Partnering for Success with Online Learning

Albany City Schools, New York
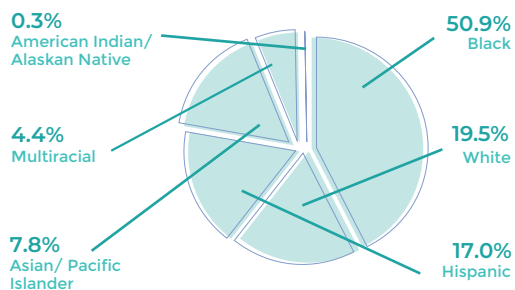
Apex Learning Solutions
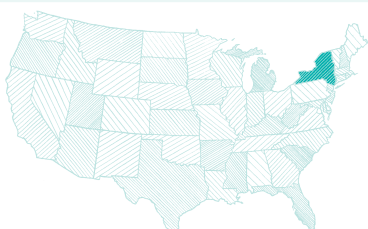
✓ **Courses**

✓ **Virtual Learning**

District Profile

🏫 2,633 High School Students

🎓 64% Graduation Rate

0.3% American Indian/ Alaskan Native

4.4% Multiracial

7.8% Asian/ Pacific Islander

50.9% Black

19.5% White

17.0% Hispanic

✓ 14.1% Students with Disabilities

✓ 11.1% English Language Learners

✓ 64.6% Economically Disadvantaged

Challenge

When schools closed in March 2020 due to the pandemic, Albany City Schools, like many districts across the country, needed a way to set up all their students and educators for virtual learning and teaching. The challenge was to minimize learning loss and keep students engaged as much as possible. What was originally a short-term need has evolved to a longer-term one as the district continues to modify how and where instruction is delivered.

Solution

Albany City Schools quickly pulled together a virtual learning program for all their middle school and high school students using a special Learning Continuity Program Apex created. The district was already using Apex Learning Courses and added Tutorials for additional flexibility. They continued the expanded virtual program into the 2020-21 school year as well, to help provide instruction at scale.

Results

Because teachers could count on having robust content and delivery, they could focus on teaching and building relationships with students and less time trying to figure out the technology. Apex also provided the district a way to hold students accountable for their learning whether teachers opted to go back to in-person classes in the fall or chose to continue learning from home.

Reaching for the same goals, but in a different way

The speed of the school shutdown in spring caught many educators off guard. Districts like Albany's that were already successfully using digital curriculum for specialized programs were able to scale quickly and provide online learning for every student while longer-term plans were developed.

"We launched a mass roll out literally over the course of a weekend. Apex was able to offer—without any labor on the teacher's part—content that students could work on at home," shares Tom Vacanti, the district's online learning coordinator. "Apex made it easy for us to offer robust content to every student."

Vacanti's perspective is unique in that he has been leading online learning programs for the district since 2011. He understands the value and power of online learning, and he notes that the core goals are still the same. What has changed is how students, parents, and teachers work differently now to reach them.

> "If we didn't have access to the Learning Continuity Program, our students were going home for two weeks with nothing. It's a no brainer. Apex does all the heavy lifting so teachers can focus on fostering a relationship with students."
>
> **Tom Vacanti, Online Learning Coordinator**

Building relationships with students and families

With Apex, student performance is tracked and monitored. Students can access Apex whenever and however it's most convenient for them. And parents can now see the instructional piece to their student's learning, not just the assessment. They can check progress in Apex and have discussions about it.

At the very beginning of the pandemic, things were moving very quickly and it was hard to bring all the educators on board simultaneously says Vacanti. Now, teachers are comfortable with the technology. Online learning tools allow them to spend more time on pedagogy and on the personal connections that are so important for student success.

For any district, the key is determining how to make it so that learning can be facilitated by teachers, administrators, and parents together. "It's going to be difficult for everyone to find their groove, but it's totally possible."

Learn more about Apex Learning digital curriculum solutions:
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OD-CS-044-1