



# Virtual Learning Academy Charter School



**12,000 Students**



**20,000 Course Enrollments**



**280 Instructors in 15 States**



**VLACS**

**Scaffold Migration**

## Migration to Canvas during Live Classes: K16 Solutions Handles Complex Project with Ease

The Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS) is one of the largest statewide virtual schools in the U.S., with more than 12,000 students and over 20,000 course enrollments. Based in Exeter, N.H., VLACS is a nonprofit, state-approved charter school that is free for New Hampshire residents and available for tuition to all others. The school offers elementary, middle and high school programs to any student under the age of 21. VLACS draws students who are enrolling full time, or attending part time to explore an area of interest not offered in their home district.

VLACS currently has 280 instructors residing in 15 states.

VLACS had used a highly customized version of Moodle since it opened in 2008 but wanted a learning platform with more features not found on the open-sourced platform. After evaluating a number of systems, the school chose Canvas. VLACS is different from many schools in that students can enroll and start courses any time during the year, even on holidays.





## SOLUTION

As VLACS explored how to migrate to a new LMS given the many complexities involved, the school heard about K16 Solutions' "magic technology" [Scaffold Migration]. The project included transferring more than 2,000 courses to Canvas, live, while students were learning. Comparing it to a physical move, Kossakoski said: **"We had to move all the chairs and tables with the kids still sitting in them."**

K16 managed the complexity with ease. **"K16 was up to it,"** VLACS's CEO said. **"They really handled it well."**

If VLACS had conducted the migration in-house, it would have taken much longer. But the bigger issue is it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, for the school to transfer the content while the courses were live. Kossakoski said VLACS likely would have had to close for the summer to make the migration to Canvas. **"We have a lot of students who really need us, so that was not an option we wanted to consider,"** said Kossakoski. **"K16 had a solution that allowed us to do what we wanted to do."**

K16 would also troubleshoot if something wasn't perfect, like audio files embedded in migrated courses, and then quickly fix the issue. **"I can't remember a time when they said to us 'that can't be done,'"** said Kossakoski. **"They always had an answer, or they always felt they could find an answer. They rose to the occasion every time."**

VLACS doesn't expect to do another migration for many years, but the school knows what it will do next time.

## CHALLENGES

### Migration Must Happen during Live Classes

In a typical scenario, an institution moves from one LMS to another during the summer or a holiday break when school is closed or on a reduced schedule. But VLACS operates 365 days a year, so the migration had to occur with students actively working in the LMS. **"When you remove time as one of the governing features of your model, it adds all kinds of complexity,"** said Steve Kossakoski, CEO of VLACS.

### Need to Adjust for Complex Processes

Kossakoski has found that outside vendors often have trouble grasping the complexity of VLACS before diving into a project. Besides always being open, VLACS has many types of students who work at a pace that makes sense to them; they don't follow a strict calendar. Students can be in the same classes and have similar experiences, but they have different needs programmatically. **"Our needs were advanced,"** said Kossakoski.

### Desire for Uniformity

VLACS wanted the structure of the courses to be identical, with the same assessments and internal IDs. The school creates a master course, or shell, for a class and then copies it to each instructor who can make adjustments. The school has 350 master courses but more than 2,000 individual live courses in the LMS.

**"I would hire K16 in an instant,"**  
Kossakoski said.

**"I would recommend them to anyone else.  
They're really good at what they do."**





## Excellent Customer Service

K16 was a constant support throughout the process. **"They were always there,"** said Kossakoski. The project started in June, and VLACS administrators' stress level rose as the August deadline approached because the school was expecting an influx of students as the migration wrapped up.

**"K16 just stuck by us,"** Kossakoski said. **"They did whatever it took to get us functioning as soon as possible."**

## RESULTS

### Realized Cost Savings

Other vendors charge to manually convert each course versus K16's automated Scaffold Migration service, which would have made this project much more expensive. **"K16 really offers a different solution where they can move a significant number of courses at once,"** said Kossakoski. **"They certainly saved us time and a significant amount of money."**

### Ensured Integrity of Migrated Content

K16 excelled at keeping everything uniform, even as it migrated large numbers of courses. **"What they're genius at is they look for patterns in data and courses, and they're able to replicate those things,"** Kossakoski said. Otherwise, the school would have had to transfer each course one by one. **"They performed their magic."**

