



# HAMILTON ALTERNATIVE ACADEMY

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## HAMILTON LOCAL DIGITAL ACADEMY 2007-2008 ANNUAL REPORT

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

We welcome you to review our annual report for the 2007-2008 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.

To address key issues regarding student performance, garnered from data collected during the 2007-2008 school year, we have implemented a continuous progress model in grades K - 12 that allows students to work at their specific instructional levels. This methodology is critical to student academic growth. By utilizing 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, and is, to provide learning opportunities to students who, for various 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 understand and 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 an addition of a correspondence program for our high school students, and we also created an alternative classroom for Middle School Students.

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 thus 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 helped enhance our learning community as we continued to grow and improve.

As the Alternative Classroom proved to be successful, in 2005-2006, we added a second Alternative Classroom for students in high school. The students placed here had the option of obtaining a diploma from the high school or the correspondence program. We also 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 in more traditional school environments. There became a strong focus to reach out to students who may opt 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.

This year also brought about change in administration, as Mr. Morrison became Hamilton Local's Assistant Superintendent in February. I took over at that time from within the district. It has been my pleasure to work with students in this capacity.

In 2007-2008, we were able to add an Alternative Classroom to the Intermediate School, bringing the district total to include three out of four buildings in the HLAD/HAA program. The three teachers helped to support and learn from each other. The full-time population continued to grow exponentially, as did the students taking credit recovery courses.

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) 491-5546.

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

The State Model Courses of Study are the basis for HLDA Curriculum. To develop our curriculum during 03 – 04 SY, we used the following process. Through study and review of the State Standards, Benchmarks, and Grade Level Indicators, we looked for content resources from the World Wide Web and subscription sites that supported these standards. Once we ascertained that the sites were appropriate, we built them into our program. The rationale for this process was to insure that our students were prepared for the state proficiency tests, which are aligned to the State Model Courses of Study. We also needed content resources that supported our digital learning environment that was deliverable over any connection speed, whether slow or fast. We used a database alignment tool to make certain that the lessons designed by our teachers aligned to the appropriate state standards, and that these standards were covered in our content delivery. This alignment process was, and is, an ongoing task which our teachers complete as they design their lessons.

The Hamilton Local Digital Academy courses were delivered using an Internet-based educational collaboration tool, FirstClass. During the 2005-2006 year, our digital students moved up to the Angel environment. The HLDA learning environment allowed students and teachers to engage in both asynchronous and synchronous interactions. Following instruction and completion of work, the student progressed to the next unit. One of the goals was to allow students to move forward at their own pace.

The amount of instructional time for our students was 920 hours each year. Due to the fact that many of our students worked online, the fit between the number of standards and the instructional hours was fairly straightforward. The standards were aligned to the students' online lessons. As they progressed through the curriculum, they met both the hourly requirements through regular attendance, participation in chats and discussions, completion of assignments, and ongoing assessment by staff.

With our correspondence program, we require our students to stay in contact with the academy director, no less than, on a weekly basis. Each student is required to communicate and deliver work weekly. Communication can come in many forms including: e-mail, home visits, office visits and phone calls. Each student must present a minimum of one examination each week to meet our attendance policy.

We now feature three Alternative Classrooms, each with a full-time instructor that provides classroom instruction to our alternative students, as well as tutoring and assistance for correspondence students as needed.

During the 2007-2008 school year we continued to support High School students through the American School program. This program allowed our secondary students, who were unable to maintain pace in other programs, to work in a more familiar atmosphere. This program also provided for a very strong credit recovery program with over 100 students participating throughout the school year. Collectively we helped support the academic achievement of approximately 250 students this year.

## **SECTION TWO – FINANCIAL REPORTING**

The Hamilton Digital Academy/Alternative Academy was last audited on May of 2007 with no findings.

### **Total Receipts and Expenditures for FY 07**

**Receipts: \$735,945.00**

**Expenditures: \$692,976.00**

**Forwarding Balance: \$202,086.00**

**Balance: \$245,055.00**

## **Ohio Department of Education Review**

We are very proud that when ODE conducted its initial review for the 2003-04 school year that no errors were found.

### **Forecasting**

Based upon our continued growth and what is occurring throughout the state we expect our enrollment will continue to increase. Our five-year projections are that by Fiscal Year 2012 HLDA will enroll more than 150 students and our budget will exceed \$1,000,000.00.

## **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.

Likewise, our staff attendance rate is also extremely high due to teachers working from their homes. Rarely is a sick day necessary due to the flexibility of scheduling office hours. In reality, many of our teachers work nights and weekends. Thus, the traditional absence model does not adequately measure staff attendance rates for our school. Using the traditional model, our rate is again extremely high at 98+%.

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**

03 - 04 SY was the first year of existence for HLDA. 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 I have links to the 04-05, 05-06, 06-07 and 07-08 report cards.

[-2005 Report](#)

[-2006 Report](#)

[-2007 Report](#)

[-2008 Report](#)

## **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 was 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, special needs students admitted to the program 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.

### **Planning**

In closing, our Board of Directors, Administration and Staff are committed to the following for 07-08:

- We will utilize a continuous progress model. (Please see the detailed explanation under Section One. Also, this process should generate a substantial increase in student achievement.)
- We will continue to work at reducing the student/teacher ratio.
- We will continue to examine hardware and software for dependability.
- 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 they may be better prepared for state testing.