



Executive Summary

DoDEA Virtual High School

New York/Virginia/Puerto Rico District

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Introduction

Every school has its own story to tell. The context in which teaching and learning takes place influences the processes and procedures by which the school makes decisions around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The context also impacts the way a school stays faithful to its vision. Many factors contribute to the overall narrative such as an identification of stakeholders, a description of stakeholder engagement, the trends and issues affecting the school, and the kinds of programs and services that a school implements to support student learning.

The purpose of the Executive Summary (ES) is to provide a school with an opportunity to describe in narrative form the strengths and challenges it encounters. By doing so, the public and members of the school community will have a more complete picture of how the school perceives itself and the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement. This summary is structured for the school to reflect on how it provides teaching and learning on a day to day basis.

Description of the School

Describe the school's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the school serves?

The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) is a federally operated school system providing educational programs on behalf of the United States Department of Defense (DoD). DoDEA operates 181 accredited schools in 12 foreign countries, 7 states, Guam and Puerto Rico. DoDEA students are the children of active duty military personnel and DoD civilians. Approximately 15,000 employees serve more than 78,000 DoDEA students worldwide.

As a function of the DoDEA, the DoDEA Virtual High School (DVHS) services all 46 secondary schools across the agency's three areas (Europe, Pacific, and the Americas). In addition, students from many of the agencies middle schools take DVHS classes for high school credit (20 middle schools in School Year (SY) 14-15). DVHS has grown from 727 total enrollments during SY 10-11 to 2462 total enrollments in SY 14-15. The total number of faculty and staff has increased to accommodate the total enrollments which have more than tripled during that time. The responsibility of providing instruction for the Online Summer Program was added to DVHS in Summer 2012. Prior to that time, the program, which was established to provide students at risk of failing to meet graduation requirements the opportunity to replace a failing grade or to fulfill a course requirement, was offered via a contracted service. During summer 2014 DVHS offered 32 semester courses with 983 student enrollments.

DVHS students are located on several continents in many countries across different time zones with over sixty percent of our students located in Europe. The DVHS supports the Non DoDDS School Program (NDSP) by servicing students located in countries without DoDEA schools. This expands our geographical reach to locations such as Africa, Australia and South America. By the nature of the community served, the school population is diverse and transient; military students have a mobility rate of about 31%. Various methods of communication and information delivery are utilized to facilitate the geographic and time zone challenges. Additionally, teachers meet the challenge of maintaining fourteen different academic calendars to accommodate local school timelines.

An analysis of the data as of February 2015 shows that our student population is 56% female and 44% male. Twelfth graders comprise our largest group of students (43%) followed by juniors (27%), sophomores (17%), freshmen (6%) and the remaining 6% of students are 7th or 8th graders taking high school courses for credit. Student sponsor reporting on racial categories indicate 60% white, 12% multi-racial, 10% African American, 9% Asian, 1% Pacific Islander, 1% Native American and the remaining declining to state.

Since DVHS is a supplemental school to DoDEA brick and mortar schools, the majority of our students (over 70%) take one class with us. Smaller percentages (18%) take two classes and the remaining students taking multiple classes. DVHS students are expected to have a dedicated period for their online class during the regular school day at their onsite schools.

Approximately 20% of DVHS students are enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Enrollment in AP courses has grown 121%, from 187 enrollments in SY 10-11 to 414 enrollments in SY 14-15. This increase is due in part to the addition of seven AP course offerings bringing our total AP courses to 18. During that time, DVHS overall course offerings have expanded from 48 course offerings in SY 10-11 to 68 course offerings in SY 14-15. In addition, DVHS now offers specific courses out of sequence (e.g. first semester of Geometry during Spring Semester) to provide students at risk of failing to meet graduation requirements an opportunity to retake the semester course and replace credits for failing grades.

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To support the operations of a global virtual high school the DVHS employs fifty-two staff members physically located in three hubs (Europe, Pacific and the Americas). The America's hub in Quantico, Virginia, includes a principal, assistant principal, district educational technologist (ET), lead and support instructional designers, counselors, a special education specialist, and administrative staff in addition to fifteen teachers. Counselors, the special education specialist, the district ET and instructional designers are located in DDESS to provide centralized support in close proximity to DoDEA Headquarters. This facilitates coordination of services across all three Areas and collaboration on curriculum and professional development issues. The European hub, located in Sembach, Germany, is staffed with an assistant principal, educational technologist and fifteen teachers. The Pacific hub, located in Okinawa, Japan, is staffed with an assistant principal, educational technologist and four teachers. The virtual school program is overseen by the Chief of Virtual School and Distance Learning who is located at DoDEA headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia.

DVHS staff embraces the challenges that come with working with children of active duty service members, and our courses provide continuity for those students whose families change stations during the school year. In addition to the course content knowledge and skills our students gain, they also obtain life-long skills such as online collaboration and digital literacy.

DVHS is uniquely challenged by having staff physically located in three separate hubs in three separate time zones. This challenge is continually addressed through cross hub meetings and collaboration via email, phone, web and video-conferencing. These same tools are used to provide real time instructional support with our students. The awareness of a shared culture, vision, purpose and direction is evident in our motto of "One Mission, One Vision, One School."

School's Purpose

Provide the school's purpose statement and ancillary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs. Describe how the school embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students.

DoDEA Mission

Educate, Engage, and Empower each student to succeed in a dynamic world

DoDEA Virtual High School Vision:

To prepare our students to live, learn, work, and serve the public good in a digital, global society through engaging, synchronous and asynchronous instruction

Motto

One Mission, One Vision, One School

Guiding Principles

V = Virtual and Versatile

I = Interactive, integrated, and Individualized Instruction that is

R = Relevant and Realistic; focused on

T = Twenty-first Century Skills with

U = Useful feedback through a balance of

A = Assessments on student performance to develop

L = Life-Long Learners

Purpose Statement: The Department of Defense Education Activity Virtual High School (DVHS) is centrally managed by the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) Headquarters Education Directorate. Students enrolled in the DVHS Program receive access to high school courses not available at a DoDEA school or in overseas locations not supported by DoDEA schools through the NDSP. In very limited circumstances, in locations not served by DoDEA schools, students may complete graduation requirements and receive a DVHS diploma. Also, military dependent students who have recently transferred from DoDDS Schools to U.S. Public Schools may continue courses not available in the local public schools, on a tuition-paying basis according to new legislation enacted by Congress and implemented in SY14-15. The DVHS adheres to all DoDEA regulations.

The DVHS is structured to support rather than to replace the local DoDEA school curriculum. Students who take courses with the DVHS (other than through the NDSP) do so with the understanding that their primary enrollment is in the local DoDEA school and that coursework is supplemental to their enrollment in their local school.

Though the DVHS program is designed to support local DoDEA schools, the DVHS is a fully accredited school with diploma-granting rights. As such, it fully supports the guiding mission of DoDEA: to "Educate, Engage, and Empower each student to succeed in a dynamic world." The vision statement and guiding principles of the DVHS are structured and aligned to the DoDEA mission, and the DVHS staff is fully committed to uphold the DVHS vision: "To prepare our students to live, learn, work, and serve the public good in a digital, global society through engaging, synchronous and asynchronous instruction."

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The DVHS culture is one that is based on shared values and beliefs, one that supports challenging, equitable and adaptable digital educational programs and learning experiences for all students. Beyond this, the DVHS culture emphasizes the achievement of learning, critical thinking, and life skills for both students and teachers. The acronym Virtual contains the core values of our guiding principles.

Our Continuous School Improvement (CSI) process is such that all stakeholder groups (given the constraints of our system) work collaboratively and consistently in authentic and meaningful ways that build and sustain ownership of the school's purpose and direction. All improvement goals are aligned with DoDEA's CSP and its Director's priorities: each has measurable performance targets, and the process includes action planning that identifies measurable objectives, strategies, activities, and resources for achieving all improvement goals. Our personnel hold one another accountable for and evaluate the overall quality of the implementation of all interventions and strategies. Additionally, we have clearly defined expectations for student learning which are aligned with our vision and fully supported by school personnel and the external stakeholders in the schools which we support. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and school effectiveness.

The evidence indicates the DVHS has a commitment to instructional practices in the digital learning environment that include active student engagement, a focus on depth of understanding and the application of knowledge and skills, all aspects of "learning to live, learn, work, and serve the public good in a digital, global society." Our commitment goes beyond the curriculum and concentrates on the whole child. DVHS teachers and counselors, facilitators, and administration meet frequently to address the individual student's success in support of our vision.

As our school is geographically located on three different continents, the importance of a shared set of beliefs and guiding principles is paramount. In order to maintain our strengths, our focus has been on continuous professional development for teacher growth and the use of data to understand and increase student achievement. Commitment to our shared vision in conjunction with strong communication and collaboration practices contribute to unity among the school's three hubs.

Thus, in the spring of 2014, the DVHS developed and adopted a motto that reflects our commitment to the organization, the school and the child: "DVHS: One Mission, One Vision, One School."

On June 8, 2012, in Alconbury, England, three students received the first diplomas granted by the DVHS with one additional student receiving his diploma later that summer. In SY 2012-13, three more students graduated from the DVHS. Last year, there were two graduates, and this year, three more are projected to complete graduation requirements. The purpose of continuous school improvement is to impact student performance and ultimately make a difference in the lives of our students. Twelve graduates in four years may seem a small number, but it speaks in a very large way as to how far the DVHS has evolved from being a supplemental program to becoming a full-time online high school program, one that serves DoDEA students with pride.

Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement

Describe the school's notable achievements and areas of improvement in the last three years. Additionally, describe areas for improvement that the school is striving to achieve in the next three years.

If there's one word which describes the last three-five year notable achievements and areas of improvement for the DoDEA Virtual High School (DVHS) it is growth. The DVHS has grown from 727 total enrollments during SY 10-11 to 2462 enrollments as of February SY 14-15. The total number of faculty and staff has increased to 52 to accommodate the total enrollments which have more than tripled during that time. Additionally, the summer school program has increased and during summer 2014, the summer school served almost 1000 enrollments in 32 separate courses. The number of courses overall for the school year program has increased as well (encompassing courses from Advanced Placement to electives), growing from 48 to the 68 offered SY 14-15. We are planning on five new courses to be added to our offerings for SY 15-16 which will bring our total course offering to 73. Our Advanced Placement enrollments have grown 121% in the same period.

At the same time that we have experienced exponential growth, in the last three years each of the three hubs which comprise the DVHS has successfully moved its respective operations while maintaining its strong sense of vision and values, fully supporting the students enrolled in our courses. In Virginia, our America's hub, originally operating out of DoDEA Headquarters in Arlington, moved to Quantico where it shares the second floor of Burroughs Elementary School with the Quantico/Virginia/Puerto Rico District Office. In Europe, our hub moved from Wiesbaden, Germany, to Sembach, Germany. It is located on the third floor of Sembach Middle School. And in the Pacific, the hub moved from Korea to Okinawa where it is located on the second floor of Ryukyu Middle School. This hub is scheduled to move again at the end of this year into the same building as the Okinawa District Office.

At the beginning of the fall semester 2014, a new Learning Management System (LMS) was implemented into DVHS operations. The new LMS, Schoology, provides a robust and user-friendly online presence to support DVHS instruction and replaces the Blackboard LMS that has been used within DoDEA for the past ten years. To support teacher use of this new platform, training was provided for all DVHS staff during a specially planned face-to-face summer workshop.

We were very pleased that in summer 2014, personnel and staff from all three hubs were able to meet at a three-day workshop which provided essential professional development. For many staff members and teachers this was the first time they were able to meet face-to-face though they may have collaborated online, sometimes for years, to build their programs. The workshop was also successful in building a strong sense of community, and a renewed commitment to a shared purpose, vision and direction. As importantly, it allowed the DVHS to begin the serious practice of analyzing our data. Using ORID, a data protocol developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), is now an embedded practice in the DVHS. Teachers and staff have used the protocol to analyze AP scores, the local assessment, and the common assessments. As an extension, some teachers are using the protocol in their own classrooms, analyzing student performance data in a consistent and documented manner.

While the summer workshop was a formal professional development opportunity, the DVHS staff and teachers have themselves created and maintain less formal professional development. This school year, 14-15, the DVHS teachers created a Professional Learning Community (PLC) through the new Learning Management System, Schoology. While in its infancy, the interest shown in the PLC is strong. More robust in its expression, the DVHS teachers and staff also created a new Mentoring group. Composed of new teachers and staff who are paired with volunteer teachers and staff, the Mentoring Program has proven successful in introducing teachers to online learning and teaching and to DoDEA itself to our programs and our common purpose.

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That common purpose is also present in the work that the DVHS Instructional Designers do with our teachers and staff. Essential to our program, the Instructional Designers are now a part of our professional development programs and our data protocol programs. Deeply involved in the migration of our learning management system (from BlackBoard to Schoology) this summer and this year, our Instructional Designers perform a role unique to DoDEA. With their assistance, new courses have been developed, the migration has been seamless, and our professional development has proven to be robust.

Perhaps most importantly, the DVHS is now a fully-accredited diploma-granting institution, having grown from a supplemental online program. In the last three years, we have proudly awarded nine diplomas and expect to award three more SY 14-15. While this number may seem small, it represents a significant accomplishment, one of which we are proud.

Over the next three years, we've set our goals high and we've much to accomplish. As our learning management system is new to our teachers and staff, much of our staff development will center on learning to utilize Schoology to its fullest potential. Additionally, our goal is to expand teacher data collection and analysis using the ORID protocol--that is, to have greater numbers of teachers using it for class-level assessment and trend analysis. We also plan on encouraging and providing teachers with time to pursue informal professional development opportunities which lead to greater student achievement in the classroom. And we plan on collaborating with our Instructional Designers to develop courses which meet the needs of our students (courses like those which will be published next year: AVID and College Prep, AP Human Geography, and two new math courses to prepare students for DoDEA's CCSR/Common Core implementation).

Keeping in mind DoDEA's Community Strategic Plan and its two priorities of

- 1) strengthening DoDEA's standards-based educational system by transitioning to: college- and career-ready standards that are infused with rigor and relevancy; and a common standards-aligned curriculum, instructional framework and assessment system; and
- 2) establishing the organizational capacity to uniformly improve student achievement and school operations

the DVHS has set a primary DoDEA goal for itself: that each DVHS course is intimately aligned with the College and Career Readiness Skills that DoDEA deems essential for future academic and career success. As DoDEA continues its focus on standards based curriculum and a systemic approach to instruction and assessment, the continued alignment of the DVHS curriculum with the DoDEA adopted curriculum is paramount. Throughout, collection and analysis of data which informs our understanding will be an essential component of DVHS practice.

Additional Information

Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.

As a virtual online school, the DVHS deals with change on numerous fronts. We adapt to technological changes that involve course delivery and development tools; we confront challenges related to rapid growth; and we adjust to new surroundings. In SY 2014-15, all of our courses were moved from our previous learning management system (LMS), Blackboard, to a new LMS (Schoology). The growth in our student population has resulted in an increase of DVHS staff members each year and additionally we have physically moved all three hubs in the past five years. The DVHS commitment to flexibility is a key component of our successful adaptation to change.

In addition to providing online courses for students during the regular school year, the DVHS has the responsibility of providing instruction for the DoDEA online summer high school program. In 2005, the Department of Defense Education Activity Online Summer High School Program was established to provide students who were at risk of not meeting graduation requirements the opportunity to replace a failing grade or fulfill a course requirement. Prior to 2012, the summer program was operated by a contracted vendor. Beginning with the 2012 summer program, DVHS became responsible for providing the online summer high school program and for selecting the summer school staff from DoDEA face-to-face institutions as well as from DVHS online instructors.

Being part of the summer school program has not only provided a professional development opportunity for local school DoDEA teachers and counselors who work for DVHS in the summer but has also provided an opportunity for teachers and counselors to become more familiar with the DVHS program. Teaching in summer school allows DoDEA instructors to cultivate the skills necessary to deliver digital content to students in an online or blended format. The six week summer school format is designed for students to complete the equivalent of one semester course credit. The program was expanded in summer 2013 to allow motivated DoDEA high school students the opportunity to continue learning throughout the summer and to earn "original credit" for identified semester courses. (Original credit refers to a student's first attempt to earn a course credit.)

Additionally, the DVHS involvement with the Non DoDDS School Program (NDSP) has grown over the last five years. We began collaborating with the NDSP department in SY 10-11 as an option for this unique population when five students were enrolled as a supplement to their international school's curriculum. During that same school year we became a comprehensive diploma granting institution. As a result, DVHS became the primary school for four students who received a diploma at the end of the school year. Currently, there are 23 NDSP students taking 64 classes three of which are advanced placement. It's anticipated that three more NDSP students will graduate with a DVHS diplomas in June, 2015.

In January 2013, new legislation was enacted by Congress authorizing the enrollment of students transitioning from an overseas DoDEA-supported program (Department of Defense Dependents Schools [DoDDS]) or Non-DoD Schools Program (NDSP) to a local public school or an accredited educational program in the United States. The legislation specifically states that students are eligible if they were enrolled immediately before such enrollment under section 1402 of the Dependents' Education Act of 1978 (20 U.S.C 921) and are dependents of active-duty Service members. This provision allows a continuity of education for transitioning dependents to complete coursework started in DoDEA schools through enrollment in DVHS. Students may continue current courses of study (or classes) that are not offered in the receiving schools or where scheduling conflicts exist. Enrollment in DVHS courses under this authority is on a tuition-paying basis. The legislation does not apply to dependents transitioning from Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools or schools located in United States territories. DVHS began enrolling students under this new legislation in the spring of 2015. Although initial enrollment

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numbers are small at this point, there is great interest in this opportunity for DODDS students in transition to acquire much needed coursework to earn a high school diploma.

Finally, throughout DoDEA, the new LMS application, Schoology, is also being phased in to support blended delivery in conjunction with face-to-face instruction, informal professional learning communities and online staff professional development. The Schoology LMS also supports online collaboration that is integral to staff professional learning and training opportunities for DoDEA across its disparate locations. As use of the new LMS continues to grow among DoDEA local schools, DVHS will continue to provide support and modeling through its online summer school instruction. The potential for continued growth within DoDEA is also inherent in the DVHS instructional model.