



K12 Students in Pennsylvania take Credit Recovery, AP, and Enrichment Courses via blendedschools.net and Wimba

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-Mark Gensimore, Project Manager, blendedschools.net

There are 501 school districts in state of Pennsylvania, yet only 46 have an enrollment of 7,500 or more. And if the goliath Philadelphia and Pittsburgh school districts are removed, the average Pennsylvania district has a mere 2,200 students – fewer students than are typically enrolled in a single Philadelphia public high school. Clearly, there are inequities in Pennsylvania schools.

While states like Virginia have county-wide school districts that are practically run like corporations, Pennsylvania school districts are run by small school boards that solely depend on revenue from their equally diminutive communities. While elite school districts such as Loudon County and Fairfax County in Virginia might have a few underprivileged towns but also affluent suburbs to support their schools, many Pennsylvania districts rely exclusively on only one or other. Therefore, districts with limited funding have almost no means to dig themselves out, while the lavish suburban districts revel in their lofty community tax dollars. It is these inequities between Pennsylvania schools in both funding and curriculum offerings which

lead to challenging situations; situations that blendedschools.net – with help from Wimba – solves every day.

blendedschools.net is a non-profit organization dedicated to optimizing technology to enhance student learning by delivering an expansive list of products and services to its member school districts and their students. In other words, it leads a consortium of more than 130 schools across the state, providing them with online curriculum, training and technology for these schools, enabling teachers to create robust online curriculum which can be used by all member districts. Now, a small, rural school in the Appalachian Mountains can extend the breadth of its curriculum by allowing its students to take classes either asynchronously via Blackboard or fully live online with Wimba Classroom.

From the Bradford Area School District in Northern Pennsylvania, to the Bellefonte Area School District in the central part of the state, to the Chartiers Valley School District west of Pittsburgh, students



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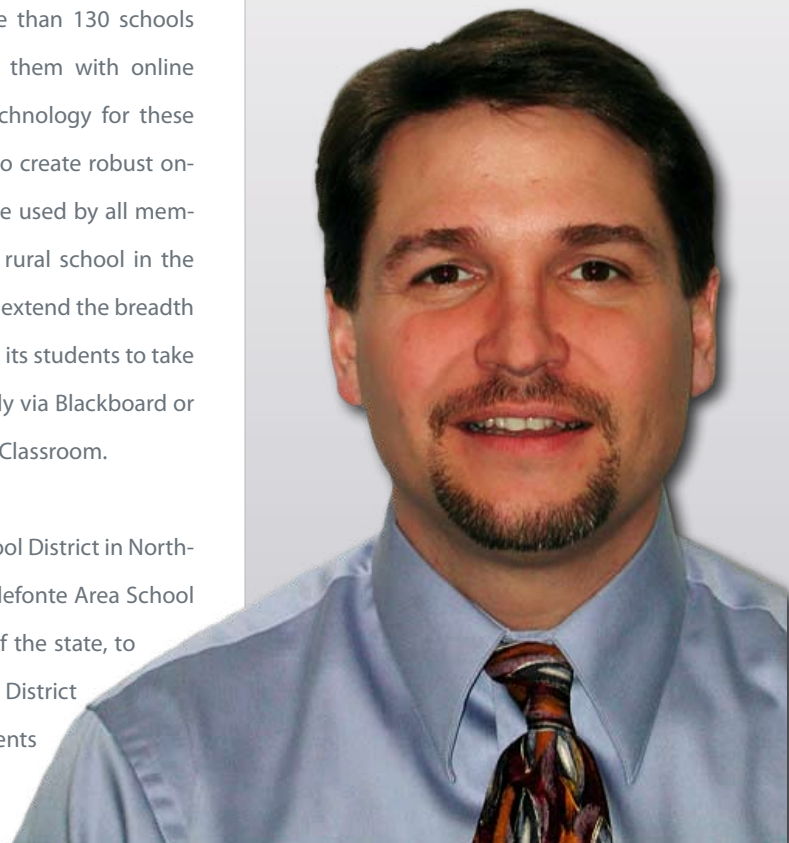
WIMBA PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- Wimba Classroom
- Wimba Pronto
- Wimba Voice

KEY BENEFITS

- Small and rural K12 schools extend curriculum
- Offer credit recovery, AP, and enrichment classes online
- Younger students easily communicate with their teachers

***Mark Gensimore**, Project Manager,
blendedschools.net*





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WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

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*-Miguel Santa, Instructional Support Specialist,
William Penn School District Cyber Academy*

throughout the state can enroll in standard courses such as English, Math, and Social Studies, as well as more advanced classes and electives such as Accounting, Personal Finance, Art History, and Computer Applications. For students who have fallen behind, they can take credit recovery courses in most subjects, while gifted students in small schools can take AP classes online.

"The Wimba tools are used in so many different ways to supplement so many different situations," says Mark Gensimore, Project Manager of blendedschools.net.

blendedschools.net courses are developed in the Blackboard Academic Suite™ with the Wimba Collaboration Suite™ enabling synchronous interaction through video, voice and chat sessions, as well as asynchronous collaboration via discussion boards, podcasts and archived classroom lessons. This comprehensive solution makes it possible for K12 students throughout Pennsylvania to continue learning on their own time and addresses diverse learning styles.

For example, the William Penn School District Cyber Academy in suburban Philadelphia offers educational opportunities for children who need a self-paced learning environment, are behind in their credits, or who are faced with social challenges that make the traditional school setting difficult for them. Like other schools throughout the state of Pennsylvania that are simply so small and under-funded that they cannot offer as broad a spectrum of classes as other schools, the Cyber Academy utilizes the online curriculum offered by blendedschools.net. By utilizing the collaborative elements of the Wimba Collaboration Suite, teachers at the Cyber Academy are in constant communication with their students, giving them the hands-on guidance that children of

their age sorely need, particularly when in an on-line learning environment.

"The Wimba software helps with interaction with students. I've found that students who are shy in the classroom or are kind of an introvert, they express themselves more via Wimba," says Miguel Santa, Instructional Support Specialist at the Cyber Academy. "It's the wave of the future. It's something all school districts should take advantage of. Wimba bridges the gap when it comes to differentiated instruction because not everyone learns the same way."

In fact, though only three years young, the Cyber Academy has already offered more than 120 synchronous and asynchronous courses taught by state certified instructors from within the district and partner schools across Pennsylvania.

"Wimba allows me to reach those students that otherwise we'd lose," explains Cynthia Hyland, Distance Educator at the William Penn School District Cyber Academy.

According to Gensimore, his organization provides online technologies that districts with shallow pockets cannot afford to purchase on their own. This purchasing power allows blendedschools.net to buy large licenses of technologies such as Blackboard and Wimba which can then be distributed to any district that requests these technologies.

"It's been exciting to see the difference education technologies such as Wimba are making in the lives of students at the schools we serve," says Gensimore. "We've been able to examine and assemble the best tools to create turnkey technical solutions so the schools can stay focused on helping students succeed."



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ABOUT WIMBA

Wimba develops web-based collaboration software designed for online education, language learning and live interactive communications. Our collaborative applications enable learning professionals to fully embrace the new wave of teaching and learning opportunities afforded by the Internet; regardless of geographic location, bandwidth or operating system. Our classroom collaboration solutions enable educators to conduct live, online classes, meetings, office hours and other collaborations, and our language learning tools add oral interaction directly into course content, web-pages, study groups and assessments. With simplicity and power, Wimba adds new dimensions to online, accessible education, enhancing the learning experience for both students and instructors.

From teaching AP classes live online, to having teachers keep in touch with students after the school day via Wimba Pronto, a school-centric instant messenger that boasts voice and video conferencing and application sharing, the addition of Wimba has significantly expanded education opportunities for K12 students of all ages.

For instance, while high school students in the Northern Lebanon schools use Wimba Voice to listen to their teachers' podcasts, kindergarten students in the Rose Tree Media School District in southeastern Pennsylvania use Wimba Voice to extend their half-day program with a thematic online course as they learn 21st-century technology skills. These kindergarteners play games and engage in other learning activities via Voice Boards to augment literacy, numeracy, technology, and science standards.

"blendedschools.net has provided a unique and valuable learning structure for our students. We utilize this format to offer an alternative learning media for students as well as to create credit recovery and extending learning experiences," says Brian Keagy, former Hyndman Campus Principal and Director of Online Learning for the Bedford Area School District in southern Pennsylvania.

"The Bedford Area School District views blended learning as an integral component of a successful "Bricks and Clicks" learning environment. The program is offered to all students of the Bedford Area School District and many are truly "blending" their individualized learning program."

Several students in the Conewago Valley School District's cyber charter program actually re-enrolled after previously dropping out. The cyber charter program uses blendedschools.net curriculum to help face-to-face students accelerate their studies. They are also exposing their college-bound seniors to Blackboard, the course management system they'll likely use in college.

"blendedschools.net has allowed our district to create our own blended academy," says Joseph M. Connolly of the Conewago Valley School District. "Our enrollment numbers are increasing based on the service that we offer to our blended families. We continue to have requests and are looking at ways to increase our capacity."

"blendedschools.net is a perfect example of how technology can directly impact learning across diverse communities to meet many different needs," adds Tommaso Trionfi, CEO of Wimba.

