

Virtual academy draws 125 students

Written by Stephanie Groves

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DELPHOS — Tuesday marked the first day of the 2013-14 school year for Delphos students and the beginning of the second year for Delphos Digital Academy (DDA), which is virtual classroom setting that allows non-traditional students access to online coursework 24/7.

Principal John Edinger said that the digital academy currently has 125 students enrolled. Of that number, 30 are fulltime students and the balance of them are taking extra-credit courses tied to the common core.

“Through Credit Flex, students have their own agenda but must have approval by our administration team,” Edinger explained.

Credit Flex consists of two options for high school students; project-based proposals and testing to show mastery of a course. The project based option enables a student to earn credit through non-traditional activities and requires developing a project and working with a Credit Flex Coordinator, who will oversee the project and credit. All projects must be approved by the Credit Flex Committee. Students planning a project for credit must outline the learning goals, action plan, assessments and timeline in a paragraph form.

The second option for students is to test out of a 1?2 credit of various high school classes. They can master out of a course entirely by passing both the Semester A Credit Flex and the

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Semester B Credit Flex. This opportunity helps students reach the goal of graduation and is based on mastery of information.

“In my opinion, you can’t replace a classroom teacher,” Edinger stated. “Online classes are for those students who are not traditional and are more self-paced.”

Delphos Digital Academy has empowered the district to offer students a successful education alternative, prevented money from leaving the district and has brought money into the district.

Edinger said from all funding sources involved, the district gets \$5,700 per year for each student. If a student leaves the district, that money disappears whether it follows the teenager to a virtual academy, public school through open-enrollment or vanishes due to the student dropping out.

“Kids who struggled in regular classroom settings are not struggling anymore,” Edinger explained. “We are proud of them and they are proud of themselves.”

Supervisor Chris Sommers, is the Delphos Jefferson High School teacher who monitors each student’s progress while they are in the library and/or taking the classes from home.

“This year we have enrolled 30 kids from the 7th - 12th grade into the program,” Sommers detailed. “We have more high school kids this year and some of them are return students from last year.”

Students have the option of working on coursework at the school or at home. Those who work from home are usually busy with a job and the program provides them with the flexibility of 24/7 access to coursework.

“The program offers the exact same courses taught in the classroom,” Sommers explained. “If they are taking Senior English 4 online, it is the same coursework students receive in the

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classroom setting.”

Sommers says that the all students like the teacher support and the majority of them work from the school.

“If students are working from home, they also have access to additional help from the teachers,” Sommers said.

The virtual program permits students seeking electives and advanced courses not offered at the high school the opportunity to earn those credits. Those who would like to earn an honors diploma can take the extra required courses through the academy during a study hall.

“If there are classes we don’t offer through school, we offer them through the digital academy,” he said.

Students enrolled in the digital academy can also participate in school and extracurricular activities.

Sommers said they have implemented new software, Odesseyware, which the students are very happy with and has proven to be much more user friendly than it’s predecessor, Plato.

“It’s a great opportunity and has opened a lot of doors for kids,” Sommers said proudly. “We’ve been successful and are very happy with the results.”

“The ultimate goal is to acquire a diploma,” Edinger said.