

Year Started: 2017

Students Enrolled:

Total: 526

High School: 351
(323 full-time, 28 part-time)

Middle School: 175
(166 full-time, 9 part-time)

Instructional Model: Online courses and pre-apprenticeships and/or work-based experiences at training centers and businesses

The Oxford Virtual Academy (OVA) is part of Oxford Community Schools (OCS) and serves seven counties around the state of Michigan. Students can enroll in OVA full-time or part-time. In the 2020–21 school year, OVA served a total of 526 students (489 full-time and 37 part-time), including 351 high school students (323 full-time and 28 part-time) and 175 (166 full-time and 9 part-time) middle school students. OVA’s uses a third-party provider for career-focused education coursework as well as software like TestOut, which is a lab simulation. For their information technology coursework, the school sends students Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator, as well as Autocad and Autodesk 360 Fusion. Depending on the functionalities needed for coursework and other learning opportunities, OVA provides students with hardware, such as computers, and Internet access.

A handful of the OCS CTE teachers teach the OVA career-focused courses. Students have a counselor who helps them navigate their coursework at OVA, while their mentor serves as a cheerleader and coach, providing them structure and support as needed and assisting them with resolving issues. In addition to their career-based courses, students have connections to professionals through independent studies that are set up like project-based learning opportunities. There are some pathways that require work-based learning through training and/or apprenticeships. OCS has access to Nepris now to provide students more opportunities for career exploration. Students also have the option through OVA to be part of the early college program, where students can earn between 60-80 college credits by the time they graduate from high school.

OVA operates only career-focused (career readiness) courses and does not offer career technical education tracks. When they think about CTE the administrators at OVA and OCS believe some of the coursework, if done online, would provide students with more flexibility scheduling-wise. Currently, as Lisa Butts, Director of Career Technical Education at Oxford, explained, “Michigan does not allow CTE programs to be entirely online, so OVA serves as a career readiness program, offering most curriculum online and providing students connections to professionals in the field by way of partnerships with business and industries across the state.” Matt Santala, Assistant Principal of OVA, added, “We believe that in certain programs the entire curriculum could be taught online. But there are certain classes where that hands-on component would potentially be missing if we moved it entirely online.” Butts and Santala regularly work together to brainstorm ways to integrate and expand offerings and flexibility for students. OCS is hoping the state will relax its requirements for state-approved CTE programs. What OCS hopes is that the OVA courses could serve as introductions to the 17 Career Pathways available to students across the state of Michigan.