



Helping more students access online learning

Blyth Academy Online expands course provision to meet surging demand for online education

With demand for its courses on the rise, Blyth Academy Online looked to scale its operations while maintaining excellent course quality for all students. By implementing D2L's Brightspace platform, Blyth Academy Online can offer an even broader array of courses, support its teaching staff more effectively, and help more students enrich their education.

At a glance

Client: Blyth Academy Online

Learners: 7,000+

Industry: K-12

Website: blytheducation.com/blyth-academy-online

Platform/Features:

- Quick Eval
- Class Progress Tool
- Brightspace for Parents
- [Performance Plus Package](#)
- Third-party integrations: Integrity Advocate and ReadSpeaker

Interviewee:

- Nathan Bishop, Principal

Highlights:

- >30% increase in course enrollments
- 50+ full-time students enrolled in the first month of the 2020-21 school year
- 20,000 Ontario credits issued to students in the past five years
- 88 hours per month saved by reducing administrative workloads for faculty members



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Nathan Bishop, Principal, Blyth Academy

Challenge

Growing demand for online learning

Originally established in 1977 to provide educational travel experiences, Blyth Academy is now one of the leading private schools in Canada and teaches over 160 courses to more than 12,000 students, both in-person at its campuses and remotely via Blyth Academy Online.

With digital technologies playing an ever more important role in children’s education, more parents and students are embracing online and distance learning. As a result, Blyth Academy Online has seen enrollments for its online courses increase year over year, with more than 7,000 students currently enrolled.

Moreover, with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic forcing more students to pursue their education online, the academy has seen applications for full-time distance-learning courses surge in recent months too.

“With interest in our online courses rising, we wanted to make sure that we could scale up course provision while still ensuring consistently excellent quality in both our online and in-class teaching,” comments Nathan Bishop, principal of Blyth Academy.

Blyth Academy Online recognized that a robust, versatile, and reliable learning management system (LMS) would help it deliver more courses to more students. Its existing LMS offered limited flexibility and placed a significant administrative burden on teachers and administrators, so Blyth Academy Online decided to look for a new platform.

“We had been using Moodle to support both our online and in-class teaching for a number of years,” continues Nathan Bishop. “It gave us a good start, but it didn’t offer the flexibility required to step up to the next level. We wanted to move away from hosting, managing, and maintaining our LMS ourselves so that we could focus more time and resources on educating our students.”

Moving to a new LMS also presented an opportunity for Blyth Academy Online to audit, enhance, and redesign its course content to provide students with even richer, more varied learning experiences. At the same time, the school wanted to create onboarding and training courses for teachers that would give them a broader array of resources and help them develop new skills.



Solution

Seizing opportunities for innovation

Impressed by a proposal from D2L, Blyth Academy Online selected the Brightspace platform to support its online courses.

“We looked at various solutions from many different LMS providers and the Brightspace platform came out on top,” explains Nathan Bishop. “The fact that Brightspace is easy to set up and requires no IT administration from our side was a huge plus. We also felt that the intuitive user interface would help our staff, teachers, and students feel comfortable using the solution.”

He continues: “Knowing that Ontario’s school boards also use the Brightspace platform played a key part in our decision too. Since many public-school students are already using the platform, we knew it would make it easier for them to join our courses without having to adapt to a whole new learning environment.”

Building cutting-edge resources for learners and teachers

Blyth Academy Online worked closely with D2L to set up the Brightspace platform and configure it for the school’s unique needs. During this process, the academy also decided to expand and enhance its digital resources by incorporating new features and functionality.

“We really like the fact that the Brightspace platform gives us the option to customize course material and integrate with third-party applications. For instance, we deployed Integrity Advocate, a proctoring tool that ensures exam integrity is upheld in our school,” says Nathan Bishop.

Blyth Academy Online has also implemented professional development tools in the Brightspace platform, creating a range of materials to help staff learn more about effective pedagogy for online and distance learning.

“Our staff are pleased with the professional development tools,” comments Nathan Bishop. “We’ve used the solution to create a repository of key information and training courses designed to help them get the most out of the Brightspace platform. In the years ahead, we plan to develop this into a complete internal training course for our teachers.”

To ensure that its course content is accessible for all students, Blyth Academy Online also implemented ReadSpeaker. Nathan Bishop comments: “ReadSpeaker helps us ensure that all students with learning exceptionalities can engage with our courses and, ultimately, achieve their academic goals.”



“With the previous LMS, I would spend approximately 60% of my time dealing with system and course administration. With Brightspace, that’s down to about 5%.”

Nathan Bishop, Principal, Blyth Academy

Result

Empowering more students to embrace online learning

With the Brightspace platform supporting its online and distance-learning courses, Blyth Academy Online has been able to increase the number of learners enrolled by almost 40% in a single year.

“With Brightspace supporting our online learning, we’ve been able to grow our operations smoothly and reach more students,” says Nathan Bishop. “We’ve seen a steady increase in enrollments and we’re on track to exceed our goal of delivering 10,000 courses this year. What’s more, we saw a significant rise in the number of students enrolling full time at Blyth Academy Online.”

He continues: “From an administrative perspective, D2L’s Brightspace platform has helped us be much more efficient. With the previous LMS, I would spend approximately 60% of my time dealing with system and course administration. With Brightspace, that’s down to about 5%.”

Blyth Academy Online is also using the Performance Plus package to gain greater visibility into the performance of its students—helping the school better support learners and improve their rate of progress.

“Thanks to the insights tool in Brightspace, we can now dig much deeper into student performance and take a data-driven approach to enhancing and improving the way we teach and assess our courses. Similarly, the survey tool helps us build a clearer picture of the relationship between a student’s engagement with course material and their final grades.”

Nathan Bishop, Principal, Blyth Academy

To help parents play a more active role in their children’s education, Blyth Academy also released Brightspace for Parents, which allows parents to track learner engagement, assessment grades, teacher feedback, and overall course progress.



“Parents are really pleased with the level of visibility we are able to provide them through Brightspace for Parents,” explains Nathan Bishop. “It gives them the information they need to provide educational support at home, which is especially useful for learners taking asynchronous courses. It helps parents check that their children are actually engaging with their courses on a regular basis and not leaving all their work to the last minute.”

Most important of all, the students themselves are delighted with the platform. Daniel S., a student at Blyth Academy Online, comments: “Brightspace is a user-friendly platform that gives students like me the opportunity to excel in my courses. Blyth Academy Online has provided me with a unique opportunity to take several courses in an asynchronous way, therefore allowing me to avoid time conflicts with my other courses. Working at my own pace has greatly benefited me by allowing me to spend more time on difficult concepts, therefore allowing me to master them thoroughly. Studying at Blyth Academy was the best part of my days as a high school student! Thank you for making my high school experience enjoyable!”

Feedback from teaching staff has been positive too; in the words of Mr. Straus, a teacher at Blyth Academy, “Brightspace offers a variety of tools that make teaching online an efficient and engaging experience. The QuickEval tool collects all of a teacher’s assessments across each of their courses in one convenient location, making it possible to assess multiple types of assessments without the need for time-consuming clicking or complex navigation. The Class Progress tab allows teachers to track the activities students are engaging in for a comprehensive look at where their efforts are spent. This is particularly helpful for directing support conversations in an online environment.”



Unit 1: Polynomial Functions

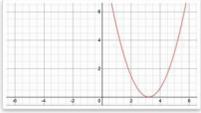
1.1: Investigating the Order of an x-Intercept

Recall: Factored Form of a Quadratic

Like other mathematical expressions, polynomials can be written in different forms. In previous mathematics studies, you have encountered the factored form of a quadratic function:

$$f(x) = (x - a)(x - b)$$

You have also encountered the graph of $f(x) = (x - a)^2$. This graph is shown in the image below for varying values of a .



Investigating the Order of an x-Intercept

In this brief investigation, you will explore the impact increasing the exponent on a binomial has on the graph of a polynomial. To begin, complete the following table and add it to your notes:

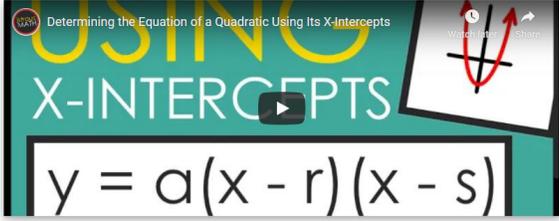
Equation	$f(x) = (x - a)(x - b)$	$f(x) = (x - a)(x - b)^2$	$f(x) = (x - a)(x - b)^3$
Sketch of graph			
Description of x-intercepts			

- Click here to open a Clever worksheet. Select unique values for a and b for the equations shown in the table above.
- Examine and sketch the resulting graph. Take particular note of the appearance of the graph at the x-intercepts.
- Click to enable the function $f(x) = (x - a)(x - b)^2$. Examine and sketch the resulting graph. Compare the x-intercepts of the function to the x-intercepts of the previous function.
- Repeat the above process for the function $f(x) = (x - a)(x - b)^3$.

What happens to the graph of the function when the exponent on one of the binomials increases? Describe the behaviour of the function at each x-intercept.

Video: Determining the Equation of a Quadratic Using Its X-Intercepts

Take a moment to review this process by watching the following video. You will then complete an exercise where this approach is applied to a cubic function to check your understanding.



Can't See the Video Above?

If the video above won't play, you can try watching it at the link below.

[▶ Determining the Equation of a Quadratic Using Its X-Intercepts](#)

Ms. Benoit, another teacher, who also happens to be a guidance counselor at Blyth Academy, shares: “As a guidance counsellor, it is important for us to provide information to our students at specific times of the year regarding upcoming academic deadlines and events such as postsecondary applications. Being able to communicate instantly to thousands of students at once is a key component of keeping the motor of an online school running effectively.

“Similarly, as a teacher, I enjoy the functionality of the announcements tool. The announcements tool is an effective way to convey vital information to all students enrolled in courses on Brightspace. I like that the notification ‘bell’ feature behaves similar to social media platforms, making it easier for students to navigate and have their attention drawn to it.

I am able to create a pinned announcement to alert students to my message that remains visible on the course home page. I use pinned announcements when I will be away for a few days, or to wish them a happy upcoming holiday!”

Looking ahead, Blyth Academy hopes to roll out the Brightspace platform for its in-class tuition and consolidate all course content with the solution.

Nathan Bishop concludes: “We’re excited to further develop and innovate with the Brightspace platform as we continue to expand our programs and help more students reap the rewards of online and digital learning.”