Introduction

Digital curriculum enables innovative ways to personalize instruction, motivate, and engage students. In many cases, students experience academic success in rigorous courses for the first time.

Alternative education programs support students who:

- Are at risk of dropping out of school or have already done so
- Are unable to attend school due to medical homebound or long-term suspension status
- Wish to complete a non-traditional academic program
- Are capable of accelerating course completion for early graduation

Program Factors

The flexibility of Apex Learning digital curriculum allows for a wide range of implementations. Consider student needs and available resources when designing your alternative education program.

Location: Where will teachers & students work?

- On-site (blended)
- Combination of on-site and off-site (enriched virtual)
- Off-site (virtual)
- Student Success Center (Physical location with devices & internet access)

Scheduling: When will students work?

- How many and which days per week?
- During what times?

Credit Type: What type of courses will be offered?

- General Studies
- Credit Recovery
- Advanced Placement
- Remediation (credit or non-credit)

Staff: Who will provide instruction & intervention?

- District teachers: Local math, English, science, social studies, and world language teachers.
- Apex Learning teachers: ALVS provides quality instruction at a distance.
- Lab managers and district teachers: Lab managers provide supervision, motivation, and proctoring. Teachers provide instruction, feedback, grading, and tutoring.

Student Support: What type of resources & support will students need?

- Coaching and counseling
- Instruction and tutoring
- Monitoring and outreach

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1 [https://www.apexlearningvs.com/](https://www.apexlearningvs.com/)
Program Models

Alternative education programs can address a wide variety of student needs. The following examples outline three models supported by a digital curriculum.

Virtual

Increase access to high-quality courses. Single course enrollment benefits students with schedule conflicts, and those completing additional courses for early graduation. Full-time enrollment benefits students who cannot physically attend school, or who prefer a non-traditional setting.

Alternative Day / Evening School

Serve students who need alternative scheduling options. This blended model may be designed using an abbreviated schedule in a day or evening program. Over-age and under-credited students, teen parents, and students balancing the need to work with educational goals benefit from this model.

Homebound Instruction

Revitalize instruction for those who are physically unable to attend school. Assign lessons and provide feedback in a timely manner. Students receive support from a mentor who visits the home to monitor assessments and provide guidance.

Best Practices: Planning

1. Define Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Support your program with qualified staff with appropriate certifications. Staffing allocations may be full- or part-time depending on student enrollment.

- Administrator/site coordinator: Oversees the program and provides direction and support to staff.
- Guidance counselor: Provides individual graduation planning, progress monitoring, and outreach.
- Teachers: Provide instruction and feedback.
- Support staff: Work under the direction of the administrator to perform operational tasks.
- Read Staff Roles and Responsibilities

2. Provide Scheduling Options

Most non-traditional students benefit from choice in their schedules. Students can work at their own pace from any computer with Internet access, allowing course work beyond scheduled school time.

3. Require On-Site Attendance

Determine the days and hours students are required to attend onsite to have access to teachers for progress checks, instruction, and assessment proctoring. Offer multiple sessions to meet demand.

Example 1: Students choose between day and evening options — Onsite sessions are offered Monday/Wednesday/Friday from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Example 2: Students choose between Monday/Wednesday and Tuesday/Thursday classes from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. In this program, students may attend both sessions.

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2 http://cdn.apexlearning.com/documents/bp_staff_roles_responsibilities.pdf
4. Conduct Enrollment Interviews

Screen applicants and meet with a parent or guardian to ensure appropriate placement. Set expectations for student work, attendance, communication, and review school policies.

5. Provide Opportunities for Professional Development

Offer opportunities for teachers to develop skills and competencies in the National Standards for Quality Online Teaching³.

Best Practices: Instruction

1. Complete a Functionality Training Course

Quickly become familiar with Apex Learning features and functionality by completing an Educator Academy on-demand training course.

2. Lead a Student Orientation

Orient students on the first day. Explain procedures, attendance requirements, expectations for student work, and your communication and support system.

3. Motivate Students for On-time Course Completion

- Assign due dates to pace work for timely completion and meaningful progress reports.
- Require portfolios with notes, study sheets, and other written work.
- Conduct progress meetings framed around student work samples and progress toward completion.
- Congratulate students who meet deadlines and discuss strategies to help students who are behind get back on track.
- Offer incentives for staying on track, such as a Wall of Fame, snacks, or free time.

4. Monitor & Respond to Student Progress

Monitor progress and develop interventions to assist struggling students.

- Small-group instruction: Use data to group struggling students by learning objective.
- Individual instruction: Provide direct instruction of concepts and skills to individual students.
- Consider additional support from resources, teachers, peer mentors, and tutors.

³ http://www.inacol.org/resource/inacol-national-standards-for-quality-online-teaching-v2/
6. Communicate Student Progress

Communicate frequently throughout the course with students and parents.

- Communicate times and methods for students and parents to communicate with you. Consider face-to-face, web conference, and phone support.
- Enable the Coach email to send an automated weekly progress email.
- Contact parents if a student is behind schedule, has not recently signed in, or has a course average below 70%. Outline steps students can take to get back on track.
- Read the Coach Getting Started Guide⁴