



CASE STUDY

District Transcends Geographic Barriers with Digital Curriculum

Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, Alaska

Challenge

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (Mat-Su), a district the geographic size of West Virginia, struggled to provide its students across 45 schools with equitable access to rigorous, high-quality curriculum and highly qualified teachers in every subject area.

Goal

The district wanted to leverage online learning to expand the district course catalog, enable virtual instruction, and transcend geographic barriers so that all students — regardless of their locations — have access to the same high-quality education options.

Solution

Mat-Su chose to partner with Apex Learning to create a scalable online learning program with an expansive catalog of rigorous courses and a robust online learning platform that can be accessed from any location.

Results

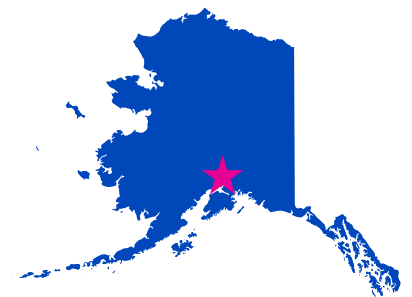
Within the first year of implementation, Mat-Su experienced rapid program growth as students eagerly enrolled in courses previously unavailable to them. Rising to the challenge of a rigorous online learning experience, students from across the district completed more than 1,000 courses, increasing their course completion rate by 19 percentage points (from 67 to 86 percent).

Course Completion Rate



District Profile

- Location: Matanuska-Susitna Borough
- Setting: Urban, suburban, rural
- Sites: 45 schools
- Program: Mat-Su iTech
- Environment: Virtual Learning
- Size of Program: 1,400 students



Identifying Barriers to Learning

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (Mat-Su) is comprised of 45 schools that cover an expansive geographic area. Individual schools span a wide range of urban, suburban, and rural settings. When reviewing the educational options that each school provided, Mat-Su found a wide range of variations.

While some schools had a large teaching staff and broad course catalogs, other schools struggled to find enough qualified teachers in their areas or did not have enough enrollments to justify adding to their teaching staff. Hiring enough additional teachers at each school to provide a large course catalog throughout the district looked to be a costly — if not impossible — task. Instead, Mat-Su began to consider online courses as a way to maximize the reach of the current teaching staff and offer consistent options to all students throughout the district.

“With 24/7 access to their courses, students progress at the pace that’s right for them. It’s not about seat time or even a block of classroom time. Time and place are no longer constraints for us.”

Kathy Moffitt

Program Administrator

Choosing Digital Curriculum Based on Quality

“For us, it was a deliberate choice,” said Kathy Moffitt, program administrator for Mat-Su. “We conducted an evaluation of digital curriculum providers and chose Apex Learning based on the quality of the curriculum.” Apex Learning believes in setting high expectations for all students, and that philosophy is reflected in the rigor as well as the breadth and depth of adherence to state and national standards across its digital curriculum solutions. Apex Learning has undergone independent evaluation and approval as a provider of quality digital curriculum by the nation’s leading education organizations including the NCAA, the College Board, and AdvancedED. “Because Apex Learning provides high-quality digital curriculum, we can focus on being the best virtual teachers we can be,” explained Moffitt.

Overcoming Geographic Constraints

Mat-Su leverages the flexible learning management system within the Apex Learning digital curriculum to enable a number of its highly qualified teachers to provide online instruction across the district. As a result, all Mat-Su students — regardless of their geographic location — have access to experienced teachers and a comprehensive catalog of courses in math, science, English, social studies, world languages, electives, career and technical education (CTE), and Advanced Placement®.

Contact

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Students Drive Program Expansion

Since the program’s inception, Mat-Su has experienced rapid growth, surpassing expectations. With measurable success and more students eager to embrace online learning, Mat-Su virtual teachers have begun working with classroom teachers throughout the district, exploring ways to integrate digital curriculum into the classroom in a blended learning model.