



Board Meeting Date: 1/16/2024

Title: Edina Virtual Pathway (EVP) Update

Type: Discussion

Presenter(s): Dr. Randy Smasal, Assistant Superintendent; and Steven Cullison, EVP Coordinator

Description: This board report is intended to provide a status update on the development and management of the Edina Virtual Pathway Program. The report provides background information, a success metrics update, a description of some recent changes and next steps.

Recommendation: No recommendation is being made at this time. This item has been prepared for board discussion.

Desired Outcome(s) from the Board: Please bring forth questions you have for the presenters.

Attachment(s):

- See report

The EVP update includes the following sections:

- Background Information
- Success Metrics Discussion
- Recent Changes to Programming
- Next Steps

Background Information

EVP, like all schools in the district, exists to support the district's Mission and Vision and to further its Strategic Plan. The program uniquely contributes by providing instruction in a different setting and different modality than in-person schools, resulting in:

- Opportunities to advance critical thinking and student engagement in order to appropriately challenge every student (Strategy A).
- A differentiated educational experience (Strategy A).
- A learning environment that supports equity by eliminating structural barriers to success (Strategy B).
- Development of skills for students for healthy lifestyles including living effectively with technology and assured access to wellness programs (Strategy C).
- An environment that is conducive to learning (Strategy C).
- Responsiveness to enrollment trends while retaining current students (Strategy D).
- Strong financial stewardship through careful spending and student retention (Strategy E).

Comprehensive

EVP serves high school students who can be divided into two groups: comprehensive (full-time online students) and supplemental (EHS students taking one or more online classes alongside their in-person classes). Students who select comprehensive online learning are seeking complete flexibility in their learning schedule combined with access to rigorous coursework. Supplemental students predominantly select online classes for a degree of scheduling flexibility or course access, rigorous learning and to seek a balance between online learning opportunities and in person learning opportunities. Both categories of students are having their needs met through the flexibility that online learning provides them.

EVP at the elementary level was phased out following the 2022-2023 school year due to insufficient enrollment. EVP does not operate a middle school program due to insufficient interest to operate in a fiscally responsible manner.

Success Metrics

A number of metrics have been identified in order to evaluate the degree to which the Edina Virtual Pathway is providing a rigorous and engaging learning experience.

1. Retention of learners as monitored through Enrollment patterns.
2. Academic achievement measured using grades, graduation rates, FastBridge assessments, and MCAs grades
3. Satisfaction of stakeholders including students, families, and staff.
4. Fiscal responsibility.

These indicators may be viewed as minimum requirements for the success and continued viability of EVP; however, the goal is to exceed these expectations and to operate one of the most innovative and rigorous online programs in Minnesota.

Enrollment

For the 2023-2024 school year, the secondary level has averaged about 58 comprehensive (full-time) students this year, an increase of about 50%.

- 19 of these students returned after attending EVP in its inaugural year.
- Two thirds of EVP's full-time students previously attended in-person in EPS. The opportunity to switch to EVP has helped the district to retain these 38 students while creating space at EHS for other students to open-enroll.
- Additionally, 14 of EVP's fully online students are new to the district.

Supplemental

This year, 755 EHS students enrolled in one or more EVP courses as a supplement to their in-person education, which is an increase of about 50% over 2022-2023.

Comparing fall of 2023 to fall of 2022, course requests from Edina students for NSO courses remained flat (356 to 362.)

These numbers demonstrate a growing demand for online learning in Edina among high school-aged students, and the value of offering an in-house option from an enrollment standpoint.

Academic Measures

Grades

Students achieving passing grades in courses will have demonstrated proficiency in the associated graduation standards.

Grades:

- 2022-2023

- Passing grades S1: 85% ; Passing grades S2: 95%
- 2023-2024
 - Passing grades S1: 89% (in progress)

Graduation Rates

EVP's reported graduation rate for Spring of 2023 was 62% (The N value of students has been excluded due to small cell size and being potentially identifiable.) As outlined later in this report, counseling and paraprofessional staffing adjustments have allowed for improved student support.

MCA's

An important area of growth for EVP at the secondary level is to increase participation rates in standardized testing (a challenge faced by many online programs throughout the state). Rates of participation in the MCA test in 2023 were too low to provide a meaningful evaluation of student proficiency.

FastBridge

FastBridge is only used at the secondary level for students enrolled in Online Pre-AP English 9.

FastBridge (Secondary Comprehensive):

- 2022-2023 (n=5)
 - aReading: 33% met or exceeded in fall (District: 70%); 50% in winter (District: 83%)
- 2023-2024 (n=7)
 - aReading: 71% met or exceeded in fall (District: 76%)

Satisfaction of Stakeholders

It is vital that programs incorporate stakeholder voices, and no measurement of Edina Virtual Pathway's progress or success could be complete without asking the students, families, and teachers for their perspectives.

In 2023, 84% of EVP students communicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their experiences in EVP. Families reported at rates of 78% or higher that they felt their child's online education was rigorous, that their child felt valued, and that they were satisfied with their child's online education. Teachers reported unanimously in the spring that they were provided with the resources to do their work successfully.

During the 2023-2024 school year, EVP is conducting visioning sessions with stakeholders, including not only students, families, and online teachers, but also EHS

staff. These will begin in January of 2024 and will help provide direction for the future of EVP.

Financial Responsibility

In the 2022-2023 school year, \$673,270 was spent on EVP. This is considerably less than the amount which was budgeted, \$826,243. The school generated about \$706,650 in new revenue by attracting open-enrolled full-time students. It should be noted that these numbers include the operation of EVP's elementary program. Overall, EVP contributed positively to the district's financial health.

For the 2023-2024 school year, \$510,112 has been allocated in the budget. Due to an increase in enrollment, revenue generation is projected at about \$761,000.

Edina Virtual Pathway contributes to the financial wellness of the district by helping to retain the enrollment of students who might otherwise leave the district in order to learn online. Some of the 39 students who moved from in-person to online may have done so permanently, while others may take advantage of the opportunity temporarily during a time of need, whether to participate in athletics or to manage their health.

Recent Changes

For the 2023-2024 school year, EVP secured a dedicated 0.5 counselor and reassigned an elementary paraprofessional position to support secondary students. These staffing adjustments have allowed for improved student support, especially for seniors around post-secondary planning, and to help with supervision of supplementary students at EHS.

In response to feedback from stakeholders, and in keeping with state guidance, EVP modernized its attendance procedures in a way that helps ensure accuracy while reducing work for teachers and increasing flexibility for students.

This year, EVP offered twelve new classes (of which two are new for the district.) For 2024-2025, at least six further offerings are planned.

For the first time, summer courses will be offered in EVP this year.

We are taking steps to establish EVP as a state leader in online learning. A partnership with a local virtual reality/artificial intelligence firm is in development. A second partnership with a local college that would provide opportunities for Edina students to build trade skills and earn college credits and certifications using virtual reality tools is also in the works. These initiatives will help to establish a distinct identity for the school while serving as an innovation laboratory whose findings could one day benefit in-person students. Additionally, in February, the EVP Coordinator will be hosting a

Summit for other MN Online Educators to create an opportunity for collaboration between online educators throughout the state.

Next Steps

As previously reported to the school board, by the end of the 2023-2024 school year, the following accomplishments will signal a second successful year of EVP at the high school level:

1. Increased passing rates for classes.
2. Increased graduation rate.
3. Increased rates of satisfaction by stakeholders as reflected by surveys with higher participation rates, allowing for reliable feedback.
4. Further improved procedures around course changes and enrollment, indicated in part by feedback from counselors.
5. Stable comprehensive enrollment numbers, while also implementing improved efforts to identify and redirect students who may be less likely to thrive in an online learning environment.
6. Continued fiscal responsibility while more fully utilizing funds allocated to support student learning.
7. An increase in the number of courses which are taught as a part of a teacher's regular work day, rather than as an overload, for 2024-2025.
8. Successful implementation of online summer offerings in 2024.

EVP is on pace to meet these measures. Increased support for learners will contribute to improved passing rates for classes, which in turn will help drive a strong graduation rate. Meetings with and surveys of stakeholders are on-going. A revised course-selection process is in place for the spring. Enrollment, as discussed, is growing, and EVP continues to generate more funds than it spends. Negotiation for an updated MOU will begin in the near future, and its language will impact the degree to which courses will be built into teacher days, as opposed to running as overloads. Finally, registration for EVP's first summer offerings are planned for this spring.

As is true for any school, Edina Virtual Pathway has an obligation to grow its ability to serve each and every student. That hard work continues.