

His Love of Online Education Led Him Full Circle to VHS Learning

Interview with Daniel Castelone, Former VHS Learning Student and now Web Developer for VHS Learning

Daniel Castelone took his first online course in eighth grade and was immediately hooked on the format, which allowed him to study in a comfortable environment, at his own pace and with the support of knowledgeable, engaging VHS Learning instructors.

Castelone thrived in the flexible online learning environment, so much so that he went on to take new courses during every semester of both middle and high school. He also took multiple Advanced Placement® (AP®) courses online. "By the time I got to college, I had almost a full year completed through AP® credits," says Castelone, who also feels that the online courses prepared him for the rigorous AP® testing process. "It really suited my learning style."

Years later, his early adoption of digital learning has come full circle. Today Castelone works for VHS Learning, the pioneering online education program that provides engaging high school courses to students throughout the United States and around the world. "I liked the VHS Learning format so much that I wound up taking their online courses every year, right up to high school graduation," says Castelone, now a web developer at VHS Learning.

Supporting a Successful Career Trajectory

Reflecting on his online learning experiences, Castelone says he especially liked how the courses were independently driven. "I feel like I get the most when I'm trying to learn something through reading, working hands-on, and using visuals and logic—more so than learning via a lecture," he explains. "For these and other reasons, I really found that the online learning environment suited me well."

Castelone enrolled in online AP® courses that he now says were more intensive than any being offered in person at his high school at the time. He also liked how the online courses were always there for him anytime he needed to review a lesson, rewrite an essay or dive deeper into a specific subject area.

"VHS Learning AP® coursework prepared me very well for other AP® courses I took at my high school," he says. "The VHS Learning courses introduced and reinforced skills that I've developed throughout my life. At VHS learning I valued the interaction and feedback I received from my teachers and appreciated that I was always getting high-quality assignments."

A Day in the Life

Castelone took his passion for online learning into college, where he earned an undergraduate degree from Western Governors University online degree program. "Some may view online learning as being 'alternative' or 'supplemental,' but I knew that it had real value," he points out.

Within a week of graduating from college, Castelone applied for a job at VHS Learning and was hired to work as a web developer in the company's IT department. Over time he's grown into the role and become an instrumental member of the VHS Learning technology team. As the online learning environment continues to evolve and become increasingly competitive, Castelone is currently helping the company shape its future vision with an emphasis on technology.



"We're at a point where we really have to make some fundamental changes quickly in terms of the platform, based on what's going on with the marketplace and our students' needs," says Castelone, who is working on several ongoing, longer-term projects while also providing day-to-day support for the company's enrollment database.

VHS Learning also recently integrated a new learning management system (LMS) into its tech stack. "I work on the integration portion and the student information system (SIS), which is basically the engine for a lot of the application logic that adds students to the course platform," says Castelone. "We're continually testing and developing new software integrations for our connected systems."

Castelone also addresses system errors, ensures high system uptime levels and pays close attention to data quality—all of which are extremely important responsibilities for a company that serves thousands of students annually across the U.S. and internationally.

Putting Yourself in the Driver's Seat

You get out what you put into any learning opportunity, and online learning is no different. Castelone took this responsibility very seriously while in school and says that commitment really helped him get and stay ahead of the pack in many ways.

"I used it to develop my writing skills, reading skills and my ability to work on my own deadlines," says Castelone. "It offered flexibility in my school schedule, and particularly in my later years of high school; I really appreciated all the free blocks that opened up."

Not having to always operate on someone else's schedule ultimately gave Castelone the freedom to enjoy other activities and interests while also ensuring that his academic skills stayed sharp. "With VHS Learning, students can really make the most of their time and get good returns on their time investment," he adds. "It helps prepare you not only in the subject matter, but also in terms of time management skills and learning how to be self-motivated."