



Jody Siebenmorgen, program director

jody.siebenmorgen@usd258.net • (620) 228-4186 • fax (620) 473-2023



After reading the LPA I understand the need to review virtual school cost and student performance. Thank you for allowing me to share the impact of Humboldt's virtual education program with emphasis on **the difference it has made for adult education** in SE KS. Four years ago I was given the opportunity to develop a virtual program for USD 258. This was an easy transition from my past commitment to always inspire and educate the nontraditional students. I was employed for 12 years in Dickinson Co. at the Solomon High School. I served as the HS At-Risk educator and Parents as Teachers Director. My passion has always been to help develop a successful path for young and older students. I remember asking myself what goals I wanted to accomplish for Humboldt's Virtual Program, knowing I intended to target adult dropouts in Southeast KS. I was determined to offer open enrollment, all year, so we did not miss the window of when a HS or adult student was ready regardless of count day! I knew a large number had difficult or failed a GED program, do not have a car, gas money, babysitters, skills or testing fees, \$132. I knew for sure I wanted to:

1. **Provide Second Chances!** (or 3rd or 4th) Students drop out of school for a variety of reasons. As right as those reasons may seem at the time, the decisions they make don't always work out the way they hoped! I wanted to provide that chance to earn a high school diploma online for adults seeking a high school diploma! The adults who have went full circle in life and realized they needed to go back to school. The 1st year a 42 year old man with a family, had worked as a manager for Walmart in Iola, Ks for 7 years. He called me and said, "Can you help me? I have a great opportunity to move up in management but when they sent my paper work in **I was turned down by cooperate office for having a GED.**" They told him if he could have a HS diploma by December they would hold the job for him. He completed 11 credits in 6 months and received the position. I enroll adults every year with a GED who tell me they are still labeled as a dropout for employment and have been unsuccessful. They want and need a HS diploma.

Year	9 th -12 th	Adults	Heads	FTE	March	Grad. HS	Adults	HS %	Adult %	Total %	Total Grads
2014-2015	36	161	197	197.9	31+	11	24	(30%)	(15%)	(18%)	
2013-2014	28	126	154	156.3	33+	16	28	57%	22%	29%	44
2012-2013	19	114	133	132.2	33+	12	30	63%	26%	32%	42
2011-2012	16	91	107	107.6	35+	4	17	25%	18%	20%	21

2. **Break the Chain!** I wanted to go into homes and enroll families and bring them back as adult students to succeed in education. I wanted to change the role models and mind set of "I always struggled in school, I had teachers who..... so I quit!" Not a one professes to be good in math, or love English literature, but to let them know that it's OK we can start at the level, where math left you! I back them down to 6th grade math all the time. You have to, I see transcripts where someone got a D in pre-algebra, D- in Algebra 1, and an F in Algebra 2, usually the same semester they dropped out! Can you blame them?

I have enrolled almost every family member there is! Husbands and wives, single parents, siblings. In one home I enrolled 8 people! I was asked up here last year how I could justify enrolling a 54 year old woman. I stated she worked at HalDex, in Iola for 23 years without a diploma. They went out of business and without a HS diploma she couldn't even open a daycare. I loved the 62 year old grandma who enrolled to make a difference. She was raising her 4 grandchildren, with her daughter who also didn't finish HS. Back to that "broken chain". Grandma said, "By golly we are all going back to school! These kids are not going to be dropouts!" She knew she had to role model the importance of education. All the above have graduated with us.

My first year, Gates Rubber Company would not let me leave my brochures for adults. She said, "we don't call applicants in or talk to them without a HS diploma! They won't see it." (Rude!) I went back the 2nd year hoping for a new office lady! Cindy now calls me if she has an applicant without a diploma, if they enroll, they start at \$10 an hour. If they are good workers and complete their HS diploma within 6 months, their wages go to \$13.50. New management fired one 50 yr old lady after 17 years, a cell phone policy. To be rehired, she needed a HS diploma and all 21 credits! I also coordinate with 5 counties to enroll DCF adults. Progress Reports are sent weekly to each caseworker to determine active or non active to receive cash assistance. Let's keep them in the enrollment line and out of the welfare lines. My 1st year I spoke with Allen and Neosho county probation officers to see if being enrolled with us could be part of juvenile or adult probation. Now it is!

Mistakes are meant to guide us, not define us. I believe they deserve another chance! That is why I am here! I will never forget the student that thanked me back in January. He said after being out of school so long he didn't think it would be possible to ever graduate. Now that he has a job he told me he wished he would have done it years ago. Getting a pay check every Friday was a lot easier than stealing for a living! He was serious!! Adult Virtual Education is changing lives! We have all heard life is a journey, and it really is. For some it just takes longer to find themselves and as an At-Risk Educator we have to be there when they do! Education is still the key foundation of moving forward, that I believe will never change, and it does continue after the age of 18.

4. I wish I had more time to share all the success stories and brag on the easy students that just put their heads down and keep working. The ones who are enrolled in Neosho or Allen Community Colleges. The ones who continue to take online classes from home using the laptops we provided. It would be easy if they were all like that. My parents were both teachers and my mom always said anyone can teach the top third of the class, but the real educators can teach that bottom third. I know we have some excellent virtual directors and programs in Kansas who really work hard to make a difference with all ages of nontraditional students. They do educate that third of the class my mom spoke of, whether they should have graduated years ago or 30 years ago. They are still trying to enter the workforce at all ages.

Please consider a more meaningful measure to keep virtual students educated. I personally felt like the Legislative Post Audit, "one size fits all", for adult education was not the most accurate representation of Humboldt's adult virtual students.

Solution: Take out the 360 minute count days to determine a full time FTE student. We know there are students who lose internet, shut down, go away, come back etc! However I also

know that I take 30-40 more students throughout the year who complete classes and/or graduate who were not enrolled by Sept. 19th. The following would also provide funding for them.

If we take LPA \$5,600 to educate a virtual student per year, divide that by 6 credits (\$933) or 7 (\$800) per credit as a full time virtual student with no age cap, the state would only be paying on results based. Classes completed could be turned in 2-3 times a year. This way if it takes a student 3 years to complete 6 credits it costs (6x \$933=5,598) or (6x \$800=4,800) the same as the student who completed all 6 in one year. Previously for a student completing 6 credits in 3 years cost \$12,076.05 My program turns in completed class now every month to the BOE. "Time" is no longer the cost, progress alone is the reward and savings. Hoping for a win win to come out of this. I can't imagine telling my staff or Humboldt's 161 adult students, "Sorry, we lost the adult virtual funding." Thank you for your consideration and all that you do for Kansas citizens in this great state.

Jody Siebenmorgen - Virtual Director

Cell 620-228-4186

USD 258 620-473-3121

jody.siebenmorgen@usd258.net