



Cyberspace Becomes the Classroom in Putnam County

Name:

Putnam County's Virtual Instruction to Accentuate Learning program

Internet:

www.putnamcounty.com

Technology Tools:

Online courses

Location:

Cookeville/Putnam County

Leadership:

Sharon Anderson,
Virtual Learning Coordinator

Innovative Insight: *"Virtual classes are allowing us to equalize course offerings across the county. For the first time, we are all on an equal playing field."*

The Impact of the Program:

"Some of our students who had been struggling found success online and it has increased their confidence in the classroom."

The Future: Putnam County is in the process of starting a pilot version of the program for middle school students and has gotten inquiries from surrounding counties interested in setting up their own virtual learning program.

Cookeville, TN - Students in Putnam County are trading the traditional classroom setting to attend class in cyberspace, thanks to a new Putnam County's new Virtual Learning Program, known as VITAL, or "Virtual Instruction to Accentuate Learning." The computer-based program has been around for several years in other parts of the country and is now available in several school systems in Tennessee, including four schools within the Putnam County school system.

VITAL substitutes the conventional classroom setting with a similar class curriculum, but students do all their work on a computer. Their work is observed by an onsite facilitator. When students complete sections or units of their work, teachers at an off-site location outside Putnam County grade the work, give them feedback and assign grades. The program got underway in the spring of 2008, with 89 students enrolled and has since expanded to nearly 200 students enrolled for the fall semester!

Students can utilize the program for credit recovery, which allows them to catch up with their fellow students if they have to repeat a class, or for credit advancement, which allows students to take on new material in the hopes of graduating early or even carry dual enrollment with the college of their choice. The program is proving to be quite popular and is allowing students to thrive in unexpected ways. "Some of our students who had been struggling found success online and it has increased their confidence in the classroom," explains Sharon Anderson, Virtual Learning Coordinator for Putnam County Schools.

Funded by a grant from the State Department of Education, the future of VITAL looks strong. Putnam County is in the process of starting a pilot version of the program for middle school students and has gotten inquiries from surrounding counties interested in setting up their own virtual learning program. And no one is happier about the success of the program than Sharon Anderson.

"With this program, we have a unique opportunity to impact students in a new way," she says. "I left the classroom to become the Virtual Learning Coordinator, and there are very few things that could have lured me out of the classroom!"

About TN 95:

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