

DIGITAL CURRICULUM SUCCESS STORY

“Apex Learning really helps us engage students who struggle in a traditional classroom setting. I call them modern learners. They are students with short attention spans. They want to be engaged in learning instead of just waiting for everything to come their way. Apex Learning reaches the students who want to move at their own pace.”

*Bob Hahn
Curriculum Coordinator
Cherokee County School District*

› Cherokee County, Georgia

Curriculum That Better Fits Student Needs

The experience of learning in a traditional classroom is not successful for every student. They grow impatient with the one-size-fits-all pace — especially in today’s abbreviated, text-message world — and struggle to keep up academically.

Cherokee County School District high schools are gaining a better understanding of how to connect with these students. The district, Georgia’s eighth largest in a community 40 miles north of Atlanta, has implemented new programs across its seven high schools, relying on modern, relevant digital curriculum to grab and hold student attention.

Cherokee began using Apex Learning[®] digital curriculum in 2008, choosing it for its current examples, use of relevant digital media, and alignment to state standards and curriculum maps. Content is delivered in smaller chunks, and lessons engage students with interactive exercises. In addition to better addressing student learning styles, Apex Learning online courses also stood out in a provider-comparison rubric for their rigor.

Using Technology to Individually Engage Students

Cherokee’s five comprehensive high schools offer Apex Learning online courses for credit recovery in computer labs during regular class periods throughout the day. Students are grouped by subject area, and certified in-field teachers facilitate learning.

A curriculum review committee of district teachers and administrators used the Apex Learning course outline manager to modify the curriculum to focus more directly on the content that is most relevant to Georgia’s end-of-course tests. The ability to customize courses has helped Cherokee teachers place greater emphasis on graduation requirements and facilitate individual student success.

Teachers use Apex Learning diagnostic assessments as pre-tests, allowing credit-recovery students to skip over content they have already mastered.

“Apex Learning allows our teachers to individually teach students what they need, when they need it. Our teachers are becoming part mentors and part teachers, reviewing a key concept with one student one moment and motivating another student the next.”

— Bob Hahn

› Challenge

Find solutions for students who are not keeping up academically in the traditional classroom

› Solution

Implement Apex Learning digital curriculum for credit recovery, original credit, and targeted remediation

› Success by the Numbers

2008 Fall Semester

- 457 course enrollments
- 323 courses completed for credit

Students receive one-on-one attention as they move through their online courses in class, and they are able to access their courses outside school from any computer with Internet access. Combined with the ability to print out practice and study sheets for “paper-and-pencil” students, the versatility of online delivery of multimedia content has made Apex Learning digital curriculum particularly effective.

“Students are getting the hang of what it takes to dive into a course and really learn. They’re realizing if you read the material, do the activities, print out the study sheets, and take notes, you can be successful.”

— Bob Hahn

Digital Math Curriculum Proves Invaluable for Remediation

Changes to state math curriculum standards led Cherokee to use Apex Learning content more extensively to support students during the 2008–2009 school year. For the first time, all 9th graders were required to enroll in a new course that takes an integrated approach to math instruction. The transition from a traditional sequence of math courses to integrated math has been challenging for many.

Cherokee math teachers conduct a comprehensive skills assessment using a rubric they created to categorize their 9th-grade students as either “needing support,” “on track,” or “accelerated.” Those classified as “needing support” are enrolled in Apex Learning online courses for a second period of math each day to address specific knowledge gaps. Additionally, schools offer an abbreviated recovery opportunity during the lunch period or after school to students who only need targeted remediation on specific skills and concepts.

Rolling Out Digital Curriculum for Original Credit

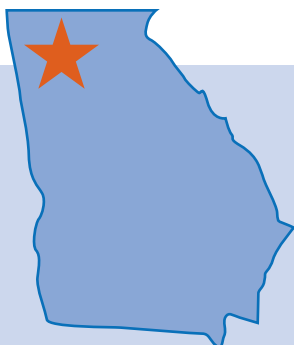
Cherokee has realized good results from using Apex Learning online courses for its credit-recovery program and has been particularly impressed by the responsiveness of Apex Learning to the needs of teachers and students.

That success has the district preparing to roll out Apex Learning curriculum for original credit in its comprehensive high schools next fall, mostly through its after-school, pay-by-the-course Credit Connect program. The online courses could also be available to students at no cost during the regular school day on a case-by-case basis.

This won’t be the first use of Apex Learning online courses for original credit in the district. CrossRoads, Cherokee’s alternative high school for students with behavior, attendance, and academic issues, and Polaris Evening Schools, for students requiring a non-traditional program, have been using online courses for both credit recovery and original credit.

“Our students are really responding to the Apex Learning courses. We are excited to expand our usage of the digital curriculum to meet additional student needs. The bottom-line goal is to get students graduating on time.”

— Bob Hahn



About Cherokee County School District

- 35,000 K–12 students
- 5 comprehensive high schools
- 1 alternative high school
- 1 evening school
- Suburban district located in Canton, Georgia, 40 miles north of Atlanta