



## New Hampshire Virtual Learning Academy Charter School Increases Professional Development Offerings & Student Communication via Wimba

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*-Steve Kossakoski, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer, Virtual Learning Academy Charter School*

New Hampshire's Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS) started using the Wimba Collaboration Suite in 2008 to enable its instructors to better engage with students throughout the state. In less than a year, all of its 100+ teachers rely on Wimba Pronto to communicate instantly with more than 2,000 students in 54 courses, while many also teach live online via Wimba Classroom, with languages teachers even using Wimba Voice to help students learn languages of the world. All the while these same teachers take live online Professional Development (PD) seminars that are so collaborative and convenient that the school has been able to offer more seminars than ever before with a greater number of teachers attending.

VLACS is New Hampshire's first statewide, online high school that is available, free of charge, to all high school students who live in New Hampshire. Created in 2007, VLACS's mission is to use the latest technologies to provide New Hampshire's high school students any time, any where access to a rigorous, personalized education that helps

them learn today, graduate tomorrow, and prepare for the future. In addition, VLACS is also an option for high school dropout students who wish to earn a high school diploma while maintaining a job.

A few highlights of VLACS include:

- Tuition-free for all students residing in NH
- Accepts both full-time and part-time students
- Accepts out-of-state students. Out-of-state students pay tuition fees.
- An approved New Hampshire public school
- Courses taught by New Hampshire certified instructors

In 2008, a year into its existence, VLACS already understood it needed state-of-the-art technologies in order to achieve its mission. Its administration sought software that would allow its instructors to collaborate with students as well as to provide professional development. VLACS had previously cobbled together consumer products for VoIP, video, and desktop sharing, but so many disparate systems



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Exeter, New Hampshire  
[www.vlacs.org](http://www.vlacs.org)

### WIMBA PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- Wimba Classroom
- Wimba Pronto
- Wimba Voice

### KEY BENEFITS

- Increase communication
- Offering tutoring live online
- Increase number of professional development courses
- Seamless integration with Moodle

**Steve Kossakoski, Ph.D., CEO,**  
*Virtual Learning Academy Charter School*





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### WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

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proved very unwieldy to use by teachers and difficult for IT staff to manage. Enter the Wimba Collaboration Suite.

"Wimba provided us with an integrated solution that replaced all of these discrete tools," said Steve Kossakoski, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer of VLACS. "We are now in our second year of using the Wimba Collaboration Suite and it's beginning to pay dividends. Instructors are quite skilled in the use of Wimba Pronto and we believe that Wimba Classroom will be widely used for small and large group instruction. We use Wimba Classroom for most of our professional development and Wimba Voice is becoming more popular with our instructors, especially for those who teach world languages."

After only one year of use, all 100 VLACS teachers use Wimba Pronto – and are required to do so – while Wimba Classroom and Wimba Voice are quickly gaining traction. Wimba Pronto allows teachers in all subjects to communicate instantly with the school's nearly 2,000 students in order to teach and offer virtual tutoring sessions. Wimba Pronto is used in 54 courses that run the gamut from English, Earth Science, and Math, to Keyboarding, Personal Fitness, and Health. In fact, VLACS helpdesk personnel even use Wimba Pronto's application sharing to assist instructors and students on a regular basis.

VLACS instructors like Wimba Pronto because it allows instructors and students to see who's online and available as well as because it easily allows users to move from chat to voice and video, to application sharing, and to the whiteboard. Further, Kossakoski believes another strength is its ability to conference with small groups of students or instructors, which he believes is great for informal and/or just-in-time instruction.

Additionally, Wimba Voice easily allows VLACS world language instructors and students to record their voices so students can easily send their vocal recordings directly to their instructors. And teachers are constantly impressed with the audio and video quality of Wimba Classroom. "I have used other "classroom-type" products and they do not provide the same audio quality as Wimba Classroom," says Dr. Kossakoski.

The Wimba Collaboration Suite seamlessly integrates with VLACS's course management system – Moodle, the foundation for most of VLACS's online courses.

"We use the Wimba applications with Moodle. We believe that Wimba is the perfect compliment to our courses as it allows our entire organization to communicate in the manner that fits the situation whether that means using audio, video, or text," said Dr. Kossakoski. "We anticipate that the ability to archive Wimba Classroom sessions as MP4 files will also provide students with the opportunity to take advantage of asynchronous multi-media learning."

After a year, both students and staff have reacted in a very positive manner to the entire Wimba suite, according to VLACS. The more that VLACS instructors use the Wimba Collaboration Suite, the more excited they become about the possibilities for communicating with students. But this traditional instruction is just the tip of the iceberg.

VLACS also offers numerous Professional Development sessions via Wimba Classroom for its teachers who are located in five New England states on topics as varied as Moodle instruction for new instructors, communicating with online learners, time management for online



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instructors, and weekly collegial discussions among instructors and administrators.

VLACS plans to expand its PD offerings to its partner schools (public schools across New Hampshire) to help them learn to support online learners.

In fact, the number of instructors attending Professional Development sessions via Wimba Classroom is increasing as instructors become more comfortable with the technology.

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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, webpages, 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.

