

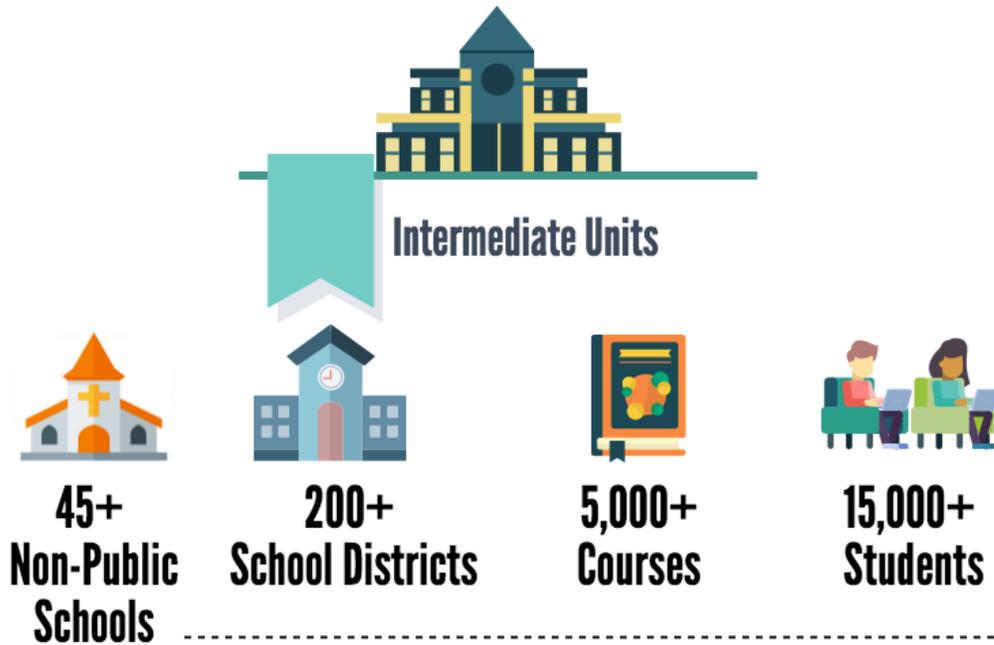


Education Solutions for  
Students, Schools and Communities:  
**Intermediate Unit  
Online Learning Programs**





# Education Solutions for Students, Schools And Communities: Intermediate Unit Online Learning Programs



## Intermediate Units provide high-quality, cost-effective online learning solutions

A quality 21<sup>st</sup> century education includes virtual learning, and Pennsylvania’s Intermediate Units (IUs) are leading the way by assisting their local school districts in meeting that need. IUs have responded by establishing a network of affordable, high-quality online learning options throughout the commonwealth that meet the needs of all learners.

Each year, more than 15,000 students statewide select from over 5,000 online courses provided by intermediate units. Intermediate units collaborate with 245 public and non-public schools to ensure that all online learning students’ needs are met, while also ensuring that students have all of the benefits of remaining a part of their local school district or non-public/private school of choice. As a result, students have the benefit of meeting with guidance counselors and school support personnel in person, taking all their courses online or accessing face-to-face instruction as desired.

For local taxpayers, their dollars stay in their district of residence, thus enabling school districts to expand their educational options and services for all students while controlling costs and ensuring fiscal responsibility.

Intermediate units provide online learning options and solutions to students, schools and communities across Pennsylvania by providing engaging, high quality curriculum.

# Education Solutions for Students, Schools And Communities: Intermediate Unit Online Learning Programs

## Portrait of a Successful Online Student: Madalyn Equi

Madalyn E. is a full-time online student in the Chester County Intermediate Unit 24 Brandywine Virtual Academy (BVA). Madalyn enrolled in BVA at the beginning of the 2013-14 school year as an 8<sup>th</sup> grader, along with her brother, Matthew, who was then a 7<sup>th</sup> grader. Madalyn chose an online school so she could be *“closer to my family and have a more flexible schedule.”*



What surprised Madalyn most about BVA was that she could still *“interact with my teacher and classmates even though we’re not in the same building. You may even be miles away but you can still go to the live lectures and be right there in the virtual classroom with them,”* she said.

What makes Madalyn a successful online student is the consistency with which she does her coursework, reaching out for help when she needs it, having strong parental support and guidance, and having a dedicated team of IU educational professionals working to ensure her success.

## Why Online Learning?

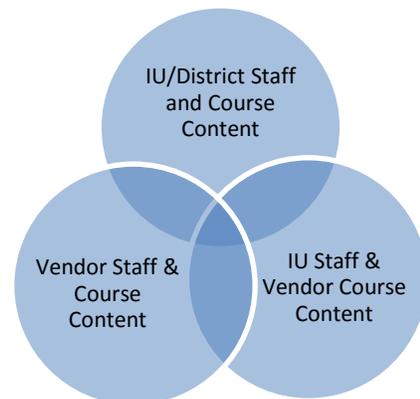
Students choose online learning for a variety of reasons, such as their preferred learning styles, extended medical absence or scheduling conflicts. IUs responded by partnering with school districts to meet the individualized needs of students, including:

1. Providing part-time online learning in addition to the traditional classroom;
2. Creating specialized instruction for students in need of remediation and/or with behavioral challenges;
3. Delivering courses that districts might not be able to afford to offer due to their specialized nature or low student enrollment; and,
4. Offering temporary online learning due to students’ personal and/or family circumstances.

## School Districts and IUs: A Partnership

Online learning solutions delivered by intermediate units cater to each districts’ needs, but generally follows one of three models:

1. The district and the IU work together to create online course content and use school district and/or IU faculty to teach;
2. The IU uses its purchasing power to leverage discounted pricing for online course content and instruction from third-party online learning companies; and,
3. A program that combines elements of the two models.



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## Pathway to Success

Colin was a struggling learner in traditional school. He experienced little success in the regular educational environment. He lacked confidence and social skills to advocate for himself. His family decided to try online schooling and he has excelled ever since. He has been in the program since his sophomore year. He secured employment his junior year. As a result, he was able to participate in the Co-Op program and gain valuable work related skills while meeting his graduation requirements for high school.

## What sets online learning through Intermediate Units apart?

### Students Continue to Be a Part of Their School Communities

Because students remain enrolled in their school districts, they have the option to participate in extracurricular and co-curricular activities. They have access to school guidance counselors and other school services, and they receive their diplomas from their home district.

### Maximum Flexibility for Students and Schools

With IU online learning programs, students have the flexibility to take one or all of their courses online. Students seeking academic remediation or enrichment, or students that have special personal circumstances can take advantage of the opportunity to do coursework online while remaining with their districts.

### Affordable Solutions for School Districts

IU online learning programs offer an affordable solution for school districts eager to provide an online learning option for students and their families. Due to the participation of multiple districts, IUs can negotiate preferred pricing from online providers of course content, and computer and software companies.

By being in partnership with the districts they serve, IU online learning programs keep tuition rates affordable for districts and taxpayers. The range of average tuition rates offered by IUs is far lower than the range of average rates offered by traditional cyber charter schools. In fact, the most expensive IU program is still 37% less expensive than the cheapest Pennsylvania cyber charter school tuition.

### Leveraging Existing Resources

IU online learning programs utilize existing IU **AND** district resources to provide an online learning experience for students that is affordable to the districts, and truly supportive of students. Working together with districts, IU online learning programs:

- ✓ Combine human resources, technology and business services to operate its programs;
- ✓ Utilize existing IU special education and curriculum staff; and
- ✓ Regularly convene IU administrators, school superintendents, curriculum directors, business managers, HR directors, and special education supervisors in order to stay abreast of the districts' and students' needs, concerns and challenges.

## Education Solutions for Students, Schools And Communities: Intermediate Unit Online Learning Programs



### IU Online Programs: Meeting Students Where They Are

Sarah Fry is in her second year in an online program. She switched to the Waterfront Learning, an online program operated by Allegheny Intermediate Unit 3, at the beginning of her junior year due to medical issues.

*“As an honors student, I found that the classes were challenging and enjoyable for me; and, I enjoyed being able to work ahead,” said Sara. “I found the cyber program was a better fit for me so I chose to stick with it for my senior year. The teachers are fantastic, willing to answer any questions, and are incredibly knowledgeable about the classes they teach.”*

Waterfront Learning offers a wide variety of classes in every subject so that students can explore a variety of options and take more classes in the subject that interests them most.

## Highest Quality Education

### Intermediate unit online learning solutions provide:

- Pennsylvania certified and highly-qualified teachers
- Course content aligned to Pennsylvania State academic standards
- Assessment of student progress by a wide variety of measures, including attendance, grades, PSSA and Keystone exam results, and time on-task
- Remediation courses
- Summer school options
- NCAA approved coursework
- Credit recovery options

IUs provide direct instruction to more than 250,000 preschool, school-age and adult learners throughout the state. IUs are the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s partner in delivering resources and supports to schools and implementing priority initiatives.



# Education Solutions for Students, Schools And Communities: Intermediate Unit Online Learning Programs

## What an IU Online Learning Program Costs:

Costs to districts for students that enroll in IU online learning programs differ across IU programs based on program design. Here is one example.

**Scenario:** John Doe is a ninth grade, regular education student, who is enrolling in the district’s virtual program operated by its local intermediate unit.

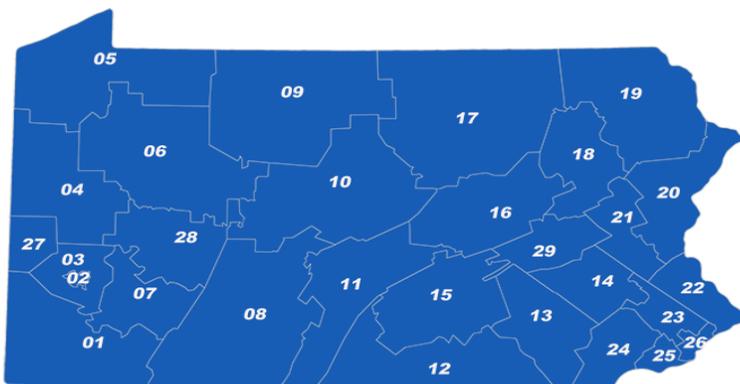
Service	IU Cost Per Unit	#Units	IU Total Charge
<b>Online Course</b>	\$695 per credit	6	\$4170
<b>Laptop Rental</b>	\$573 per student	1	\$665
<b>Internet Reimbursement</b>	\$563 per year/household	1	\$573
<b>Total Cost to District</b>			\$5,408

## About Intermediate Units in Pennsylvania

Every year, more than 175,000 students and 75,000 educators and adults receive services from one of Pennsylvania’s 29 intermediate units. As public, regional educational service agencies, intermediate units provide educational, administrative and technology services to the Commonwealth’s 500 school districts, 120 charter schools and 2,400 non-public schools.

Created in 1971 by the Pennsylvania General Assembly, IUs were designed to serve as a liaison between local schools and the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Over the past four decades, these regional educational service agencies have adapted to server a broader array of needs focusing on the unique characteristics of their communities.

In doing so, IUs have demonstrated an incredibly entrepreneurial, highly-skilled, and technology-rich approach to educating Pennsylvania’s students.



*Pennsylvania’s 29 intermediate units are strategically positioned across the commonwealth; thereby allowing IUs to provide a seamless network of educational services throughout the state while at the same time responding to local need and demand.*

To learn more about online education solutions offered by Pennsylvania’s intermediate units, contact the Pennsylvania Association of Intermediate Units or visit [www.paiu.org](http://www.paiu.org).

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