

SCHOOLS

Akron offers charter-school options to combat dropouts, transfers

By Doug Livingston
Beacon Journal education writer



Published: March 13, 2015 - 11:26 PM

By Doug Livingston

Beacon Journal education writer



The Akron public school district has a new plan to slow, if not reverse, the flow of students and state dollars to charter schools.

The district has launched a four-month pilot program to provide online courses through a Columbus area charter school and an educational service center near Cleveland.

Administrators hope to populate the program with 300 elementary students they've identified as living in Akron but either home-schooled or attending a

charter school.

Another 40 Akron high school students who have fallen behind on graduation credits will be able to log onto computers in school buildings to take classes they still need. The hope is that they will not drop out to enroll in a dropout recovery charter school, most run in a similar fashion by Akron-based White Hat Management.

Together, virtual and dropout recovery charter schools account for roughly 40 percent of the 3,409 students and \$28.3 million in state funding Akron Public Schools loses to charter schools.

"That is the reality of the situation," Superintendent David James said after publicly announcing the pilot program this week. "We are in a competitive world."

The plan

Akron administrators deliberately waited to announce the program until families had been contacted, though few have signed up or attended the first two of four informational sessions.

Administrators didn't want to attract students who are not suited for online learning, which requires a certain level of independence and motivation from the student and a commitment from the family.

The program would offer current Akron high school students a school-based, online education provided by the Virtual Community School of Ohio, an online charter school overseen by Reynoldsburg Local School District near Columbus.

The elementary students would engage teachers and classmates on remote discussion boards and electronic messaging through [Lincoln Interactive](#), an online curriculum provider to be administered by the Cuyahoga County Educational Service Center.

James said state funding following the students, which would be less for the online-only either partner.

igital Academy, which Akron teachers and

Read how you want
Only 99 cents for [Ohio.com](#)



administrators founded in 2002. This time, the school board is creating an additional course option, not an independent charter school that would compete with Akron Public Schools for students and money.

James said the wide array of extracurricular activities and educational options in Akron Public Schools could appeal to students.

Students languish online

Akron Public Schools is again attempting to succeed where so many online endeavors have failed.

Other Ohio school districts and a handful of for-profit companies have embraced online charter schools as the remedy for Ohio's dropout dilemma.

However, the proliferation of these schools has been accompanied instead by an increase in dropouts, **pushing Ohio in a direction opposite from the national rate.**

The revolving door of dropouts at the computer-driven online charter schools makes it difficult to track whether they help or hurt student learning; 14 of Ohio's 24 online charter schools received no graduation and academic grades on last year's state report cards because of low or turbulent enrollment.

The 10 that did have scores were among the worst in Ohio.

The highest graduation rate in the group was 23 percentage points below the state average.

The group's average academic score on state tests was 71 percent, comparable to the high-poverty urban districts of Cincinnati, Akron and Canton and better than Cleveland, Dayton, Youngstown, Columbus and Toledo public schools. However, more than three-quarters of students who attend the online charter schools live outside Ohio's Urban 8 school districts, so the students are not comparable.

Two, the Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT) and Ohio Virtual Academy (OVA), enroll 21 percent of Ohio's roughly 123,500 charter school students.

ECOT and OVA are run by Altair Learning Management and Virginia-based K12, Inc., respectively. They rank last among all 2,565 Ohio schools — charter and traditional public — in terms of how much the typical student learns in a year, according to the Ohio Department of Education's value-added index scores.

OVA and ECOT accounted for more than half of all Ohio students who dropped out last year.

Doug Livingston can be reached at 330-996-3792 or dlivingston@thebeaconjournal.com.

Click here to read or leave a comment(s) on this story.



Get the daily **Ohio.com** newsletter in your inbox:

Subscribe

MORE IN NEWS

Cuyahoga Falls Facebook group bands together to help others

10 city schools now receive no busing as Akron must cater to 29 charter, private schools
- 12:09 PM

Boating, fishing, hiking, nature-watching at new 400-acre park near Lodi outlet mall

Jeb Bush says Donald Trump 'uninformed,' not a serious candidate

A longtime hub of East Akron services, former EACH building finds new life

MORE IN NEWS >

EDITORS' PICKS

Cuyahoga Falls Facebook group bands together to help others

One. Two. Three. Say cheesy. We want to see your awkward family Christmas photos

10 city schools now receive no busing as Akron must cater to 29 charter, private schools
- 12:09 PM

Torn about starting again, Browns quarterback Josh McCown is seeking sweep against Ravens on Monday night

Boating, fishing, hiking, nature-watching at new 400-acre park near Lodi outlet mall



See notices from your local paper and others throughout Ohio at publicnoticesohio.com.

PUBLIC NOTICES OHIO

A blue rectangular banner. On the left, white text reads "See notices from your local paper and others throughout Ohio at publicnoticesohio.com." On the right, the text "PUBLIC NOTICES OHIO" is written in white. To the right of the text is a circular logo for the Ohio Newspaper Association (ONA). The logo contains the text "OHIO NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION" around the perimeter and "ONAH" in the center, with "1953" below it.

Real Estate

SEARCH →

Tallmadge \$177,000



[View Listing](#)

Akron \$99,900



[View Listing](#)

MOST READ STORIES

24 hrs

7 days

Cuyahoga Falls Facebook group bands together to help others

Torn about starting again, Browns quarterback Josh McCown is seeking sweep against Ravens on Monday night

University of Akron soccer: Two own goals, 19 corner kicks later, Zips advance to NCAA quarterfinals with victory over SMU

Police identify suspects in Akron strip club shooting

Suspected burglar dies in chimney after resident lights fire

LeBron's game-winning shot continues to bury the notion that Cavs' superstar wilts in the clutch

Police: Woman, boyfriend arrested after secret room used as meth lab found in home with children

Top business leaders to counsel University of Akron

10 city schools now receive no busing as Akron must cater to 29 charter, private schools

Boating, fishing, hiking, nature-watching at new 400-acre park near Lodi outlet mall

[Read More >>](#)

Our Site:

Akron
Beacon
Journal
Ohio.com

[News](#) • [Sports](#) • [Entertainment](#) • [Photos](#) • [Archives](#) • [Writers](#) • [Lifestyle | Feature](#) • [Videos](#) • [Business](#) • [Editorial](#) • [Obituaries](#)

Web2PDF

converted by Web2PDFConvert.com

Subscriptions/Feedback
Advertisers/US/Feedback

© 2015 The American Express Company, 250 Greenwich Street, New York, NY 10007

