

## USA (Ohio)

**The North Union Academic Advancement Opportunities**

*North Union Local Schools has initiated a Comprehensive Educational Academic Advancement Programme which aims to meet the educational desires of any and all students. Students are encouraged to take a more challenging middle and high school academic course load to be better prepared to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and to develop social and critical thinking skills. All students have the autonomy to plan an individualized learning plan that meets their individual needs. A variety of advancement options are offered to these secondary students, including: credit flexibility, flexible scheduling and extended school day options, on-line and correspondence course offerings, dual enrolment and post-secondary educational options, and a pilot “schools without failure” programme wherein students are not permitted to fail. The school aims to help every student reach his/her full potential regardless of ability level and actively encourages community & parental involvement.*

**Main Focus of Innovation:** RESOURCES, ORGANIZATION

**Other Keywords:** technology-rich

**General Information**

**Name of the ILE:** The North Union Academic Advancement Opportunities

**Location/Address:** North Union Local School District Office, 12920 St. Rt. 739, Richwood, OH 43344

**Website:** n-union.k12.oh.us

**ILE submitted by:** Curriculum Director

**Rationale**

*Why do you suggest that it should be included in the project? How does it respond to 21<sup>st</sup> century learning challenges?*

North Union Local Schools has initiated a Comprehensive *Educational Academic Advancement* Program which meets the educational desires of any and all students. The program has been widely publicized and includes each of the following advancement options for secondary students:

1. Middle School Classes for High School Credit (and increase of one course to eight)
2. Credit Flexibility/Testing Out of any class offered in the district. Testing out is available by additional options including successful passage of one or more Advanced Placement Test and Testing Out of College Classes where a comparable class is available at the high school.
3. Piloting “Schools Without Failure”, program or a standards based approach to education where students are not permitted to fail.
4. Flexible Scheduling Options which include a. Early Bird Classes, b. Extended Day Classes, c. Evening Classes, d. Saturday Classes, e. Summer Classes and f. Non-Traditional School Year Classes.
5. On-line classes are available for students in grades 5 – 12 and are listed in the student Course Selection Program and On-line.
6. Correspondence Course Offerings.
7. Educational Options for credit including travel, internships, summer employment and more.
8. A list of Dual Enrolment Options allowing high school students to take advantage of earning high school and college credit at the same time by taking college level classes at the high school. Evening dual enrolment classes are open to students both within and outside the district allowing other high school students to earn dual enrolment credits as well.
9. Post Secondary Educational Options opportunities allowing students to attend local colleges or universities, earning both high school and college credits.

The program allows students to earn college credits while attending their four years of high school. Graduates from class of 2012 have the potential to graduate with enough college credits to enter college as sophomores and possibly juniors!

One challenge is to recognize that all children do not arrive at the same learning place at the same time. Students who would like to advance or accelerate their academic progress and customize their educational path have great latitude under the North Union Academic Advancement plan. Middle School students can earn high school credits, high school students can take classes at high school during regular operating hours, take classes early or late, take classes via correspondence courses, take classes on line, test out of classes, can create their own project for class credit, internship, or special study plan via educational options (initiating the North Union Local Ohio Senior Capstone Project), take dual credit courses for high school AND college credit simultaneously, and/or take college courses for college and high school credit! Parent and student meetings, school newsletters, local newspapers, information on the Ohio Department of Education website and Ohio Secondary School Administrators website are all being used to communicate the opportunities that are available in the North Union Local School System. The possibilities are being well established and the benefits for North Union students and all Ohio students are unlimited!

**Learning Aims / Intended Learning Outcomes of the ILE**

*What are the core learning aims and which knowledge, skills or attitudes are to be acquired? (These may include outcomes related to learners' social, interpersonal, or meta-cognitive development)*

Our goal is for all students to take a more challenging middle and high school academic course load and to be better prepared to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by being college and/or workplace ready! We want all students to have the autonomy to plan an individualized school plan that meets their individual needs and serves as a launch pad for their life goals!

Students are evaluating, accessing, planning, setting goals and creating multi-year, individualized plans designed to assist them in reaching their full potential. Students are now taking ownership and have more control than ever on course work, scheduling and career direction and planning, all at an earlier age!

**Learners**

*Which group(s) of learners is it aiming at? Who is eligible to take part? How many learners are there? What are their ages?*

The Academic Advancement Opportunities are targeted for every student who is contemplating attending a college or tech school by giving them opportunities for advanced preparation and success before leaving high school. We are focusing on helping EVERY STUDENT reach and perform at his/her academic best regardless of ability level. When students have more control over their decisions, they accept more responsibility for their success with a more invested level of engagement.

Eventually every student in the district will be eligible and will have their needs met. Initially every student in grades 7 – 12 can benefit from the Academic Advancement opportunities. Every student can take advantage of the diverse educational structure and academic services beyond the traditional “in the box” systematic thinking. Paradigms have shifted and the culture has changed in an exciting way to allow students to learn and progress at a manner that best suits the needs and interest of the learners!

**Facilitators**

*Who are the teachers/facilitators? Who are the leaders? What are their professional backgrounds? What are their roles?*

All teachers across the district are being in-serviced on the various options for student advancement, what the requirements are, what procedures and timelines should be followed, and how to advise students academically. Teachers have also been in-serviced on Schools Without Failure and how the needs of all students can be met in a flexible and academically productive manner.

All teachers and administrators are actively involved by encouraging every student to be lifelong learners and participate in the program. It is a culture change, an opportunity to make personal decisions and have the opportunity to participate in more challenging classes. Students are only limited by the choices they make and the work ethic and desire they display in gaining the best possible education! They work at their own pace and are taking a greater voice in who they are and what they want to do.

### **Organization of the ILE**

*How is learning organised? How do learners and facilitators interact? What kind of pedagogy do they follow? What curriculum is used?*

Learning is standards based and assessments are being developed based on the Ohio Performance Assessment Pilot; the district secondary math and science departments are Pilot Program Participants.

Students who can take advantage of academic acceleration or advancement are identified by administrators, guidance counsellors and teachers. Parents receive information by email, school newsletters, the local newspaper, and our Honeywell mass phone call system. Evening meetings are helped for parents, small group meetings are scheduled during the day with grade level cohort students groups to explain options and encourage students to take advantage of the options.

Our goal is for 100% of all students to pass 100% of all classes. Students are expected to complete all assignments at a “C” level or better and pass all assessments with a “C” or better. Instructional practices including GAPPING, Extended School Day and Instructional Reassignment Systems are all being used to ensure students demonstrate an acceptable level of proficiency and a high level of initiative and work ethic.

### **Learning Context**

*In which context does learning take place? What does the physical learning environment look like? Are community resources used to facilitate learning and how?*

North Union Local Schools is an area leader in the use of Instructional Technology with Smart Boards in every classroom, wireless buildings throughout the district, student response devices available at all levels and each building. Learning includes on-line classes, distance learning classes, and an abundance of personal computers available in classrooms, media centres, in computers labs, and on mobile computer carts. Classes are being offered before school, after school, evenings and during non-traditional times.

Partnerships exist between colleges and the district, between county children’s services organizations, with business partnerships and with community professionals who participate as partners in the Educational Options programs for credit.

Parents are intimately involved with their child in the scheduling process. In some instances parents cover the cost of such programs as correspondence courses, educational options, some on-line course work, dual enrolment classes and more. At the first meeting to explain the North Union Academic Advancement and Acceleration opportunities parents turned out for a “standing room only” program. The program will be repeated at least twice a year.

### **History of ILE**

*Who initiated it? For what reasons was it started and with what purpose? Have these changed since?*

Initiation in the North Union Local Schools is shared among the administrative team, the board of education, and the teaching staff; they are met with strong support from the community. Everyone benefits from an education system where there is great flexibility and opportunities to help students determine their own direction, chart their own progress and progress at their own pace!

The process was started to *Raise the Rigor* and meet the needs of all students regardless of how diverse the needs and interests of each individual student might be. Initially our goal is for 20% of our students to graduate having earned enough college credits to be classified as college sophomores or juniors. Another 20% will graduate with enough college credits to have completed one semester of college, and 70% or more students to graduate with some college credit on their transcripts. We have also raised the North Union graduation requirement from 21 credits to 26 credits for the current freshmen class.

The support of the staff has been excellent, the parent support and interest is also very high because not only do students earn college credits, they also can save up to two years of college expenses while living at home and attending high school and/or college at a fraction of the cost. Student interest has also been high and we are excited to see the number of students who choose to take advantage of this developing program.

**Funding of the ILE**

*How is it funded?*

The Academic Advancement and Acceleration program is district and parent/family funded. No additional financial resources are used.

**Learning Outcomes**

*What are the learning outcomes achieved by the ILE, including academic, social, interpersonal and meta-cognitive outcomes? How is learning assessed?*

It is clearly evident that students arrive at different learning places at different times, and to best serve all students a variety of educational instructional options must be created. The initial response at North Union Local Schools has been overwhelmingly supportive and appreciative. Now more than ever students can approach their secondary and collegiate education in a variety of ways, ways that meet the needs of the learner first!

Initially the increase in the number of students who choose to take advantage of one or more of the nine Academic Advancement or Acceleration opportunities will launch our program. Each year students (grades 9 – 11) participate in a high school survey seeking information regarding student opinions on educational practices and preferences. A similar survey is given to seniors during graduation rehearsal week, and a third survey is given to all members of the student council during the Annual Government Day each spring. Students pass judgment on options, practices and make recommendations based upon educational trends that they feel would benefit students.