and training on a range of topics: enrolling students, using data to monitor progress, helping students to set goals and take ownership of their learning, and more. Additionally, professional development must be an ongoing process throughout the school year. At a minimum, staff should plan to attend an online (or on-site, if applicable) training with Edgenuity on how the systems and instructional model work.



Monitor Data:

Depending on your role, you may be looking at data daily to monitor student metrics like attendance, progress, and performance. Edgenuity's Student Information System (SIS) and Learning Management System (LMS) provide real-time access to a number of reports to help you evaluate both the success of students and your program. More importantly, take action when you see issues with the data. Edgenuity's virtual instructors and your Partnership Advisor can help you find the reasons behind the data and recommend steps to get things back on track if needed.

ADJUST AS NECESSARY:

If something isn't working, don't wait until the end of a semester to fix it. Edgenuity's team of Partnership Advisors, Implementation Consultants, and customer service and tech support specialists can help you diagnose and implement changes to your program in order to foster greater success.

CONTACT US

to learn more about implementing your own virtual program.