



Online Courses Come to Middle Schoolers



Dr. Michelle Hutchinson

Imagine a world in which your middle school child could take courses, for school credit, online! Wouldn't it be great if those courses could be used for curriculum acceleration (if your child needs more challenges), for credit recovery (if your child needs to retake a course), or as an alternative to the traditional electives? Well, imagine no more, because that world is here.

The Georgia Virtual School (GAVS) division of the Georgia Department of Education, which

began as a system to offer online, for-credit courses to high school youths, has expanded its offerings to meet the demands of middle school students. Historically, GAVS students have scored higher on state-mandated EOCTs (end-of-course tests) than their brick-and-mortar counterparts. GAVS courses can be accessed from any Internet-connected computer 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Because the courses are administered by the Georgia Department of Education, they follow Georgia Performance Standards and are taught by highly-qualified certified teachers. Courses are 9 weeks in length to coincide with the typical middle-school quarters, are preceded by an orientation that familiarizes the student with the online platform, and carry a tuition fee of \$150 for each quarter-unit course. Students can take courses in health care science or career management (electives),

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math, science, language arts, Spanish, or French.

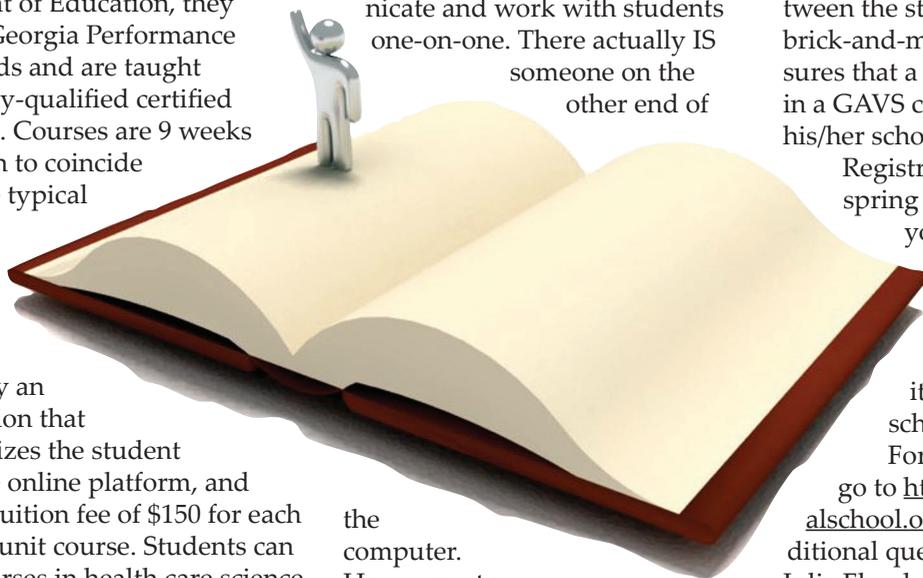
Since different students log into GAVS courses at different times of the day and work at different paces, GAVS teachers can communicate and work with students one-on-one. There actually IS someone on the other end of

each other via online discussion boards and weekly live classroom chats.

Every public middle school or school system in Georgia has a facilitator who acts a liaison between the student and his or her brick-and-mortar school and ensures that a student's final grade in a GAVS course is reported to his/her school.

Registration is now open for spring courses. To register, you will need your child's GTID (Georgia Testing Identifier) number. If you do not know it, contact your child's school counselor.

For more information, go to <http://www.gavirtualschool.org/>. If you have additional questions, please contact Julie Floyd at julie.floyd@doe.k12.ga.us.



the computer. However, students also get to know



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