

Press Release

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COLQUITT COUNTY SCHOOLS
VirtuPack Learning Center

No Walls...Just Options

Moultrie, Georgia – April 6, 2017 - Colquitt County Schools will take another step into the 21st century this fall when it opens the VirtuPack Learning Center, allowing middle and high school students the option to take classes and even graduate from Colquitt County High School without ever setting foot on campus.

Dr. Marni Kirkland, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction described the VirtuPack Learning Center (VLC) as a natural progression for the school system. “As part of living and working in a digital society, it is important to provide options for students that give them experience in that realm,” said Kirkland. “VirtuPack extends the options the school system is able to provide to an increasingly diverse and technology-minded generation of students that will undoubtedly use these skills in their future workplace.”

VLC students will be enrolled at Colquitt County High School, Gray Junior High School, or Williams Middle School but take academic classes through Georgia Virtual School (GaVS), the state’s online charter school, rather than on campus. Elective classes for students in grades 8-12 are also available through GaVS, while students in grades 6-7 will utilize Apex Learning, a computer-based learning platform. VLC students will have access to college classes at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and Southern Regional Technical College via the Move-On-When-Ready program as well.

Allen Edwards, Director of 6-12 Gifted Education for the school district, said VLC meets a need in the community’s changing student population. “We have a number of nontraditional students in our community for whom the public school structure just doesn’t work for whatever reason,” said Edwards. “But they are Colquitt County kids, and they deserve the opportunity to graduate with a Colquitt County High School diploma.”

Edwards hopes VLC will provide a pathway for those students, particularly homeschooled students. “We have a large and growing homeschool community,” said Edwards. “This will allow homeschool students access to a 100-percent free curriculum and the opportunity to participate in our athletics program, clubs, dances, and elective classes while learning at home and maintaining a connection to their homeschool group.”

Other examples of nontraditional students noted by Edwards are students who work fulltime, travel for extracurricular interests, or have extended illnesses necessitating hospital homebound services for one or more semesters.

“We also have a number of students who just don’t care about the traditional high school experience, students who just want to take their classes and graduate but may never attend a football game, sing in the choir, join a club, or go to prom,” said Edwards. “This gives us the flexibility to meet all children where they are, not force them to conform to a one-size-fits-all educational approach.”

This fall, VLC will occupy an unused office at back of the old high school, which will be equipped with 10 laptops for students who do not have home access to the Internet. However, students will not be required to complete course work in the VLC lab. “They can take classes literally anywhere they can get an Internet signal,” said Edwards, who noted similar programs are already in place in some surrounding counties.

Edwards described the program as a “win-win” for the community. “There isn’t much of a downside in creating more options for students,” said Edwards. “This has the potential to impact our graduation rate positively, reduce class sizes at our secondary schools, and pull in students who might look outside of the school district for their academic options.”

Superintendent Doug Howell commented, “We are in an ever-changing time; especially in terms of technology. Education delivery methods can now be much more diverse to meet the needs of our students. We are excited to be able to offer students in our community multiple options to earn a high school diploma.”

For more information on the VirtuPack Learning Center, please contact Allen Edwards at (229) 890-6200 ext. 10074.

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