

AN EVALUATION OF A SCHOOL SYSTEM'S EXCURSION
INTO ONLINE INSTRUCTION FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

A Dissertation
By
DEBORAH HARMON KINCAID

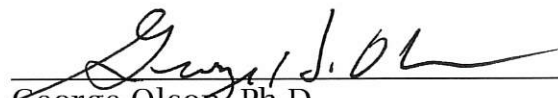
Submitted to the Graduate School
Appalachian State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION


December 2011
Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership

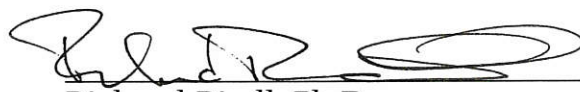
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ABSTRACT

AN EVALUATION OF A SCHOOL SYSTEM'S EXCURSION INTO ONLINE INSTRUCTION FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Online learning continues to grow at a rapid pace at all levels of education. However, K-12 school systems have struggled with placing online courses into traditional schedules, traditional thinking, and traditional instruction.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the implementation of online courses into one school system's five traditional middle schools using these key questions: What steps were needed to implement an online program in middle school? What implementation differences (scheduling, extra time available, DLA appointment and support, number of facilitated courses, administrator perceptions and support, and faculty/staff support) existed among the schools? Were there student characteristics (demographic, classifications, reading achievement levels—EOG scores, prior academic achievement) that can be associated with success in online learning? What were the student outcomes (course participation, EOG scores, time management, technological skills,

preparation for future coursework, high school credits earned)? Which online courses were most effective in fostering academic success? What changes should be implemented for this online program in the future?

Data collection included individual interviews with administrators and distance learning advisors to determine processes and procedures. Student data included test data, course grades, student characteristics, and student perceptions from a survey developed by the school system. This study indicated that the presence of a strong distance learning advisor and a prerequisite online course play a major role in the success of online middle school students.