

Sugar-Salem High School  
Sugar City, Idaho  
Sugar City Schools



## Using Technology to Expand Opportunities for Rural Students

**Jared Jenks, Principal:** Sugar Salem High School is a rural school in a rural community. Because we are in a rural environment, we have had to adapt. We use different ways to get more electives and core classes that we wouldn't otherwise have access to.

**Fred Wooley, Counselor:** We have a number of programs for advanced opportunities to allow students to get dual credit during high school. One of the programs we use is through the Idaho Education Network. It allows our students to take college classes from a live instructor over the Idaho Education Network, which is a video-conference system which allows the students to see the teacher live and the teacher hears and sees our students live. So it's like having an extended classroom, with up to four schools connected at once. We have fifteen courses that we offer over the year. We also have a partnership with North Idaho College; they offer online classes for us, as well as our traditional AP credits that you can earn

**Alan Dunn, Superintendent:** We allow our students to get enough credit to graduate early if they'd like. We start in the 8th grade to get high school credit. We offer classes at the 8th grade that are the same curriculum, the same difficulty, and with the same end-of-course assessment and if those students pass that end-of-course assessment with 85% they receive high school credit as well. And then during their senior year all online or college credit classes that they take, our goal is to pay for those. So kids can earn a lot of credit at little cost. We don't force anyone to do that, we just provide lots of opportunities. And it's surprising how many students take advantage of that.

**Kristen Galbraith, Board of Trustees Chair:** So that our students, as they graduate, can have those credits under their belt for when they go to college.

**Tanya Johnson, Math Department Chair:** I have nothing but good to say about the colleges that we're working with. They're extremely helpful and they do, they do demand the same rigor at their college campuses, which I appreciate a lot. The kids know what they are getting into; they're the same exact courses. And they are prepared, just as though they had learned it at college.

**Bryce Owen, Counselor:** Our partnership with North Idaho College allows a student to receive an associate degree if they start into the program by about their sophomore year. It is a 64 credit associate degree and students will be taking class over the IEN from other colleges like College of Southern Idaho or Idaho State University, but all of those will transfer up to NIC. As soon as the student has the 64 required they get awarded an associate's degree from North Idaho College at the same time as their high school graduation.

**Student:** They give you a jump start on college and it does teach you to be independent. If you have a teacher in your own classroom you can ask them questions but on these networks sometimes you have to be your own problem-solver.

*The district also provides a laptop for every student.*

**Sean Edwards, English Department Chair:** There were a lot of the kids that just didn't have internet at home, they didn't have access to a computer. And so besides just giving our kids tools they need in school, we're also empowering a community. Because it's not "take a laptop home and my kid's going to sit on it in the corner, it's now, "mom and dad can check their email on this laptop. We can have access to things in our home that we didn't have before. And for some people this has been a very liberating improvement to their lives.

**Jared Gee, Science Department Chair:** I teach a physics class right now and because of some time and budget constraints, we have taken a class that's normally three trimesters and put it into one. And instead of trying to compress everything, with the laptops I've been able to put together units for my students. They have to complete a certain number of units in order to complete the course as opposed to, let's all cover electronics. Instead I have four kids who are working on electronics, I have three kids who are working on kinematics, and two kids working on nuclear fission nuclear fusion. So instead of having to be personally in front of them I can create videos to teach them material and they can watch those during class, they can do online research.

**Jared Jenks, Principal:** Our approach is, regardless of their previous history, whether that be family history or even their own personal academic history, we strive to include all students and encourage all students to take dual credit courses, if they're prepared to do so. You know, if you take a student that may be a first-time student ever going to attend college, if they were able to be successful in a college course while in high school, under our direction and our help, that may encourage that student to say, "Hey, I can actually accomplish this and I'll go on" and complete their education where previously they may not have thought that being possible.