

SUBURBAN SCHOOL ACHIEVES COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS BY MAKING THE VHS COLLABORATIVE A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF CURRICULUM

SITUATION

Second only to the Silicon Valley, the Metro West area of Massachusetts is known for technological innovation that dates back to the 1950's when engineers developed the minicomputer and scores of other high-tech companies imagined groundbreaking hardware and software. In particular, the town of Hudson, MA is currently home to one of the country's largest technology companies, Intel. Hudson, with just fewer than 20,000 residents, blends small town charm with technological sophistication.

Nestled in the shadows of Intel's campus is Hudson High School. This institution, consisting

of over 1,000 students and faculty, is part of a community that prides itself on preparing young residents for academic and professional success in a 21st century world, and carrying on the area's rich culture of innovation.

In 1996, under the direction of the former superintendent, the school became one of the first in the country to offer online courses to students as part of a ground-breaking research project. It wasn't until 2003 however, when the town opened a new \$50 million dollar facility, that the program would become what its forefathers envisioned.

SOLUTION

The VHS Lab at Hudson High School isn't your typical classroom. Instead of a blackboard or physical textbooks, there are 30 computer workstations in this state-of-the-art computer lab. During each of the school's four blocks, students in grades nine through twelve file into the room, log on to their courses, and join a global classroom to learn with teachers and students in other parts of the world.

Similarly, during one period per day, Hudson's VHS teachers forgo their traditional classroom lessons, and take to their own computers to chat with students, issue assignments online and oversee projects from students across the globe. These educators completed graduate-level professional development in online best practices in order to facilitate VHS courses such as American Popular Music, AP Statistics,

Philosophy I, and Psychology of Crime. Through their partnership with The VHS Collaborative, students and teachers at Hudson High School come together online to study, share ideas and work jointly on projects – developing critical thinking skills and opening themselves up to new ways of learning.

To ensure the program runs smoothly at Hudson High School, VHS site coordinator, Sherry Arsenault, supports and assists students' efforts during their VHS block, and communicates with students' teachers and parents as needed. She works closely with the guidance department to ensure appropriate enrollment for students and promotes the program via the school's course selection night and presentations.



"The key to a successful program is good communication and proper placement of students in classes that are interesting and challenging for them. There are many benefits to students who take an on-line course. They gain good time management and 21st Century collaboration skills that are needed in life after high school. I would like all students at Hudson High School to consider taking a VHS class to navigate and experience an online learning environment."

Sherry Arsenault
VHS site coordinator, Hudson High School



- ▶ Early adapter of online courses
- ▶ 90% of students are college-bound
- ▶ VHS Member for 16+ years
- ▶ Offers VHS to grades 9-12
- ▶ 504 & IEP Participation

RESULTS

Today, nearly 90% of Hudson High School students go on to either a two or four year college. Over the years, Arsenault has been happy to see once-shy students become more open. "In VHS where your thoughts are read and not heard it makes it easier for all students to communicate freely and insightfully without the fear of being judged," said student Kennedy Prashaw. "Overall, they both have their ups and downs, but I personally like VHS better. I would love to take another class soon."

Arsenault believes that all students can benefit from taking a VHS class regardless of their learning styles or challenges. "VHS has been great about accommodating our students with 504'S and IEP's," said Arsenault. "I fondly remember a student I had during my first year as site coordinator; he was an average student in a face to face class. His accommodations

were reviewed by his VHS teacher and after a short learning curve he learned to navigate the new learning environment and did very well, missing an A by one point. Now he is excited to be gearing up to take another online course. The confidence he's gained has been extraordinary."

The VHS program at Hudson High School has been increasingly successful for more than 16 years. "Most of our kids are balancing schoolwork, extracurricular activities and working," said Arsenault. "Taking a VHS class helps them to learn valuable time management skills. I believe that taking an online class helps our students tremendously to prepare for college and the workplace. In the next year, I hope to increase the number of students taking VHS."

about the organization

Founded in 1996 and headquartered in Maynard, MA, The Virtual High School Collaborative is the pioneer of K-12 online learning. Since then, the nonprofit organization has been setting the standard for quality online education. VHS provides engaging courses taught in global online classrooms for secondary school students and online professional development in 21st century teaching best practices for educators. The organization also meets the unique educational needs of schools through custom course development, private course offerings, and support for blended learning initiatives.

VHS' design and delivery standard was the model used by the National Education Association in their recommended standards for online learning. The organization has won numerous awards, including the Stockholm Challenge Award for Global Excellence in Information Technology and is a three-time winner of the United States Distance Learning Association's (USDLA) award for Excellence in Programming and Excellence in Best Practices.



"VHS courses have helped me tremendously to determine my college major and I feel fortunate to have had it as an option. I'm now confident that I want to major in nursing and have applied to nine colleges."

Katie Stacey
Senior, Hudson High School
VHS Honors Psychology of Crime and AP®
Psychology student

