

Providing Mobility for a Transient Student Population in Jacksonville, NC

Onslow Virtual Academy - Jacksonville, NC



**Vikki Childress,
Director of Virtual
Programs**



**220 students
Grades 9 to 12**



EdOptions Academy



**75% Caucasian
17% African American
9% Hispanic
48% Free/Reduced
Lunch
10% English Language
Learners
13% Special Education**

The Challenge:

Onslow County Schools, on the eastern coast of North Carolina, is the district that serves U.S. Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, which stations over 43,000 marines and sailors. Correspondingly, 49 percent of the district’s population changes schools during the course of a school year—many to another district or state. The district was able to create a virtual learning environment, Onslow Virtual Academy, that opened in January 2017.

“Students were losing credits when transferring from state to state,” said Onslow Virtual Academy’s Director of Virtual Programs Vikki Childress. “We wanted to allow students to move and continue to earn credits. . . . transferring in any high school is tough, but when you transition schools in a military community, it brings on a whole other set of challenges.”

Because of the need to remain mobile, many military families opt to homeschool their children. Onslow County Schools wanted to offer homeschooled students an opportunity to work within the district and also provide the flexibility to which these families have become accustomed.

When the district arrived at the idea of an online-only academy, a committee researched different models and vendors over the course of a year. Edmentum’s EdOptions Academy was selected to serve as the backbone of the new Onslow Virtual Academy beginning in the spring 2017 semester because many students who were losing credits—specifically in electives or specialty classes that Onslow County Schools did not have in its school system—were also falling behind schedule to graduate. EdOptions Academy could give them the ability and resources to do this.

When a district serves a major military base, student mobility will always be a challenge. Before Onslow Virtual Academy, students’ credits may not have followed them if they moved

outside the district. Now, students can continue to make progress toward graduation no matter where they finish the school year.

How They Did It:

Onslow Virtual Academy was made possible through a grant from the U.S. Department of Defense Education Activity that is designed to offer greater choice, flexibility, and options to students. Although the primary focus of the program is students from military families, Onslow Virtual Academy is open to any student from all seven Onslow County high schools with a 2.0 GPA through a lottery system. The district makes laptops available for each student to use. Most students opt for a blended learning option, mixing online and in-person classes.

“About 80 percent of our population uses the blended options, two to three online courses each day and one to two in person,” explained Childress. “This allows flexible scheduling and socialization. About 15 percent are only online and never come on campus.”

EdOptions Academy makes it possible for the district to offer more than 100 different courses of study, including some classes that are not available through its brick-and-mortar schools, such as anthropology, astronomy, and entrepreneurship. For those courses with a mandated state assessment, that test serves as the final exam.

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Vikki Childress,
Director of Virtual Programs

Success:

For its first semester in spring of 2017, Onslow Virtual Academy opened with 85 students taking more than 200 classes. In math and English, its students beat the proficiency averages for both the district and the state, in some cases by as many as 10 percentage points. For the 2017–18 school year, Onslow Virtual Academy has grown to 220 students.

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The Future:

The district’s long-term plans include continuing to grow Onslow Virtual Academy, including adding middle school courses and a solution designed around at-risk students with discipline challenges.

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For more information:

Contact [800.447.5286](tel:800.447.5286) or visit www.edmentum.com to learn more about Edmentum's online learning solutions.