



## HAMILTON ALTERNATIVE ACADEMY

Hamilton Local Digital Academy

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### HAMILTON LOCAL DIGITAL ACADEMY 2009-2010 ANNUAL REPORT

#### **Letter from the Sponsoring Superintendent – Christopher T. Lester**

We welcome you to review our annual report for the 2009-2010 school year. The Hamilton Local Digital Academy (HLDA)/Hamilton Alternative Academy (HAA), sponsored by the Hamilton Local School District, officially opened its doors on September 15, 2003. Our primary goal is to offer students, grades K-12, the highest quality alternative educational programming possible in order to meet their individual needs. The information that follows provides a statistical and narrative overview of our school during the previous academic year. We are pleased with the continual strides we have made and look forward to continued improvement. As a matter of fact, Hamilton Local Digital Academy has moved into Continuous Improvement on the School Report Card status for the 2009-2010 school year. This is an accomplishment we are quite proud of.

To address student performance, we utilize data collected during the school year, this methodology is critical to student academic growth. By following a year-round school calendar, our students have the greatest learning flexibility, allowing us the ability to provide ongoing academic support on a continual basis.

We, at HLDA/HAA, believe that parents play a critical role in the education of their children. We appreciate the support they have already given by the decision to enroll their children in HLDA/HAA, and the follow-up educational support they have provided their children and our staff. Should you have questions regarding this report, please contact me through e-mail: [clester@hamilton-local.k12.oh.us](mailto:clester@hamilton-local.k12.oh.us) or by phone: (614) 491-8044

#### **Letter from the Executive Director – Allyson Price**

Hamilton Local Digital Academy/Alternative Academy embarked on its initial year of existence on September 15, 2003, with Mr. William Morrison as the Director. Our goal was to provide learning opportunities to students who, for a variety of reasons, could not regularly attend school. Initially, we provided on-line learning opportunities for students in grades 7-12. The year was one of changes and challenges as we continued to develop an educationally sound online school environment.

During the 2004-2005 school year, our student population increased almost two-fold and the inquiries about this school option became numerous. We became a “mixed” or “blended” environment with the addition of a correspondence program for high school students (grades 9-12). We also created an alternative classroom for middle school students (grades 7 & 8).

The correspondence program allowed secondary students to work in a more familiar environment using textbooks and study guides as the main core of the curriculum. This also enabled us to provide Credit Recovery courses to students attending our high school. Students who had either failed a course, or could not fit one into their schedule, could therefore make up credits.

The Alternative Classroom allowed students, who would otherwise be home-schooled, the ability to work with an instructor in a small group setting within the school. The instructor worked diligently to provide as much individual attention as possible to the students there and to guide them through the state required curriculum as effectively as possible. These additions greatly enhance our learning community as we continued to grow and improve.

As the Alternative Classroom proved to be successful for students, we added a second Alternative Classroom in 2005-2006 for students in high school. The students placed here had the option of obtaining a diploma from the high school or the correspondence program. During this year, we broadened the credit recovery program and were able to meet the needs of more students than in the year before.

During the 2006-2007 school year, we worked diligently to provide additional support for students who were in jeopardy of not being successful. We hired teachers to work one-on-one or in small groups to tutor students, both in the full time and in the credit recovery programs. We began to focus and reach out to students who may drop out of school all together. We utilized our district resources like the truancy officer and the Career Based Instructor to help communicate with students about their options.

The 2006-2007 school year also brought about a change in administration as Mr. Morrison became Hamilton Local's Assistant Superintendent in February. I took over at that time from another position within the district. It has been my great pleasure to work with students in this capacity.

In 2007-2008, we were able to add an Alternative Classroom to the Intermediate School. We were excited to be able to offer that to three out of our four buildings in the district. The three teachers helped support and learn from each other. The full-time population continued to grow exponentially, as did the students taking credit recovery courses.

We were excited to add an additional staff member in 2008-2009 to help with instruction and tutoring, Mrs. Jenny Davisson. She worked with students daily and provided curriculum support as needed. In addition she helped monitor student work and attendance. We were able to continue her providing support in the 2009-2010 school year.

HLDA/HAA continues to offer a unique opportunity to students and families who have decided that an alternative education is a valid choice. I know I speak for the entire HLDA/HAA staff when I say that it is exciting to be part of an organization that is serious about providing such educational experiences for students.

Should you have questions, feel free to contact me through e-mail at: [aprice@hamilton-local.k12.oh.us](mailto:aprice@hamilton-local.k12.oh.us) or call our office at (614) 491-8044 Ext. 1240.

### **SECTION ONE – ACADEMIC PROGRAMS**

The State Model Courses of Study are the basis for HLDA Curriculum. To develop our curriculum, we follow a multi-factored approach as well as look for a variety of options so we best meet each student's academic and learning needs.

Initially, we began with an on-line learning environment. Through study and review of the State Standards, Benchmarks, and Grade Level Indicators, we found resources from the World Wide Web that supported Ohio Standards and therefore aligned to the State Model Courses of Study. This approach allowed us to insure that our students were prepared for the state achievement and graduation tests, which they are required to take annually.

At the beginning, the on-line courses were delivered using FirstClass, an Internet-based educational collaboration tool. During the 2005-2006 year, we moved up to the Angel environment provided by TRECA Digital Academy. This learning environment allows students and teachers to engage in both asynchronous and synchronous interaction. Following instruction and completion of work the student progresses to the next unit. This allows students to move forward at their own pace, one of our main goals of the program.

The addition of the correspondence program for high school aged students allowed us flexibility to meet individual needs and meet graduation credit requirements. We utilize the American School of Correspondence for a majority of our courses, however teachers from our sponsoring district's high school have developed several courses for our use as well. Our goal is to be able to use more locally developed curriculum as well. This program also enables us to have a very strong credit recovery program with over 100 high school students participating throughout each school year.

The Alternative Classrooms, in three of our buildings, enable us to meet students individual needs in a flexible small-group setting. There is a blend of academic programs in each of these rooms depending on each student. In each classroom, you might see students on-line, using textbooks or following the teacher's lesson plans and curriculum. This allows students to be successful in a learning method best suited for them.

To meet our special education students' needs, we implemented the Special Needs Academy in 2006-2007. Students with IEPs are able to work in a flexible environment with teacher provided lessons and support. We are able to maintain IEP goals in this manner. This program is of great benefit to our students who are thus able to maintain academic success.

Our students participate in 920 hours of instructional time each year. Our on-line students progress through their curriculum and meet the hourly requirements through completion of assignments, participation in chats and discussions, and ongoing assessment by staff. The students participating in the correspondence program are required to submit work weekly and must stay in regular contact with the academy director. Communication can come in many forms including: e-mail, home visits, office visits and phone calls.

## **SECTION TWO – FINANCIAL REPORTING**

The Hamilton Digital Academy/Alternative Academy was last audited on June of 2009 with no findings.

### **Total Receipts and Expenditures for FY 09**

Receipts: \$685,792.00

Expenditures: \$652,597.00

Grants: \$32,350.00

Balance: \$89,480.00

## **SECTION THREE – FAITHFULNESS TO THE SCHOOL'S CONTRACT**

### **Attendance**

Student attendance has been a critical emphasis, and we continue to refine what attendance means in a distance-learning environment. Since students have the opportunity to "attend"

school 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, documentation of their activities and contacts with their teachers is critical. We feel as if this is one of our strengths.

For our on-line students, they are considered “attending” if they do the following each week: contact their teachers in a meaningful way, complete assignments, participate in online classroom-related discussions, complete their online learning logs and access their classroom environment. Since attendance is recorded on a weekly, rather than daily, basis, our attendance ranking is quite high when compared to traditional attendance criteria. We maintained a 98+% attendance rate.

Attendance for our alternative classrooms is measured as per public school district policy. Each student identified as an Alternative Classroom student attends a separate facility within a sponsoring school building. Our district truancy officer is in daily contact with these students and provides parents with multiple opportunities to participate in various parenting and family-related programs that help maintain appropriate daily attendance.

Attendance for our correspondence program, as discussed earlier, is measured by communication and academic output. Each student must communicate with our office weekly and provide a minimum of one examination to be considered present.

### **Assessment Results**

2003-2004 was the first year of existence for Hamilton Local Digital Academy. Based upon feedback from all stakeholders, one of the biggest challenges was to determine how to deliver a more effective, quality online curriculum tied to state standards. To meet this challenge, we continually worked on ways to modify curriculum delivery. However, one of the most difficult issues we faced was the high level of student transience. Because this was our first full year as a “Start-Up” district, data regarding state indicators were not available. Below you will find links to the our Ohio Department of Education’s School Report Cards.

[2004-2005 Report Card](#)

[2005-2006 Report Card](#)

[2006-2007 Report Card](#)

[2007-2008 Report Card](#)

[2008-2009 Report Card](#)

[2009-2010 Report Card](#)

In 2009-2010, we were graded on 11 of the 30 State Indicators. These areas are the 5 Ohio Graduation Test areas of 10<sup>th</sup> Grade, the 5 Ohio Graduation Test areas of 11<sup>th</sup> grade and Attendance. We met 2 out of 11 of the indicators – in 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Writing and in Attendance. As we met Adequate Yearly Progress we moved into the Continuous Improvement designation. This shows the positive direction our academic improvements have made.

### **Parent and Community Involvement**

HLDA/HAA strongly encourages parents and guardians to be actively involved in their child’s education. Each student participating in our digital tract is required to attend a three-hour orientation in the accompaniment of at least one parent/guardian to begin the school year. During this introduction to our online school, both students and adults are guided through a hands-on

demonstration of how our school works, how students participate in their classes and how to communicate with their teachers. Though parents do not receive their own private email accounts, they are given complete access to their child's account and are able to log in and see what work is accomplished, not completed and the communication that occurs between student and teacher. An additional communication tool has been added for parents in the form of an online grade book. This web-based program is accessible from any computer connected to the Internet. Parents have toll-free telephone access to the Help Desk and Administrative office. Parents also received online inquiry features if they did not wish to use their child's account or did not have an individual email account. Parents may also contact the academy director for academic progress reports.

Students participating in our correspondence program are required to participate in an in-depth orientation that covers curriculum questions and program procedures. These families also have access to an online database showing the latest progress for their student. We send home progress reports to our correspondence students approximately every six weeks. This allows us to keep communication open between our personnel, our students and our parents. It has proven to be a very useful tool in keeping students active.

### **Special Needs and Support**

As per Ohio Law, students with special needs are admitted to the program and are served in educationally appropriate ways, without discrimination. A special education supervisor coordinates and oversees appropriate educational services. LDA Board of Directors adopted the current Ohio Model of Policies and Procedures.

### **Future Planning**

In closing, our Board of Directors, Administration and Staff are committed to providing the highest quality educational options for students as possible. We continually seek methods to improve instruction and student learning. With that in mind, we plan to implement the following for the 2010-2011 school-year:

- We will utilize a continuous progress model.
- We will continue to work at reducing the student/teacher ratio.
- We will focus on the referral and enrollment process to ensure we are successfully meeting the needs of our students that enter the Alternative Academy
- We will continue to examine hardware and software for dependability and instructional benefits.
- Because of the diversity of our population and our commitment to provide the best education, we will continue to modify curriculum, programs, delivery, and instruction in order to increase student achievement along with preparing them for the world of work and a democratic society.
- We will continue to provide additional services for students participating in all of our tracts so that they may be better prepared for state assessments.