

An Academy's Success Story

The Flexibility of Odysseyware Resulted in a Single Solution for Multiple Instructional Settings



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“We had used several different curriculums that just weren’t as easy for learners to use. When we heard of Odysseyware we knew it would solve our curriculum problem”.

- Dr. Tricia Jones, Ed.D.

The Challenge

Finding a single digital curriculum to meet the needs of diverse student populations and multiple unique instructional settings can be a daunting task. And finding an educational solution that promotes higher graduation rates and student retention within the district is not only important for students and families, but is equally vital for districts. Districts are also looking to retain per-pupil funding and adhere to their state's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan, which requires they raise or maintain graduation cohort numbers. With these local and federal obligations comes a greater need to seek out educational solutions that are flexible, easy to use and implement, serve multiple needs, meet school and district initiatives, and are cost-effective. If these goals can be achieved through a single solution, well that's just icing on the cake.

Dr. Tricia Jones, Curriculum Coordinator at The Innovation Academy in Clinton, Tennessee, has seen first-hand how implementing the right solution can directly correlate to a 100% graduation rate.

When the Innovation Academy was looking to retain students and ensure they graduated with their cohorts, teachers voiced dissatisfaction with the current curriculum provider and sought to find a new program that could effectively serve their diverse student populations and was flexible enough to meet the needs of students, staff, and district leaders alike in their three online learning programs (ACOLA, BRAC, and Opportunity Credits).

The Journey

“Every student, every day,” is the motto established for Anderson County Schools by the Director of Schools, Dr. Tim Parrot. So, it is with no surprise that Anderson County Schools established Innovation Academy, that encompasses three different online learning programs for high school students seeking alternative learning opportunities and settings to meet their unique needs.

Innovation Academy is comprised of **Anderson County Online Learning Academy (ACOLA)** which serves at-home learners, **Bridge Academy (BRAC)** which serves students who are behind in credits and/or behind their age-appropriate cohort, and **Opportunity Credits** that serves students seeking credit recovery, Middle College credits, transfers, and work-based learning students seeking online courses that do not fit into their on-campus schedule.

For the past seven years, Innovation Academy has been using Odysseyware with fidelity and high success. However, prior to finding and implementing Odysseyware, Innovation Academy had not found a solution that was flexible enough to meet the diverse learning needs of students and families, as well as provide rigorous, state-aligned, digital curriculum that didn't overtax teachers' time in developing lessons.

Innovation Academy chose Odysseyware as they found set-up easy and navigation of lesson sequence and expectations for both students and teachers straightforward. Odysseyware offers virtual instructors as an option for schools who wish to start their own virtual academies, but Anderson County decided to use their own teachers.

“The Innovation Academy staff all love what they do, and are very good at it. We are very pleased with the Odysseyware curriculum, and the personal touch is what keeps students going when things get tough.”



Photos (Top to Bottom): Recent graduate of Innovation Academy, some of Innovation Academy staff Ginger Sills (Math teacher), and Krista Petrick (English teacher).

Teachers also appreciated that they did not have to build lessons from scratch. The authoring tool enabled them to further adapt and customize classes to Tennessee standards if needed, as well as add content to their lessons, like Kahn Academy videos, especially for math. Teachers also wrote some of their own courses in Odysseyware, like Creative Writing, Film Studies, and Greek Mythology.

“We liked that Odysseyware grades a lot of the work, and the cost was reasonable.”

With three different digital programs to manage, Dr. Jones believes that not only are excellent teachers key to the success of each of the programs, but that a flexible, digital curriculum with quality courses, rigorous lessons, and extensive data, plays an essential role too.

With data being critical in education, Odysseyware provides a multitude of reports and at-a-glance feedback via the Teacher and Student Dashboards. Administrators also have the opportunity to see the ‘big picture’ of time usage and different reporting options to make quantitative and qualitative decisions.

“We really like the reports that we can run, and you can get so much data from them.”

Odysseyware lessons provide explicit instruction with videos and vocabulary, while giving students immediate feedback that allows them to stay on track and learn concepts the correct way the first time. Dr. Jones indicated that her students and parents also appreciate being able to have something that they can access at home, as well as at school.

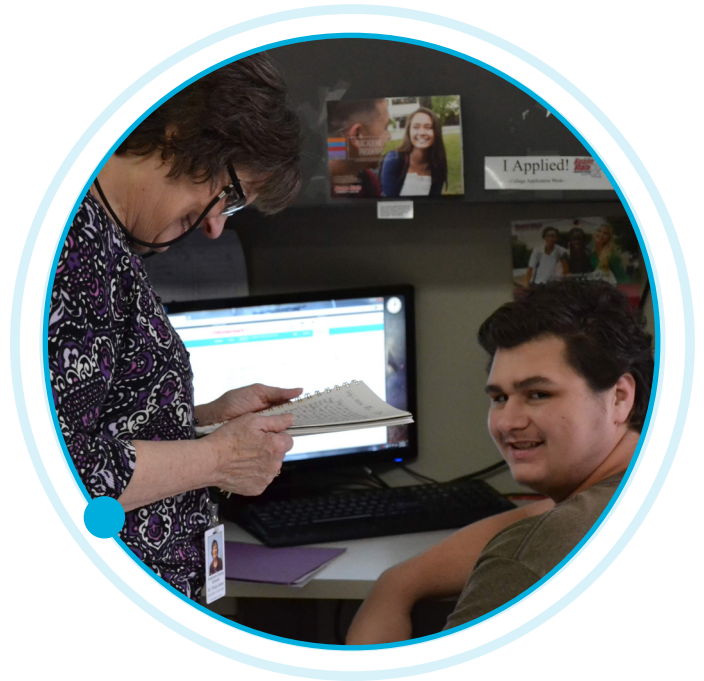
Students in the Bridge Academy are usually behind in classes; therefore, are with Innovation Academy teachers all day unless they need a course that is not available through Odysseyware, such as Cosmetology.

Students in the Anderson County Online Learning Academy (ACOLA) work at home through Tennessee-aligned courses in Odysseyware with Innovation Academy teachers available to help when needed.

“One of the things our parents love about Odysseyware is there is no cost to them, and other homeschool programs can be very expensive. They love that they can see if their student is on pace and appreciate that the school provides the support they need with difficult subjects.”

Students are offered tutoring twice a week which is held at the school, and may take classes on campus as well, such as culinary arts, welding, and others. Students can also participate in school activities like band, ROTC, sports, and prom, and go through the graduation ceremony with their class, which students appreciate.

Students in the third ‘branch’ of Innovation Academy are in Opportunity Credits. These students either come to the academy with one or two blocks for credit recovery or use Odysseyware to earn a new credit which they can’t fit into their regular schedule.



“Many of the students see no hope to graduate. They are beaten down but when they come to us, we see their posture and countenance change.”

The Conclusion

Due to the success of Innovation Academy, Dr. Jones is optimistic about what virtual programs can do for students and is an advocate for helping other schools launch their own programs to establish alternative learning options for their students.

Every year, Bridge Academy graduates roughly 25 students, with a total of 300 students graduating since the start of the program who otherwise would have become dropouts. Not only would that affect their graduation rate as a system, but it would have affected each of those student's lives. Now they're able to help those students find success. Because of the format of their program, their teachers, and Odysseyware, Bridge Academy has a graduation rate of 96 – 100%.

“By using Odysseyware and having these programs, we are able to help students who need to learn in a different way, and meet the needs of every student, every day, here at Anderson County.”

Dr. Jones is now seeing a huge need for middle school options, so the Innovation Academy has started a middle school at-home program for these students. With Odysseyware, they already have access to curriculum for all grade levels and everything they need, making the process of set-up easy.

