

## EMBRACING ONLINE LEARNING: SOLVING FOR OVERCROWDING AND IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS DISTRICTWIDE

### Case Study—Falcon School District 49

#### CHALLENGE

Faced with fast-growing enrollment and overcrowded schools, Colorado Springs' Falcon School District 49 launched its first online school, Falcon Virtual Academy (FVA), in August 2010, to offer students more education options.

Schools were at 103 percent capacity and, as a floor-funded district with little bond capacity, Falcon had minimal resources for accommodating students in their brick-and-mortar buildings. School administrators believed the launch of FVA was a first step to solve overcrowding. But equally important, they believed that a full-time online and blended learning program would provide students the opportunity for “individualized learning” that focused on students’ specific social and academic needs.

Falcon Virtual Academy opened with 59 students and in just three years, enrollment has surged to 420 full-time students. Administrators quickly added a part-time online program, and recently opened a blended learning facility centrally located in the district that was designed especially for FVA students interested in face-to-face instruction and support.

In addition, FVA has attracted students throughout Colorado. “We have students who are not in our district who are in the full-time online program,” says Kim McClelland, Assistant Superintendent and Innovation Leader of the iConnect Innovation Zone in Falcon School District 49. “We also have kids from all over the city and from other districts who come to our 20,000-square-foot facility for blended and enrichment education.”

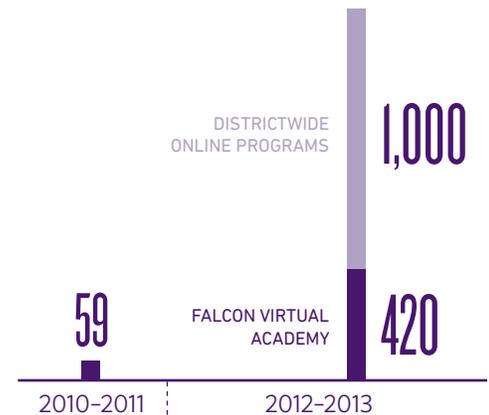
Adds FVA Principal David Knoche, “We are a very crowded school district, and Falcon Virtual Academy has provided us with some real options to deal with outgrowing our buildings while keeping students moving forward academically. We also knew we needed to address a population of kids not being served effectively in the district. FVA provided another way to help kids be successful.”

To say that District 49 has embraced online education would be an understatement. The rapid success of FVA spurred the district to launch multiple online learning programs for its more than 15,000 students across more than 20 elementary, middle, and high schools, academies, and learning centers. These districtwide programs are designed to solve an array of pressing problems, as well as offer a robust course catalog.

#### SOLUTION

Falcon School District 49 chose the K<sup>12</sup> curriculum for its elementary and middle school students, and the Aventa Learning by K<sup>12</sup> curriculum for its high school students at Falcon Virtual Academy. Another reason the district decided to partner with K<sup>12</sup> was that

### FALCON SCHOOL DISTRICT STUDENTS USING ONLINE LEARNING



Increase in Mid-Year Science and Reading Scantron Results Across All Grades at Falcon Virtual Academy Over Start of School Year Results



2012-2013

**“We have families who know the curriculum—love the curriculum—and they came to us because we were using K<sup>12</sup>.”**

#### Kim McClelland

Assistant Superintendent and Innovation Leader  
iConnect Innovation Zone  
Falcon School District 49



administrators knew K<sup>12</sup>'s curricula, services, and technology would scale and support a variety of online models and programs for all of its students.

“We needed an online program that built a bridge to the entire city of Colorado Springs by offering education options to students,” explains McClelland. “The district also chose K<sup>12</sup> because we could provide the K<sup>12</sup> and Aventa curriculum to our brick-and-mortar schools through a variety of different programs to help serve every type of learner.”

McClelland saw the opportunity to address the unique needs of each school in the district. With the help of a task force and the district's iConnect Solutions Manager, she conducted needs assessments and developed customized online programs for each school. McClelland remarks, “It's been a wonderful partnership with K<sup>12</sup>. We get the experts in the curriculum world and the experts in our world together in order to provide the best possible options for our schools.”

Today, the district's online portfolio serves more than 1,400 students and includes:

- **Full-time Virtual Academy:** K-12 students participate in full-time, online instruction at home, supported by state-certified teachers.
- **Part-time Virtual Academy:** K-12 students participate in a minimum of three online courses with the support of a state-certified teacher. The other courses are taken at home, supervised by parents.
- **Supplemental Online:** This program option is for students who choose to take an online course for enrichment toward graduation.
- **Credit Recovery:** High school students take online courses to recover credits in order to graduate on time.
- **Blended Model:** Recently launched, the new “blended” program allows students to take online courses at home and also attend the district's new facility two to three days a week.
- **Response to Intervention:** This multi-level instructional and behavioral system, which uses online assessments, lessons, and tools to bridge between general education and special education, is designed to prevent student failure.
- **Gifted and Talented:** K-6 students may accelerate their curriculum in their strength areas as identified through online assessments. Middle and high school students may also take accelerated courses or opt for concurrent enrollment with Pikes Peak Community College.

## RESULTS

In addition to increasing enrollment sevenfold in three years, Falcon Virtual Academy students have improved their Scantron performance and Transitional Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP) scores:

- Across all grades, FVA students have increased their mid-year Science and Reading Scantron performance scores by 35 percent since the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year.
- In 2011-2012, 38 percent of students in grades 9-12 received “Proficient” and “Advanced” TCAP scores in Science—up from 20 percent in 2010-2011.
- Also, in 2011-2012, students in grades 6-8 made significant gains in TCAP scores in Reading, Math, and Writing over the prior year score, and third-grade students outperformed both district and state averages for TCAP scores in Reading.

## CLIENT PROFILE

### Falcon School District 49

**LOCATION:** Colorado Springs, Colorado

**ENROLLMENT:** 15,000+ students

**SCHOOLS:** More than 20 elementary/middle/high schools, learning centers, and academies

**CHALLENGE:** Solve for overcrowded schools; provide individualized learning for challenged and advanced students both districtwide and across the state

**RESULT:** Since opening full-time Falcon Virtual Academy in 2010, enrollment, TCAP, and Scantron scores have increased; since implementing multiple online programs across the district, more than 1,400 students have participated

“We have kids who have never had success starting to really enjoy school and progressing ... we have definitely seen increases in student outcomes.”

**David Knoche**  
Principal  
Falcon Virtual Academy



“We have kids who have never had success starting to really enjoy school and progressing,” says Knoche. “We have definitely seen increases in student outcomes, not only in addressing students’ deficits through our Response to Intervention Program, but also with kids at the top of the curriculum who need more of a challenge.”

Further, Falcon’s district high schools have been very successful with both credit recovery and original credit online courses. In 2012-2013, more than 500 students recovered 300 courses and completed more than 200 original credit courses.

McClelland reports, “For Falcon School District, this equates to more than three full-time teachers and 20 classes where students don’t need to take up a seat in a traditional classroom. We predict that with the success of the districtwide initiative this past year, more than 600 students in our high schools will take advantage of blended original credit courses in the 2013-2014 school year.”

## K<sup>12</sup> PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

**K<sup>12</sup>® Full-Time Curriculum** incorporates the best research and usability testing to most effectively present instruction online. Covering all core subjects—plus five academic levels and dozens of electives for high school—K<sup>12</sup> courses address the differing ways that students learn by engaging them with animation, game simulations, avatars, threaded online discussion groups, video lectures, online debates, and more. For grades K-8, hands-on materials—ranging from K<sup>12</sup> produced textbooks to science equipment, CDs, maps, art supplies, and classic literature—are tightly integrated with online lessons. Plus, adaptive courses in math and reading for select elementary grades intelligently adjust to individual skill- and knowledge-levels.

**Aventa Learning® by K<sup>12</sup> Curriculum** includes high-quality, standards-based online courses for middle and high school. Covering all core subjects, world languages, and electives, more than 170 self-paced Aventa courses feature a rich multimedia format that includes graphics, avatars, simulations, and videos to help keep students engaged and motivated to learn. Courses can be hosted on virtually all major learning management platforms.

**Aventa Learning® by K<sup>12</sup> Credit Recovery** provides schools with a flexible, cost-effective way to help students pass courses and receive the credits they need to graduate from high school. Through the diagnostic-driven model, unit-level assessments measure mastery of critical concepts in 19 courses, allowing students to bypass topics they previously mastered and focus on more difficult concepts.

## Falcon Virtual Academy Blended Learning Facility Colorado Springs, CO



## ABOUT K<sup>12</sup> FOR SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS

K12 Inc. (NYSE: LRN), a technology-based education company, is the nation’s largest provider of proprietary curriculum and online education programs for students in kindergarten through high school. Using 21<sup>st</sup>-century tools to prepare 21<sup>st</sup>-century students, K<sup>12</sup> provides a new choice for students to learn in a flexible and innovative way, at an individualized pace. K<sup>12</sup> provides curricula and academic services to public and private online schools and districts, traditional classrooms, blended school programs, and directly to families. K<sup>12</sup> is accredited

through AdvancED, the world’s largest education community. For more than a decade, K<sup>12</sup> has partnered with over 2,000 school districts in all 50 states to provide research-based online learning, including curriculum development, instruction, assessment, school management, and educator support.

For more information, call us at **866.912.8588**  
or visit us at **K12.com/educators**.