

2010

KEEPING PACE WITH K-12 ONLINE LEARNING

An Annual Review of Policy and Practice

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450,000

enrollments in
state virtual
schools



10

notable policy
developments

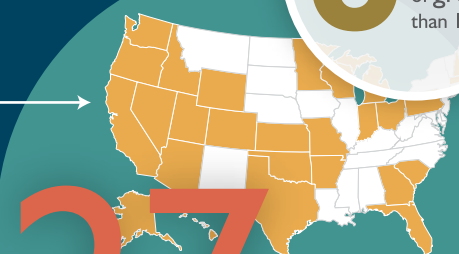
11
established
district
programs



● ratings
● of online
● opportunities
● in all 50
● states

6

states have
full-time
enrollments
of greater
than 10,000



27

states have
a multi-district
full-time
online school

2010

KEEPING PACE

WITH K-12 ONLINE LEARNING

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Acknowledgements

This is the seventh annual *Keeping Pace* report. It is unlikely that when the study was first conceived anyone imagined that it would be around seven years later, let alone develop to the point that it has. *Keeping Pace* continues to benefit from a growing set of authors, researchers, sponsors, and contributors—all of whom are important, and none more important than those who saw the value of the research in the earliest days of the study.

The first *Keeping Pace* was published in 2004, in response to a request for timely online education policy information by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). Stevan Kalmon, then of the CDE, was a strong advocate for the project, and helped with raising funds, writing, and guiding the concepts behind the study. The report was originally envisioned as a simple document that would be distributed only to the sponsoring organizations, but Cathy Gunn, then of the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory at Learning Point Associates, recognized the work’s larger value and was instrumental in suggesting and overseeing publication and distribution to a wider audience. The four funding organizations in the first year were the CDE, Illinois Virtual High School (IVHS), Learning Point Associates, and Wisconsin Virtual School.

In 2004 *Keeping Pace* reviewed 22 states, and in 2005 expanded to review all 50 states. The expansion to review the entire country was largely in response to the vision of Matthew Wicks, then of IVHS, who overcame the reluctance of the researchers when faced with the daunting task of covering all states. Although IVHS is no longer a sponsor of the report, we are fortunate that Matt has remained part of the *Keeping Pace* team.

The cast of *Keeping Pace* sponsors evolves every year, with the only common thread being that they are educational organizations that share an interest in online education and believe that it is important that current policy and practice information be available to practitioners and policymakers. Sponsors provide guidance and leadership in planning, research, analysis, and writing. *Keeping Pace* benefits from the involvement of these experienced and knowledgeable online learning practitioners and their organizations:

Allison Powell and Matthew Wicks International Association for K-12 Online Learning	Jamey Fitzpatrick and Dan Schultz Michigan Virtual University	Liz Pape Virtual High School Global Consortium
Amy Anderson Donnell-Kay Foundation	John Canuel Blackboard	Mickey Revenaugh Connections Academy
Andy Frost PLATO Learning	Julie Young and Holly Sagues Florida Virtual School	Scott Bullock and Lachelle Brant Wyoming Department of Education
Andy Scantland Advanced Academics	Kate Loughrey Texas Education Agency	Todd Hitchcock Pearson Education
Bryan Setser North Carolina Virtual Public School	Lisa Gillis Insight Schools	

Keeping Pace has partnered with the Southern Regional Education Board for the last two years, with the two organizations sharing program survey efforts and the resulting data. The goals of this partnership are to reduce the effort that online programs invest in responding to surveys, and to share data and insights across both organizations.

The educators and policymakers who gave their time to provide the information that is the basis for *Keeping Pace* are another set of key contributors to the report. We have been consistently surprised by the amount of time and quality of responses we receive from people around the country; this report would not be possible without their input.

We have made every attempt to ensure accuracy of the information in *Keeping Pace*, but recognize that in a report of this breadth some errors of accuracy or omission are likely. We welcome comments, clarifications, and suggestions to john@evergreenedgroup.com.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	2
How to read this report	4
Executive summary	6
K-12 online learning background, categories and definitions	8
Notable reports	14
The state of K-12 online learning 2010	16
Emerging issues & trends	40
Outlook & conclusion	50
State policy profiles	54

How to read this report

A report as long as *Keeping Pace* can be intimidating, leading the reader to wonder, “Where do I start?” This introduction provides background on how the report is organized, whether you’re looking for specific information or simply seeking to gain a background understanding of the state of online learning.

Keeping Pace has several goals. First, it strives to add to the body of knowledge about online education policy and practice, and make recommendations for advances. Second, it serves as a reference source for information about programs and policies across the country, both for policymakers and practitioners who are new to online education, and for those who have extensive experience in the field. Third, because there has been so much online education activity in the past year, the report attempts to capture new activity.

Readers who have reviewed *Keeping Pace* in recent years may note some changes to the organization of this year’s report. In particular, with online learning growing in so many directions we have decided to organize the opening sections of the report into online program categories. The reason for this is that the key issues in online learning (e.g. funding, student assessment) are so different for the different categories that discussing funding across all the types of programs has become confusing. In essence, we have changed from organizing by topic (e.g. funding) to organizing by program type (e.g. state virtual schools).

After an **Executive Summary**, which provides a stand-alone summary of key numbers, issues, and trends, **Online Learning Background, Categories, and Definitions** is the report’s introductory section. It is meant for readers who are relatively new to K-12 online learning. Because there are many terms in online learning without commonly understood definitions, this section defines the key terms used in this report.

The State of K-12 Online Learning in 2010 begins with a snapshot of online learning in each state. It then reviews the number of schools and students taking online courses in several categories: state virtual schools, full-time statewide online schools, district programs, and consortium programs. **Emerging Issues and Trends** reviews blended learning, including use of blended learning in school turnarounds; competency-based learning; and mobile learning.

The **Outlook and Conclusion** looks at how blended learning represents a synthesis of online learning and computer-based instruction, and how that plays into future adoptions, particularly at the district level.

The **State Policy Profiles** contain online learning profiles of all fifty states, in alphabetical order. Most state profiles include footnotes that reference state laws and state policies. However, in some cases, the information is general and was gathered through numerous website reviews and phone interviews with state agencies; in these cases footnotes are not included. The primary purpose of footnotes is to provide the source documents that will be most valuable to readers.

Much of the information in *Keeping Pace* is changing; the newest information is available at our website, www.kpk12.com. The website includes two versions of this report—one that is the length of this print copy and one that is much shorter, without the state profiles—along with additional graphics that can be downloaded for use in presentations or print reports. State profiles on the website will be updated with new information throughout 2011. Stay on top of developments in K-12 online learning policy and practice throughout the year with our blog, also available at www.kpk12.com.

Index of Figures and Tables

Figure 1	Defining dimensions of online programs	10
Figure 2	Defining dimensions of blended learning models	12
Figure 3	Map of State virtual schools / State-led online initiatives	21
Figure 4	State virtual school enrollments	26
Figure 5	Key roles for a state virtual school	27
Figure 6	States with multi-district full-time online schools	28
Figure 7	Established districts map	37
Figure 8	K-12 Online learning market landscape	49
Figure 9	Arizona Online Instruction student enrollments	60
Table 1	Categories of online programs	11
Table 2	State-level online learning activity	18
Table 3	State virtual schools	23
Table 4	Education management organizations	30
Table 5	Full-time online schools	31
Table 6	Wisconsin virtual charter school enrollment	32
Table 7	Full-time online enrollment, statewide	33
Table 8	Single-district programs	35
Table 9	Consortium programs	39
Table 10	Computer-based instruction and online learning	53
Table 11	Distance Offerings in Alaska School Districts	58
Table 12	Arizona Online Instruction enrollments by program	61
Table 13	California charter school enrollments	64
Table 14	Florida virtual education options	71
Table 15	Louisiana virtual enrollments	89
Table 16	Texas Virtual School Network enrollments	135
Table 17	Wyoming online enrollments by grade level	147
Table 18	Wyoming online enrollments	148

Executive summary

While K-12 online learning continues to grow rapidly, the shape and pace of growth is uneven. Constrained education budgets, new policy developments, and changing technologies are accelerating growth in some areas while slowing growth in other segments, but the growth trend persists. As of late 2010, online learning opportunities are available to at least some students in 48 of the 50 states, plus Washington DC. No state, however, provides the full range of potential online learning opportunities—supplemental and full-time options for all students at all grade levels.

State virtual schools have been, and remain, an important part of the online learning landscape. State virtual schools, or state-led online learning initiatives, now exist in 39 states. Their size varies greatly, from many schools with fewer than 2,500 course enrollments (one student taking one semester-long course) to the Florida Virtual School, with more than 220,000 course enrollments. Together, the state virtual schools had about 450,000 course enrollments in 2009-10. This was an increase of nearly 40% over the previous year. However, two state virtual schools—in North Carolina and Florida—alone account for 96% of the net growth, meaning that the total enrollment increases and decreases in other state virtual schools amount to only a 4% increase.

State virtual schools are in flux due to funding constraints and policy changes. In 2010, a multi-year trend has accelerated as it has become clear that the role of state virtual schools is changing amid expanding online learning opportunities with new providers, business models, and products emerging and evolving rapidly. In addition, there is significant turmoil in many of the states that had supported prominent state virtual schools. The key role of the state virtual schools has evolved from being primarily a provider of supplemental online courses, to also helping states and districts build online learning expertise, and providing thought leadership around online learning issues.

Full-time online schools that draw students from across multiple districts, and often an entire state, make up a second major sector of online learning. As of fall 2010, 27 states plus Washington DC have at least one full-time online school operating statewide. The number of states that have full-time online schools is growing, as is the number of these schools, and the number of students obtaining most or all of their education online. *Keeping Pace* estimates 200,000 students are attending full-time online schools. Although not equal across all states, in general the growth in full-time online schools across the country has been steadier than that experienced by state virtual schools.

Individual school districts operating online programs for their own students make up the fastest growing segment of K-12 online learning. Many districts are creating blended learning programs that combine online and face-to-face instruction. Because very few reporting requirements exist for single-district online programs, the number of students in these programs is unknown. *Keeping Pace* research, as well as other published reports, suggests that about 50% of all districts are operating or planning online and blended learning programs. District programs account for most of the difference between the online students identified in state virtual schools and full-time online schools, and the total of 1.5 million students taking one or more online courses estimated by the International Association for K-12 Online Learning.¹

¹ *A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning (Version 2, 2010)*, by Matthew Wicks and published by the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL). Available at www.inacol.org

Ten notable developments in 2010

While new developments seem to be occurring nearly constantly in online learning, the key developments during 2010 include:

- New state virtual schools opened in Vermont and Montana, and Alaska began the process of opening a statewide online learning network.
- Michigan and Massachusetts both created their first full-time online schools, although with restrictions in each case. Michigan will start with limited enrollments in only two statewide schools. A state board of education ruling in Massachusetts requires online schools to enroll 25% of the students from within the district creating the school, but allowing for the possibility of a waiver to the 25% requirement. Online schools are also capped at 500 students.
- Many large school districts created or significantly expanded their online offerings. In fall 2010 New York City is piloting Advanced Placement,[®] credit recovery, and blended courses across the city, and Los Angeles opened its first full-time online school.
- Connecticut passed a law with two notable components. First, the law allows online teachers to be certified in any state, instead of requiring that teachers be certified in Connecticut. Second, the law requires districts with a dropout rate of 8% or higher to establish an online credit recovery program as of July 2010.
- State audits of online charter schools were released in Wisconsin and Idaho. The audits were more notable for what they did not say than for what they did say. In previous years, audits of online schools in Colorado, Kansas, and several other states found that state policies and the operating practices of some (not all) online schools called for improved oversight and quality assurance measures. The 2010 audits found far fewer major issues and mostly reported on the number of online students and schools, their growth rates, and similar data.
- Washington created a requirement that school boards have an online learning policy as part of a larger state certification process for multi-district online programs.
- Alabama passed a measure by which students can be granted credit based on mastery instead of seat time. While this is not a rule specific to online learning, it has significant implications for online and blended learning.
- In Idaho, Standards for Online Teachers were approved by the State Board of Education and adopted in 2010, establishing 10 core standards for online teacher competency.
- As of July 30, 2010, online teachers in Wisconsin must have completed 30 hours of professional development “designed to prepare a teacher for online teaching.” The Department of Public Instruction notes that the professional development should be based on the online teaching standards created by iNACOL.
- In August 2010, Chicago Public School officials announced a pilot program to add 90 minutes to the school day at 15 elementary schools using online courses that are not teacher-led.

Despite the growth of online and blended learning, policy and access barriers still exist for many students who wish to take an online course or attend an online school, and for many educators who seek to start an online program. A continuing need exists for policymakers to develop a framework to allow and encourage online and blended teaching and learning to enhance, expand, and transform learning. Online learning has proven to be meaningful to students, igniting their passion for learning using real-world applications, stimulating their creativity and innovation, and communicating on the global stage—taking teachers and students beyond the class walls and beyond the class period in order to open new possibilities for both teaching and learning.

K-12 online learning background, categories, and definitions

This section is primarily for readers who are relatively new to online learning, as it reviews the basic elements of teaching and learning in online and blended formats. It also provides definitions used in the report, and explains the main categories of online programs that *Keeping Pace* highlights. This section is partially based on the second edition of the *National Primer on K-12 Online Learning*² published by iNACOL, and some sections directly quote from that report.

K-12 online learning is growing rapidly and evolving in many different directions. As it evolves it is merging with face-to-face instruction, and the result, blended learning, is likely the fastest-growing segment in online learning. Other ways in which online and blended learning are evolving mix online instruction with other elements of educational technology. Instruction may be entirely classroom-based, but use computers, the Internet, and other technologies to enhance learning. *Keeping Pace 2010* explores many of these trends, but uses online learning—which we define as teacher-led instruction that takes place over the Internet, with the teacher and student separated geographically—as the starting point.

Many terms and definitions in the field, such as online learning, blended learning, hybrid learning, elearning, virtual schools, and cyberschools, do not have commonly understood definitions.

Online learning is instruction via a web-based educational delivery system that includes software to provide a structured learning environment. It enhances and expands educational opportunities, and may be synchronous (communication in which participants interact in real time such as videoconferencing) or asynchronous (communication that is separated by time such as email or online discussion forums). It may be accessed from multiple settings (in school and/or out of school buildings). **Blended learning** combines online learning with other modes of instructional delivery.

The online learning environment and the role of the online teacher

One of the misconceptions about learning online is that online courses consist mostly of reading on a computer screen. While this may be true of a few online programs, in most online courses there is a high degree of communication and interaction between teachers and students. In fact, many online teachers report that teaching online is more time consuming than teaching in a classroom because of the amount of individual attention each online student receives. Courses are delivered via a software package called a **learning management system** (LMS), which includes communication tools, instructional tools, and assessment features.

The teacher in online and blended courses is just as important as the teacher in the physical classroom. An online teacher's roles include guiding and individualizing learning; communication with students; assessing, grading, and promoting students; and, in some cases, developing the online course content and structure.

² *A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning (Version 2, 2010)*, by Matthew Wicks and published by the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL). Available at www.inacol.org

Online instructional materials include audio and video presentations, animation, digital textbooks, and other content that may reside inside or outside the learning management system. Publishers, digital content companies, and nonprofit organizations are increasingly developing content. Except for synchronous instruction, little course material can be delivered via the equivalent of a classroom lecture.

The skills necessary to successfully teach online often go beyond those required in a traditional classroom. Many **online program professional development requirements** focus on helping teachers understand how to motivate individual learners, enhance student interaction and understanding without visual cues, tailor instruction to particular learning styles, and develop or modify interactive lessons to meet student needs.

Assessing online students and schools

Assessment and grading are as important in an online program as in a brick-and-mortar classroom. An online student typically completes a variety of quizzes, tests, exams, reflections of learning, collaborative discussions, and individual/group work products, such as essays and projects, which the teacher will use in determining the student's grade in that class. For students taking individual online courses in combination with traditional classes as part of their brick-and-mortar school program, online course grades simply become part of their overall grade point average. While students' mastery of concepts learned in supplemental online courses may be assessed in more general standardized tests, such as high school exit exams, the online course provider is typically not responsible for administering these tests. Rather, the **home school**, where a student is officially enrolled, is held accountable.

One exception to the typical accountability pattern in the supplemental online course realm is the online Advanced Placement® course which is directly accountable for student results on the relevant AP® exam. Quality online AP® course providers track these results carefully and disclose them as part of key course information.

Full-time online schools, on the other hand, bear full accountability for all student assessments. As with all public schools, online school students must take required state assessments. Test administration can be a complex task, especially for programs serving most or all of an entire state. This challenge is exacerbated by the need for students to travel to testing sites during the customary testing dates set by the state, leaving the best-laid testing plans vulnerable to early spring snowstorms and other weather challenges.

Technology for online programs

Although technology is important to online learning, it is crucial not to overstate its role. In the online environment teachers and students are still the primary players; the technology plays a supporting role. In addition, while some cutting-edge educational technology tools hold great promise for online learning—and indeed classroom-based learning as well—the basic technological components in online education are fairly simple. The hardware that is required is available in most schools and many homes across the country. The software may, with some exceptions, be on its way to becoming a commodity, judging by the vendors' focus on price and services.

In many respects the hardware and software are essentially the “facilities” of an online school, much as physical buildings are the facilities of a traditional school. However, unlike traditional school facility funding, there is no such funding mechanism for online facilities.

Some school districts, however, are finding that their hardware and bandwidth limitations are major barriers to large-scale implementation of online and blended opportunities across the district. This is in part because in early stages, access to online courses may be based on excess or easily acquired capacity—but as hardware and network requirements increase, significant improvements must be made across the district. This is particularly true of urban districts with school buildings that pre-date wiring for computers and Internet access, and rural areas with limited access to high-speed Internet connections.

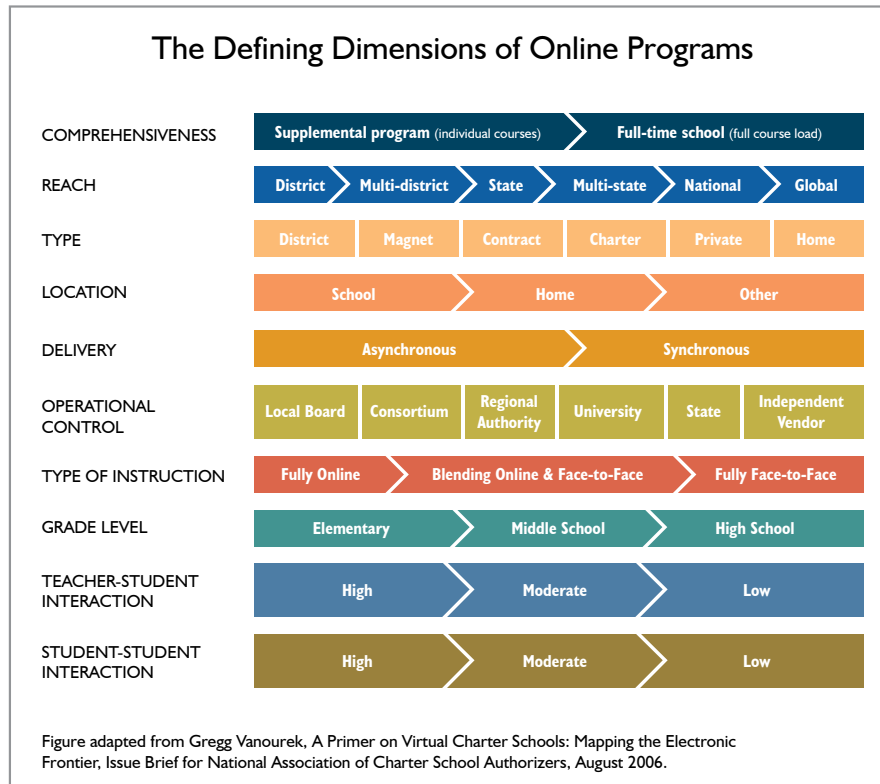


Figure 1: The defining dimensions of online programs

Types of online education programs

Online schools vary in many of their key elements. A set of the defining dimensions of online programs, represented in Figure 1,³ describes whether the program is supplemental or full-time; the breadth of its geographic reach; the organizational type and operational control; and location and type of instruction. Some of these attributes may be combined or operate along a continuum (e.g., location and type of instruction).

Of the ten dimensions listed in the figure, four are especially significant:

- **Comprehensiveness (supplemental vs. full-time):** One important distinction is whether the online program provides a complete set of courses for students enrolled full-time or provides a small number of supplemental courses to students enrolled in a physical school. Full-time programs typically must address the same accountability measures as physical schools in their states.

³ Defining dimensions of online programs. Figure adapted from Gregg Vanourek, *A Primer on Virtual Charter Schools: Mapping the Electronic Frontier*, Issue Brief for National Association of Charter School Authorizers, August 2006.

- **Reach:** Online programs may operate within a school district, across multiple school districts, across a state, or in a few cases, nationally or internationally. The geographic reach of online programs is a major contributing factor to the ways in which education policies can be outdated when applied to online programs, because the policies do not account for the possibility that a student in California may be learning from a teacher in Illinois who is employed by a program in Massachusetts.
- **Delivery (synchronous vs. asynchronous):** Most online programs are primarily asynchronous—meaning that students and teachers work at different times, not necessarily in real-time interaction with each other—but those that operate classes in real time may present a somewhat different set of program and policy questions depending on state policies.
- **Type of instruction (from fully online to fully face-to-face):** Many programs are now combining the best aspects of online and classroom instruction to create a variety of blended or hybrid learning experiences.

Categories of online programs					
Category	Organization type / governance	Full-time / supplemental	Funding source	Geographic reach	Examples
State virtual school	State education agency	Supplemental	State appropriation, course fees, funding formula	Statewide	Florida Virtual School, Michigan Virtual School, Idaho Digital Learning Academy
Multi-district	Charter or district-run	Full-time	Public education funding formula	Statewide	Oregon Connections Academy, Insight School of Washington, Georgia Virtual Academy, Minnesota Virtual High School
Single-district	District	Either or both	District funds	Single-district	Riverside (CA), Broward (FL), Plano (TX), Los Angeles, JeffCo (CO), WOLF (NV)
Consortium	Variable	Supplemental	Course fees, consortium member fees	Statewide, national, or global	Virtual High School Global Consortium, Wisconsin eSchool Network
Post-secondary	University or college	Either or both	Course fees	National	University of Nebraska Independent Study HS, Brigham Young University-Independent Study

Table 1. Categories of online programs and their usual attributes.

Note that the descriptors are the most common in each category, and exceptions exist for each.

The myriad online program attributes can be combined into a few major categories of online schools. *Keeping Pace* places online programs into the following categories:

- State virtual schools;
- Multi-district full-time schools;
- Single-district programs;
- Consortium programs; and
- Programs run by postsecondary institutions (see Table 1).

Note that these categories share some common attributes, but the programs within each category are not exactly the same. For example, most state virtual schools are supplemental, but a few have full-time students. Also, note that the categories are not based on a single defining dimension; instead, each has one or two dominant dimensions that define the category. State virtual schools, multi-district schools, single-district programs, and consortium programs are reviewed in separate sections of *Keeping Pace*.

As online learning evolves into new models that include blended learning, personalized instruction, portable and mobile learning, and computer-based instruction (CBI), other defining dimensions come into play as well (Figure 2). The level of instruction that includes online components may be a lesson, a single course, or an entire school. A course that includes online instruction may expand learning beyond the school day or school year, or it may still be defined by classroom hours. The roles of teachers and students may be quite similar to their roles in a typical classroom, or they may change dramatically as learning becomes student-centered.

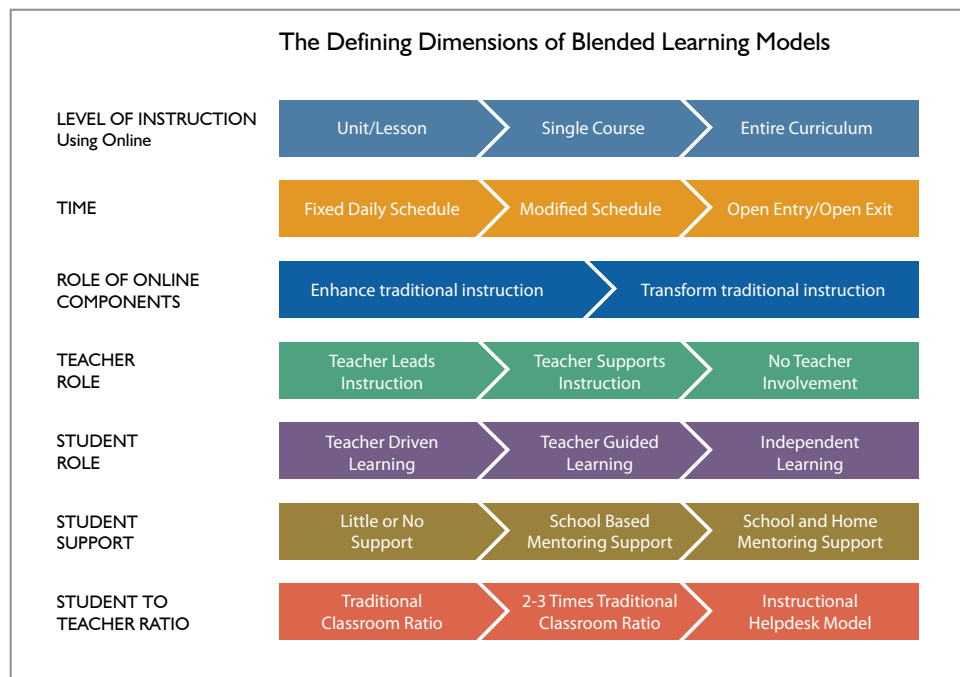


Figure 2: Defining dimensions of blended learning models
 Source: Michigan Virtual University®

Definitions

Online, elearning, virtual schools, digital courses—there are countless terms that relate to online learning but which may have different meanings for different people and organizations. This section defines the terms that *Keeping Pace* uses throughout the report.

Online learning is teacher-led education that takes place over the Internet, with the teacher and student separated geographically.

Supplemental online programs provide a small number of courses to students who are enrolled in a school separate from the online program.

Full-time online schools, also called cyberschools, work with students who are enrolled primarily (often only) in the online school. Cyberschools typically are responsible for their students' scores on state assessments required by No Child Left Behind, which is the primary way in which student outcomes, and school performance, are measured. In some states most full-time online schools are charter schools.

The ways in which *Keeping Pace* counts student numbers for full-time programs and supplemental programs differ from one another:

Course enrollments—one student in one semester-long course—are used to count student numbers in supplemental programs.

Student enrollments—defined as one year-long full-time equivalent (FTE) student—are used to count student numbers in full-time online schools.

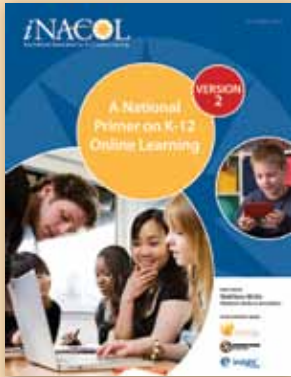
State virtual schools are created by legislation or by a state-level agency, and/or administered by a state education agency, and/or funded by a state appropriation or grant for the purpose of providing online learning opportunities across the state. (They may also receive federal or private foundation grants, and often charge course fees to help cover their costs.) Examples of state virtual schools include the Idaho Digital Learning Academy, Florida Virtual School, and Michigan Virtual School. Because online programs evolve, some programs are categorized as state virtual schools that do not fit the definition presently, but did in important stages of their development.

State-led online initiatives are different from state virtual schools in that these initiatives typically offer online tools and resources for schools across the state but do not have a centralized student enrollment or registration system for students in online courses. Examples include the Oregon Virtual School District and Massachusetts Online Network for Education (MassONE).

Some states draw a distinction between **single-district programs**, which serve students who reside within the district that is providing the online courses, and **multi-district programs**, which serve students from multiple districts. Single-district programs may sometimes serve a small number of students from outside the home district while retaining single-district status.

Notable reports from 2010

The following list highlights some of the reports that are among the most valuable for online learning policymakers and practitioners. It is not meant to be comprehensive. Several reports that appeared in late 2009 are included.



A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL)

October 2010

This report is designed to be a resource for anyone who is new to online learning and wishes to quickly gain a broad understanding of the academics, operations, policies, and other key issues in online education. The primer examines teaching, learning and curriculum in an online environment; choosing and maintaining the appropriate technology to support an online program; evaluating the effectiveness of the program; and emerging trends that will shape the future of online learning.



Learning in the 21st Century: 2010 Trends Update Project Tomorrow

2010

This report is based on the views of more than 370,000 K-12 students, teachers, pre-service teachers, administrators and parents from across the nation who participated in the Speak Up 2009 National Research Project in fall 2009. It examines the growing student demand for online learning and how schools are meeting that demand. The report highlights students seeking out online classes to increase their productivity as learners and to customize the learning process to meet their needs, the challenges that exist in preparing teachers to effectively tap into online learning to enhance student achievement, and a shift in administrators' views of online learning as a professional development tool for teachers to an online learning tool for students.



Innosight Institute Case Study Series Innosight Institute

2009-10

The Innosight Institute case study series investigates, describes, and explains existing problems in education and illuminates how the needed innovations and solutions can materialize. The series provides policymakers and other stakeholders a clearer understanding of how these innovations work as well as their current shortfalls. The Institute's mission is to apply Harvard Business School Professor Clayton Christensen's theories of disruptive innovation to develop and promote solutions to problems in education. Case studies include: Florida Virtual School: Building the first statewide, Internet-based public high school; VOISE Academy: Pioneering a blended-learning model in a Chicago public high school; and Wichita Public Schools' Learning Centers: Creating a new educational model to serve dropouts and at-risk students.



An Expectation of Sharing: Guidelines for Effective Policies to Respect, Protect, and Increase the Use of Digital Educational Resources
 Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)
 Educational Technology Cooperative

March 2010

Across the country thousands of electronic educational resources, which were created through public funding, are “frozen” because they are not legally sharable. This document recommends a set of specific guidelines for increasing the potential for sharing these materials while preserving the rights of owners. The guidelines focus on standard terminology, granting—rather than reserving—rights, and establishing the infrastructure and incentives for sharing.



Horizon Report: 2010 K-12 Edition
 The New Media Consortium

April 2010

Key learning technology trends, critical challenges for education and impactful technologies to watch are identified and ranked in this yearly report from The New Media Consortium. Guided by an international Advisory Board, this report examines emerging technologies for their potential impacts on and use in teaching, learning, and creative expression within the environment of pre-college education.



Virtual K-12 Public School Programs and Students with Disabilities: Issues and Recommendations
 Project Forum at National Association of State Directors of Special Education

July 2010

This policy forum proceedings document offers compelling findings from a recent gathering of special education and virtual learning leaders funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs. Highlights include the identification of issues and challenges related to serving students with disabilities in virtual K-12 public school programs, and identifying what works in providing special education and related services to students with disabilities in virtual K-12 public school programs.



How to Start an Online Program
www.onlineprogramhowto.org

This comprehensive new website, developed by the International Association for K-12 Online Learning with assistance from an Advisory Team, helps educators and policy makers who are new to online learning by providing resources in all key topics that must be addressed when starting an online program. Topics reviewed include funding, curriculum, teaching, and quality.

The state of K-12 online learning in 2010

As online learning grows and evolves in many directions, it becomes increasingly difficult to capture a snapshot of the national landscape that covers all types of online learning. This section explores the state of online learning in the summary state table (Table 2), and then in four subsequent sections on state virtual schools, multi-district online schools, district online programs, and consortia.

This section reviews four categories of online learning: state virtual schools and initiatives; full-time online schools; single-district online programs; and consortium online programs.

State virtual schools and state-led online initiatives are created by legislation or by a state-level agency. They are often, but not always, administered by a state education agency, and usually funded by a state appropriation or grant for the purpose of providing online learning opportunities to students across the state. They may also receive federal or private foundation grants, and sometimes charge course fees to help cover their operating costs.

Keeping Pace distinguishes state-led online learning initiatives, as opposed to state virtual schools, as programs that provide online content or resources to schools across the state but do not provide the full combination of course content, a teacher, and a learning management system that together provide a fully online course that can be accessed by students. Initiatives may, for example, provide the course content without the teacher, who is provided by the local school.

Full-time online schools are the main education providers for their students, unlike state virtual schools that are primarily supplemental. This section of *Keeping Pace* focuses on full-time online schools that operate across multiple school districts, and often draw students from an entire state.

Single-district online programs are created by a district primarily for students within that district. While they may be full-time, most provide supplemental online courses for students who are enrolled full-time in the district and are accessing most of their courses in a physical school. Single-district programs are leading the trend towards blending online and face-to-face courses.

Consortium online programs are often developed by districts or intermediate service units who wish to create efficiencies by combining resources. They usually serve students across multiple districts who join the consortium.

Online learning activity by state

Table 2 presents all 50 states rated in six categories of online learning activity: full-time and supplemental online options for high school, middle school, and elementary school students.

For each category we assigned one of four ratings:

- Available to all students across the state
- Available to most, but not all, students across the state
- Available to some, but not most, students across the state
- Available to few or no students across the state

State ratings are based on the availability of online learning options to students of all grade levels in all geographic areas of the state. When recent changes in policy, programs, or funding clearly indicate a change in availability for the 2010-11 school year, the ratings are based on the expected availability for the coming year, otherwise they are based on the availability for the 2009-10 school year.

The rating for each category in each state was a mix of objective metrics and subjective determinations. Several factors were taken into account. First and foremost, we asked the question: If students (or their parents) from anywhere in the state are seeking a publicly-funded online course or full-time online school at a specific grade level, how likely is it that they will have access to these opportunities? The primary question was then subdivided into several sub-questions:

1. Do full-time online schools or supplemental online programs exist?
2. If such schools and programs exist, are they available to students across the entire state, or are they restricted by location or other factors? In particular, is their total enrollment limited at a level below demand, either explicitly by a cap on enrollments or students, or implicitly by funding constraints?
3. Does the decision to participate in online learning primarily rest with the student and parent or do individual schools control the decision?
4. Are there other potential barriers such as enrollment fees that would discourage some students from participating?

The above set of questions was based on the existence and attributes of programs and policies, including funding of online schools and the presence or absence of seat-time requirements. We also recognize that our knowledge of programs and policies is imperfect, so we looked at the size of online schools and programs relative to the state's school-age population as a way of determining whether barriers might exist of which we are unaware. The percentage of the school-age population that is taking part in online learning in a handful of states with well-known and successful online schools (e.g., Florida and Idaho) created a benchmark against which other states were compared.

We also looked for evidence of significant district programs that provide options beyond state virtual schools and full-time charter schools. In cases where the presence and size of district programs would shift a state's rating, we researched district programs in more detail.

Any summary rating system must balance the competing needs of accurately describing as many data points as possible while keeping the number of categories and ratings low enough as to be meaningful. States that have significant online programs that are not available across all grades or locations were particularly challenging. An empty circle does not necessarily mean there are no online learning opportunities in the state in that category, but if such options exist they are highly restricted to a very small percentage of the student population.

Table 2: State-level snapshot of online learning activity

State ratings are based on the expected availability of online learning options to students of all grade levels in all geographic areas of the state for the 2010-11 school year. Availability is in turn based on the existence and attributes of programs, state policy and funding (including changes created in 2010 that will impact the 2010-11 school year), and the proportion of the student population taking part in online courses and schools for the 2009-10 school year.

Available to all students
 Available to most but not all
 Available to some but not most
 Not available

State	SUPPLEMENTAL			FULL-TIME		
	High School (grades 9-12)	Middle School (grades 6-8)	Elementary School (grades K-5)	High School (grades 9-12)	Middle School (grades 6-8)	Elementary School (grades K-5)
Alabama						
The state virtual school, ACCESS, has the third most course enrollments in the country. AL was second state to create an online learning graduation requirement.						
Alaska						
At least two statewide online schools and some district online programs.						
Arizona						
Arizona Online Instruction (AOI) program had seven online charter schools and seven online district programs in SY 2009-10; 22 additional districts became part of AOI in the 2010-11 school year.						
Arkansas						
Arkansas Virtual High School is state virtual school; there is one full-time virtual charter school which serves students grades 1-8 but is limited to 500 students.						
California						
Many district and online charter schools; University of California College Prep is a state-led initiative.						
Colorado						
Colorado Online Learning is state virtual school; there are 22 multi-district online programs in the state, with one additional opening in fall 2010.						
Connecticut						
Connecticut Virtual Learning Center is very small state virtual school; Connecticut Adult Virtual High School serves adults; 27% of high schools participate with the Virtual High School Global Consortium; new law allows high schools to award credit for online learning courses and requires schools with at least 8% drop-out rate to create an online credit recovery program.						
Delaware						
State virtual school which operated for 18 months lost funding after the 2008-09 school year; no other major programs.						
Florida						
Florida Virtual School is the largest in the country, with districts required to allow students to participate. Districts required by law to provide a full-time online learning option to their students.						
Georgia						
Georgia Virtual School is state virtual school; several suburban Atlanta schools offer online programs. The sole existing full-time virtual charter school only serves through grade 9; very low funding for virtual charter schools currently under review.						
Hawaii						
The Hawaii Virtual Learning Network is responsible for expanding online offerings throughout the state and includes the state virtual school. There is one full-time charter school for high school students, and two full-time charter schools for middle and elementary schools.						
Idaho						
Idaho Digital Learning Academy is a relatively large state virtual school, although budget was cut in 2010. Several online charter schools exist.						
Illinois						
Illinois Virtual School is the state virtual school; one full-time online charter school and one blended learning school in Chicago.						
Indiana						
Several statewide supplemental programs; two hybrid-learning charter schools; small pilot of virtual charter schools in the 2009-10 school year and expanded in the 2010-11 school year.						

● Available to all students ● Available to most but not all ○ Available to some but not most ○ Not available

State	SUPPLEMENTAL			FULL-TIME			
	High School (grades 9-12)	Middle School (grades 6-8)	Elementary School (grades K-5)	High School (grades 9-12)	Middle School (grades 6-8)	Elementary School (grades K-5)	
Iowa	○	○	○	○	○	○	Iowa Learning Online is the state virtual school.
Kansas	●	●	○	●	●	●	44 district programs and charter schools provide online courses, some of these schools serve students statewide.
Kentucky	○	○	○	○	○	○	Kentucky Virtual Schools is small state virtual school with 30% reduction in enrollments last year; also supports blended learning options state-wide; there is a large district program in Jefferson County.
Louisiana	●	○	○	○	○	○	Louisiana Virtual School, the state virtual school, will begin charging course enrollment fees for the first time in 2010-11.
Maine	○	○	○	○	○	○	27% of high schools participate in Virtual High School Global Consortium; new Maine Online Learning Program is not yet underway as of September 2010.
Maryland	○	○	○	○	○	○	Maryland State Virtual School is very small; some districts use its courses for district programs. A law allowing districts to create virtual school programs may be modified this year before it takes effect for the 2011-12 school year.
Massachusetts	○	○	○	○	○	○	MassONE is a state-led initiative supporting blended learning statewide; 57% of high schools participate in Virtual High School Global Consortium. Beginning in 2010, districts may open statewide virtual schools, but are limited to serving 500 students, 25% of which must come from local district unless waiver is obtained from the state; one district opened virtual charter initially serving students grades K-8 in the 2010-11 school year.
Michigan	○	○	○	○	○	○	Michigan Virtual School is the state virtual school; first state to create an "online learning experience" graduation requirement; first two full-time online schools opened in the 2010-11 school year but with limited enrollments.
Minnesota	●	●	○	●	●	●	Many online charter school and district programs offering full-time and supplemental options.
Mississippi	●	○	○	○	○	○	Mississippi Virtual School is state virtual school; operations have been outsourced to a private provider as of the 2010-11 school year.
Missouri	○	○	○	○	○	○	State virtual school, Missouri Virtual Instruction Program (MoVIP), enrolls both part-time and full-time students, but lost most of funding in middle of 2009-10 school year and is primarily on a tuition model.
Montana	●	○	○	○	○	○	Montana Digital Academy, the state virtual school, opened fall 2010 with more than 2,000 course enrollments. There are also some small district-led supplemental programs.
Nebraska	○	○	○	○	○	○	Omaha Public Schools and other district programs; Partnership for Innovations supports blended learning through statewide license for open educational resources from the Monterey Institute for Technology and Education (MITE).
Nevada	●	○	○	●	●	●	Online charter schools and district online programs including Clark County Virtual High School.
New Hampshire	●	○	○	○	○	○	The Virtual Learning Academy Charter School provides primarily supplemental course enrollments for grades 7-12 and acts as the de facto state virtual school.
New Jersey	○	○	○	○	○	○	Few online programs in the state, but 12% of high schools participate in Virtual High School Global Consortium.
New Mexico	○	○	○	○	○	○	IDEAL-New Mexico is the state virtual school; some single district programs exist.
New York	○	○	○	○	○	○	A few online programs through BOCES. New York City Schools and state education department are in pilot and planning stages to provide new online and blended options.

● Available to all students ● Available to most but not all ○ Available to some but not most ○ Not available

State	SUPPLEMENTAL			FULL-TIME			
	High School (grades 9-12)	Middle School (grades 6-8)	Elementary School (grades K-5)	High School (grades 9-12)	Middle School (grades 6-8)	Elementary School (grades K-5)	
North Carolina	●	○	○	○	○	○	North Carolina Virtual Public School has the second highest number of enrollments of any state virtual school.
North Dakota	●	○	○	○	○	○	North Dakota Center for Distance Education provides self-paced and scheduled courses to high school and middle school students. Districts may also use courses from seven approved out-of-state course providers.
Ohio	○	○	○	●	●	●	Many online charter schools with a combined course enrollment of over 31,000 students in the 2009-10 school year. OhioLearns!, is a state-led initiative that launched in September 2010.
Oklahoma	○	○	○	●	●	●	Two statewide full-time online schools and two university supplemental programs.
Oregon	○	○	○	○	○	○	Oregon State Virtual School District, a state-led initiative, supports blended learning statewide; several district programs and statewide online charter schools but growth of online charter schools is restricted.
Pennsylvania	○	○	○	●	●	●	11 online charter schools and other district programs; state is investigating the creation of a state virtual school; non-profit organization blendedschools.net provides supplemental and blended online learning to large number of school districts.
Rhode Island	○	○	○	○	○	○	14% of high schools participate in Virtual High School Global Consortium; Northern Rhode Island Collaborative offers 80 online courses to grades 3-12; little other activity.
South Carolina	●	○	○	●	●	●	South Carolina Virtual School is state virtual school; multiple full-time charter schools.
South Dakota	●	○	○	○	○	○	South Dakota Virtual School is a consortium of course providers approved by state department of education. There is also a statewide virtual alternative school and state-wide programs that focus on career and technical education and advanced courses.
Tennessee	○	○	○	○	○	○	e4TN is small but growing state virtual school serving all districts in state; some district programs including Hamilton County.
Texas	○	○	○	○	○	○	Texas Virtual School Network is state virtual school; Electronic Course Program (eCP) allows for full-time schools operated both by charters and independent school districts for students grades 3-10; some large district programs.
Utah	○	○	○	○	○	○	Utah Electronic High School was among the first state virtual schools in the country. There are two full-time charter schools and two more scheduled to open in 2011. Four school districts provide online elementary school options.
Vermont	○	○	○	○	○	○	State virtual school opened in 2010; 84% of high schools participate in Virtual High School Global Consortium.
Virginia	○	○	○	○	○	○	Virtual Virginia is state virtual school; some district programs especially in northern Virginia.
Washington	○	○	○	●	●	●	At least 15 district programs serving students statewide. There are at least an additional 20 single-district programs.
West Virginia	○	○	○	○	○	○	West Virginia Virtual School is state virtual school utilizing third-party course providers. Schools must pay course fees, which can be quite high, after state budget allocation has been spent.
Wisconsin	○	○	○	●	●	●	Wisconsin Virtual School – Wisconsin Web Academy is state virtual school. The Wisconsin eSchool Network, a supplemental program, is a consortium of nine districts including some of the largest districts in the state. In addition there are 13 full-time online charter schools.
Wyoming	○	○	○	●	●	●	Wyoming Switchboard Network coordinates distance learning for K-12 full-time and supplemental options statewide.

Table 2: State level snapshot of online learning activities

State virtual schools

State virtual schools have been a critically important part of the online learning landscape in many states. Indeed, for hundreds of thousands of students their first exposure to an online course has happened via a state virtual school. State virtual schools, or state-led online learning initiatives, now exist in 39 states (Figure 3 and Table 3). Their size varies greatly, from many schools with fewer than 2,500 course enrollments to the Florida Virtual School, with more than 200,000 course enrollments. Together, the state virtual schools had about 450,000 course enrollments (one student taking one semester-long course) in 2009-10. This was an increase of nearly 40% over the previous year. However, two state virtual schools—in North Carolina and Florida—alone account for 96% of the net growth, meaning that the total enrollment increases and decreases in other state virtual schools account for only a 4% increase. Some other state virtual schools grew by small amounts, but others lost enrollment such that the overall change in state virtual enrollments was flat if NC and FL are not included in the count.

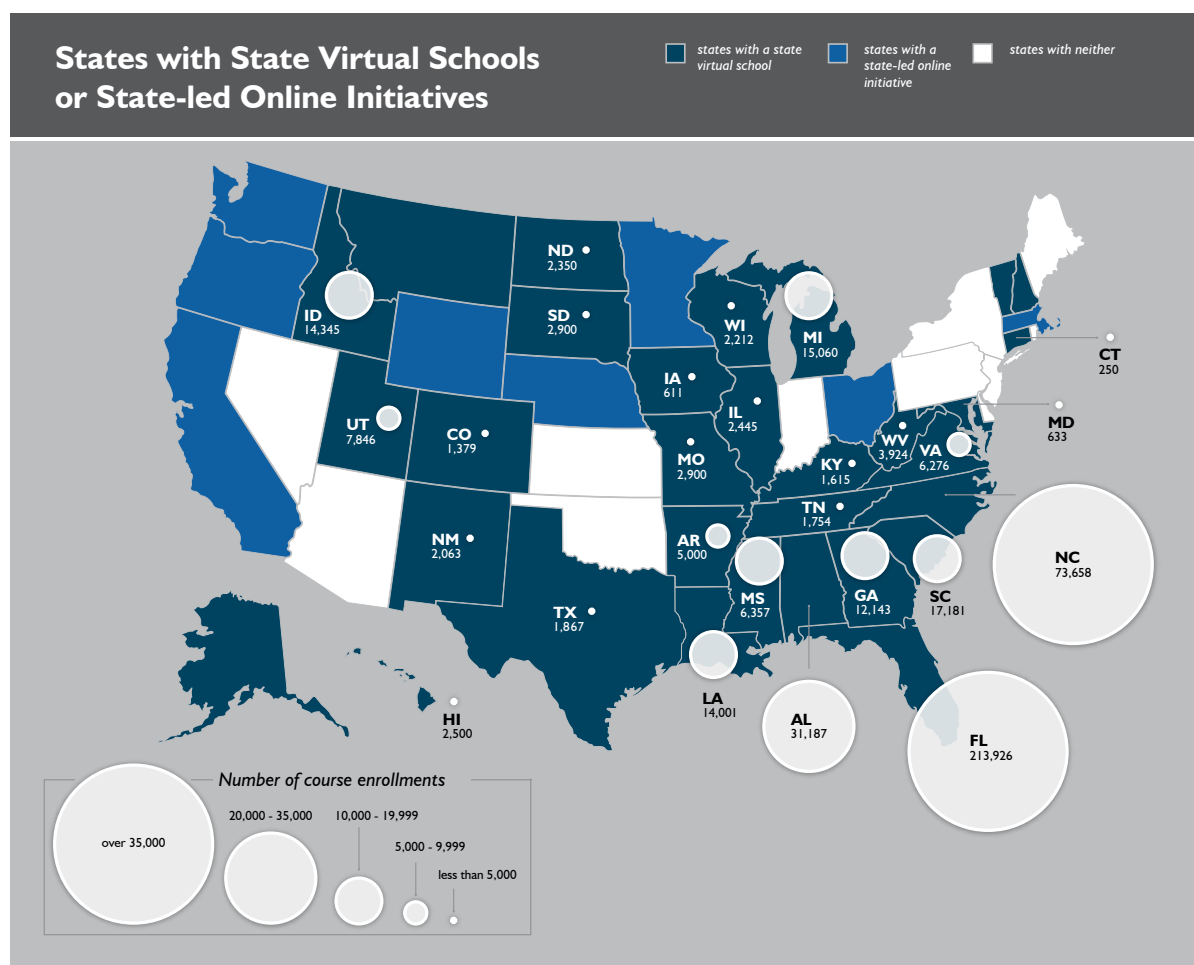


Figure 3: States with state virtual schools (dark blue) or state-led online learning initiatives (light blue). Circles and numbers indicate number of course enrollments in state virtual schools.

Attributes of state virtual schools

Most state virtual schools share the following attributes:

SIZE Most had a few thousand to about 16,000 course enrollments (one student taking one semester-long course) in 2009-10.

FUNDING Funded primarily by legislative appropriation, sometimes supplemented by charging course fees.

GRADE LEVEL Grade levels are primarily high school, although half offer middle school courses and most offer high school courses to middle school students.

FULL-TIME STUDENTS Most provide supplemental courses to students who are enrolled in another school full time. Though half offer a full-time option, most serve few or no full-time students.

ORGANIZATION TYPE Run by or within the state education agency.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT Most state virtual schools work in partnership with local school districts, which grant the credit for the online course. The state virtual school provides the grade for the course. With the exception of courses that have a common exam that is the same for both online and face-to-face courses (e.g., Advanced Placement courses and, in some states, end-of-course exams), in most cases student achievement is not easily tracked beyond measures such as grades and course completions.

Exceptions to the common attributes above include:

SIZE Florida Virtual School is roughly three times larger than any other state virtual school, and 10-25 times larger than most, with 213,926 course enrollments in 2009-10.

FUNDING The growth of FLVS is in part due to its funding, which draws on the same funding formula as the state's traditional public schools. Any high school student in Florida can choose an FLVS course without restriction, and the funding tied to that student goes to FLVS. No other state-led program has this funding model, although for 2010-11 North Carolina has instituted a funding formula approach that is similar in some ways to Florida.

GRADE LEVEL Florida Virtual School (FLVS) offers elementary school courses (in conjunction with Connections Academy); the Missouri Virtual Instruction Program also offers elementary courses, though either students or their home district must pay tuition.

FULL-TIME STUDENTS Some state virtual schools have a small number of full-time students; FLVS has full-time students in its K-8 programs.

ORGANIZATION TYPE Colorado Online Learning and the Michigan Virtual School are (or are part of) non-governmental, non-profit organizations. Idaho Digital Learning Academy is a government entity but is recognized (by legislation passed in 2008) as existing outside the state education agency. Mississippi Virtual Public School is now run by Connections Academy through a contract with the MS Department of Education. Montana Digital Academy is a unit of the Montana higher education system hosted by the University of Montana's College of Education. Missouri Virtual Instruction Program and Illinois Virtual School outsource operations to other government entities in the state.

Table 3: State virtual schools

Table 3 shows key attributes for many state virtual schools⁴:

Program name	Start date	Governance	# Course enrollments (2009-10)	% Annual change	Grade levels	Full-time students?	Ratio to state population*
Alabama ACCESS	Fall 2005	SEA	31,187	+11%	9-12	No	14.3
Arkansas Virtual High School	Spring 2000	SEA	5,000	-6%	9-12	No	3.6
Colorado Online Learning	Fall 1999	Independent NGO with partial state funding	1,379	-22%	9-12	Yes, 10	.56
Connecticut Virtual Learning Center	Spring 2007	SEA	250	0%	9-12	No	.143
Florida Virtual School	1997	Special school district	213,926	+39%	K-12	Yes, 205	27.4
Georgia Virtual School	Fall 2005	SEA	12,143	+22%	6-12	Yes, 10	2.6
Hawaii Virtual Learning Network	2008	SEA	2,500	0%	K-12	Yes	4.7
Idaho Digital Learning Academy	Fall 2002	Gov't entity outside SEA	14,345	+49%	6-12	Yes, 30	17.6
Illinois Virtual School	Spring 2001	SEA	2,445	-16%	5-12	Yes, ~50	.4
Iowa Learning Online	Summer 2004	SEA	611	+49%	9-12	No	.4
Kentucky Virtual Schools	January 2000	SEA	1,615	-30%	K-12	Yes	.8
Louisiana Virtual School	Fall 2000	SEA	14,001	+27.3%	6-12	No	7.6
Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities	Fall 2003	SEA	633	-11%	6-12	Yes	.2
Michigan Virtual School	2000	NGO- state-funded 501c3	15,060	-6%	6-12	No	2.8
Mississippi Virtual Public School	Fall 2006	SEA, outsourcing to EMO	6,357	-9%	6-12	No	4.6
Missouri Virtual Instruction Program	Fall 2007	SEA	2,900	-82%	K-12	Yes, 55	1.0
Montana Digital Academy	Fall 2010	Unit of the higher education system	New program	n/a	9-12	Yes	n/a

⁴ Most of the data are based on the *Keeping Pace 2010* program survey, which was developed and collected in conjunction with the Southern Regional Education Board. One course enrollment is one student taking one semester-long course; enrollments are 2009-10 school year.

Program name	Start date	Governance	# Course enrollments (2009-10)	% Annual change	Grade levels	Full-time students?	Ratio to state population*
New Hampshire Virtual Learning Academy Charter School	May 2007	LEA	8,000	+38%	7-12	Yes	12.3
New Mexico IDEAL	2008	SEA	2,063	+37%	P-20+	Yes, with local board approval	2.1
North Carolina Virtual Public School	Summer 2007	SEA	73,658	+368.5%	9-12	No	17.1
North Dakota Center for Distance Education	Fall 1996	SEA	2,350	-3%	6-12	Yes, 100	7.6
South Carolina Virtual School	Fall 2007	SEA	17,181	+32%	9-12	No	8.1
South Dakota Virtual School	March 2007	SEA	2,900	+25%	6-12	No	7.4
Tennessee – e4TN	Spring 2006	LEA	1,754	+15%	6-12	Yes, 4	.6
Texas Virtual School Network	Spring 2009	SEA	1,867	+1713%	9-12	No	.1
Utah Electronic High School	1994	SEA	7,846	+.2%	9-12	Yes, limited	5.1
Vermont Learning Cooperative	Fall 2010	SEA/LEA	New program	n/a	9-12	No	n/a
Virtual Virginia	Fall 2004	SEA	6,276	+20%	6-12	No	1.6
West Virginia Virtual School	Fall 2001	SEA	3,924	+24%	6-12	No	4.7
Wisconsin Virtual School	2000	LEA	2,212	+25.5%	6-12	Yes, 36	.8

Table 3: Attributes of state virtual schools.

Acronyms used: LEA – Local education agency; NGO – Non-governmental organization; SEA – State education agency;

* The ratio is calculated as the number of course enrollments in the state virtual school, divided by the state’s public high school student population, multiplied by 100.

State virtual schools are in flux due to funding constraints and policy changes.

In 2010 a multi-year trend has accelerated as it has become clear that the role of state virtual schools is changing, amid expanding online learning opportunities with new providers, business models, and products emerging and evolving rapidly. In addition, there is significant turmoil in many of the states that had supported prominent state virtual schools. While some state virtual schools continue to grow, many are facing budgets that are either flat or reduced, leading to a slowing or reversal in the growth of course enrollments. Figure 4 shows the enrollment and growth rates of all state virtual schools for which data are available.⁵

⁵ Course enrollment data for state virtual schools are based on the *Keeping Pace 2010* survey.

Snapshots of changes in course enrollments and funding include:

Three states opened or created new state virtual schools.

- **The Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative** launched, using a model similar to the barter system created by the Virtual High School Global Consortium and applying it across the state to create a new state virtual school model.
- **Montana Digital Academy** had its first students in fall 2010, with more than 2,000 course enrollments in its first semester.
- **Alaska** began the process of creating a new state virtual learning network, releasing a grant application process in 2010 for implementation in 2010. Both Vermont and Alaska are using Enhancing Education Through Technology (E2T2) funds to start their programs.

Three state virtual schools experienced large enrollment increases.

- **Florida Virtual School**, the largest online school in the country, continued to grow rapidly. Its course enrollments increased by 38% to 213,926 in 2009-10.
- The **North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS)** became the second state virtual school in the country (after FLVS) to be funded based on a funding formula tied to the state's public education formula. NCVPS has become the second largest state virtual school in the country, with 73,658 course enrollments in 2009-10 even before the funding formula was put into place; this was a 369% increase from 15,721 enrollments in 2008-09. However, the funding formula in North Carolina does not allow for growth in the way that the funding model in Florida has, because NCVPS is funded for 2010-11 based on 2009-10 enrollments, with a projected increase. The funding is created by charging school districts for their 2009-10 enrollments. Most importantly, districts retain the right to refuse to allow students to take an NCVPS course.
- In 2009-10, **Louisiana Virtual School** had 5,789 students and 14,001 course enrollments, 27% growth compared to 2008-09. For 2010-11 the total budget from state allocations and grant funding is down by \$1.5 million to approximately \$2.9 million.

Many other state virtual schools saw flat or declining enrollments or funding, either in 2009-10 or looking ahead to 2010-11.

- **Idaho Digital Learning Academy** grew by 49% in 2009-10, but in spring of 2010 IDLA's funding was cut for the 2010-11 school year. Although IDLA has been able to secure some new private funding, its course enrollments will be capped during the 2010-11 school year and IDLA will not be able to meet anticipated demand.
- The **Missouri Virtual Instruction Program** saw its funding drop from \$5.8 million in 2008-09 to \$4.8 million in 2009-10; however, its funding was eliminated mid-year, forcing it to charge tuition to all students in the spring semester. As a result, its enrollments dropped 83% from 15,810 in 2008-09 to 2,900 in 2009-10. It has received \$600,000 to serve medically fragile students in the 2010-11 school year.
- **Arkansas Virtual High School** is funded through an annual Department of Education grant; funding was steady at \$740,000 from 2007 through 2009, however, in 2009-10 the funding decreased to \$590,000.
- **Illinois Virtual School** experienced a 16% decline in course enrollments to 2,445 in 2009-10.
- In **Maryland**, course enrollments in the state virtual school declined from 927 in the 2007-08 school year to 710 in 2008-09 and declined further to 633 in school year 2009-10, largely due to a lack of funding at the district level.

Also, the Mississippi Virtual Public School became the first state virtual school to be outsourced. In 2010 the legislature passed a law requiring that the school be outsourced, and the MS Department of Education released a Request for Proposals, eventually selecting Connections Academy as the provider. Within two weeks of making the announcement, registrations reached near capacity and were closed to all but 12th graders.

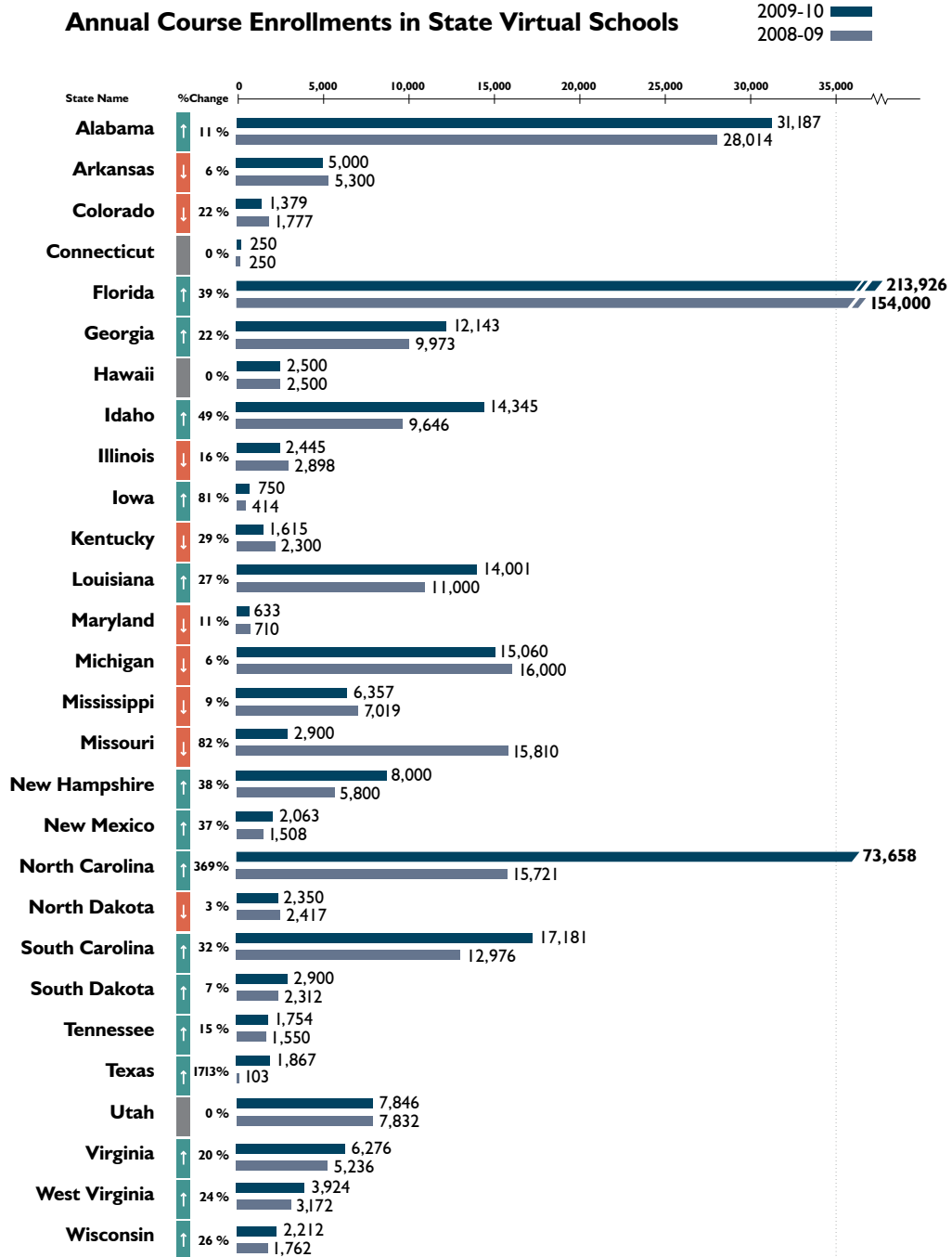


Figure 4: Annual course enrollments and percent change in state virtual schools

The role of state virtual schools is changing

The changes in online learning in recent years, including budget cuts to state virtual schools, the expansion of alternative providers, and the increase in district online learning programs, call into question the role of state virtual schools in at least some of the states in which they currently operate. The key roles of state virtual schools have evolved from being primarily or entirely a provider of supplemental online courses, to also helping states and districts build online learning expertise, and providing thought leadership around online learning issues (Figure 5). As budgets for many state virtual schools are reduced or even eliminated, and states without state-wide options struggle to find funding for large-scale initiatives, the critical roles that state virtual schools have served—beyond the obvious of offering classes to students—should be considered. In the first decade or so of K-12 online learning, state initiatives and state virtual schools have played a key role in efficiently providing high-quality online courses and resources. As online learning activity increasingly moves to the district level, the ongoing role of state virtual schools and other state-level efforts is being re-examined.

Key Roles for a State Virtual School



Figure 5: Key roles for a state virtual school

Multi-district full-time online schools

Online schools that serve students full-time from across multiple districts, and often an entire state, make up a second major sector of online learning. These schools are often, but not always, charter schools. In full-time online schools, students enroll and earn credit and diplomas issued by the online school.

The number of states that have full-time online schools is growing, as is the number of these schools, and the number of students obtaining most or all of their education online. Although growth has not been equal across all states, in general growth in full-time online schools across the country has been more steady than the uneven growth experienced by state virtual schools.

As of fall 2010, 27 states and Washington DC have at least one full-time online school operating across multiple districts (Figure 6).

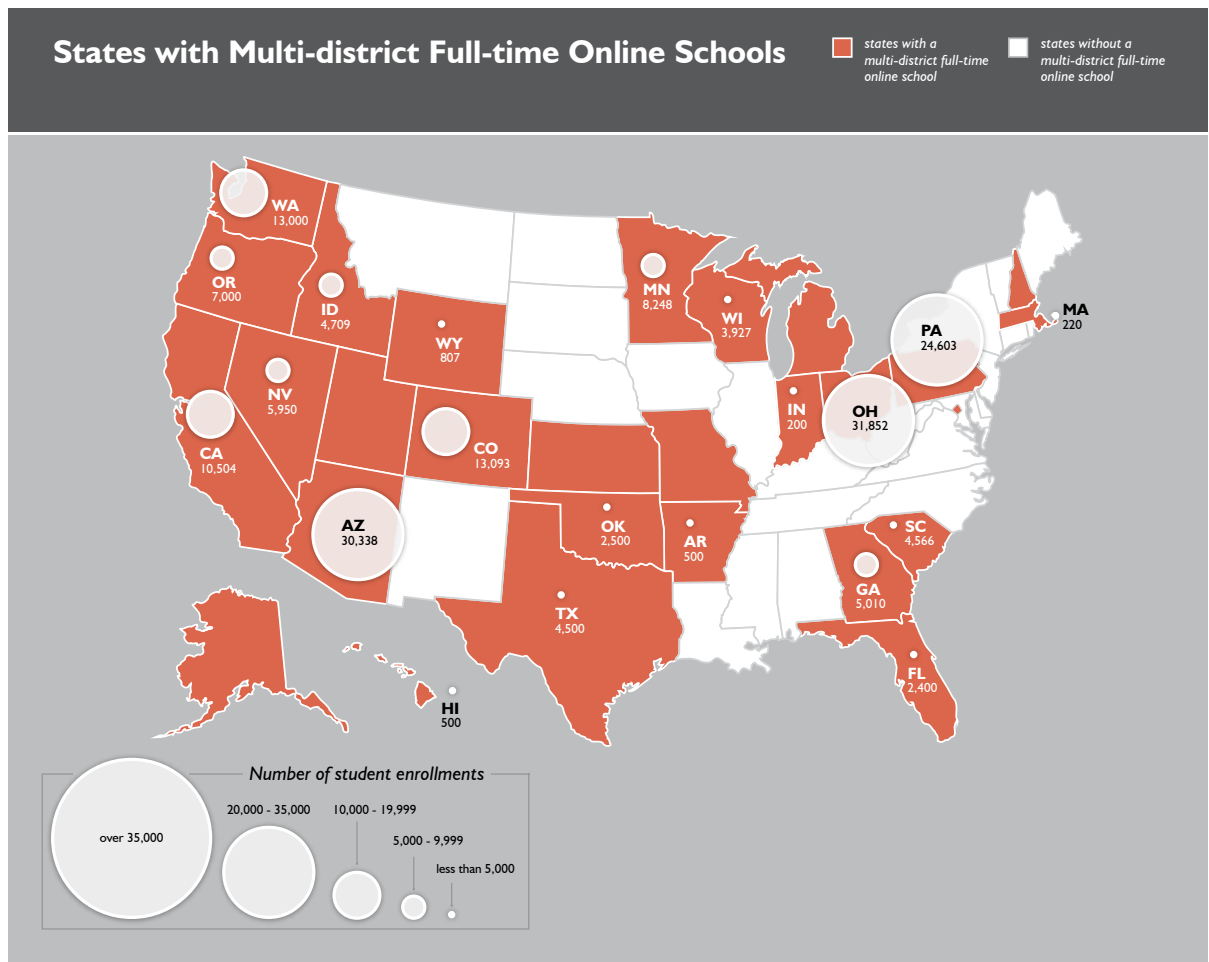


Figure 6: States with multi-district full-time online schools, and the number of students in full-time schools in states that track and report these data
 Florida full-time number is for the Virtual Instruction Program only, not FLVS.

Attributes of full-time, multi-district online schools

Most full-time, multi-district online schools share the following attributes:

ORGANIZATION TYPE Often organized as a charter school.

AFFILIATION Many schools are affiliated with a national organization, such as Connections Academy, K12 Inc., Advanced Academics, or Insight Schools, which provides courses, software, teacher professional development, and other key management and logistical support.

GEOGRAPHIC REACH Most of these schools attract students from across the entire state, in order to achieve scale; therefore most of these schools are in states that allow students to enroll across district lines and have funding follow the student. The Electronic Course Program in Texas offers full-time online courses statewide to students in grades 3-10.

ALL GRADE LEVELS are offered in online schools collectively, although individual schools may be limited to older or younger students.

FUNDING is often provided via state public education funds that follow the student, though some are funded through appropriations, fees, or grants.

ENROLLMENTS Most have few or no part-time students, and most have enrollment of a few hundred to several thousand students (FTE).

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT Because these are full-time schools, they are accountable in the same ways as all other public schools and/or charter schools in the states in which they operate. They report results of state assessments and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

Exceptions to the common attributes above include:

ORGANIZATION TYPE Some states that do not have charter schools have districts that are offering online schools to students across the state. In some states such as Colorado, full-time online schools are a mix of charter schools and district programs.

AFFILIATION There are many online schools that are not affiliated with a national organization. Most of these are independent.

GEOGRAPHIC REACH Multi-district schools in California are limited to drawing students from contiguous counties. Some national education management organizations have multiple schools in California, in effect covering most of the state.

FUNDING Some states, for example Colorado, have established funding levels for online students that are different than funding for students in physical schools.

National education management organizations (EMOs) are a key part of the full-time online school landscape, because they operate the schools that collectively make up more than perhaps 75% of the total enrollment in all full-time online schools. The EMOs are a mix of companies that started as online school providers (e.g., K12 Inc., Connections Academy, Insight Schools) and companies that were involved in education and have recently begun offering online schools (e.g., Edison, Kaplan). Table 4 lists many of the major companies that are operating online schools.

Some full-time schools are not affiliated with an EMO. Table 5 shows attributes of a collection of full-time online schools, including some affiliated with a national provider and others that are independent.

National Education Management Organizations Operating Full-Time Online Schools						
Name	Start date	States in which company operates schools	Grade levels	# FTEs 2009-10	% Annual change	Part-time students
Advanced Academics	2000	Full-time schools in California, Washington, Minnesota, Alaska, Nevada, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and New York; additional programs with districts in over 30 states	6-12	Not available	Not available	Yes
Connections Academy	Fall 2002	Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Wisconsin and Wyoming	K-12	25,000	+25%	Yes
Insight Schools	Fall 2006	California, Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Kansas, Colorado, Minnesota, and Wisconsin	9-12	Not available	Not available	No
iQ Academy	Fall 2003	California, Kansas, Minnesota, Nevada, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin	3-12	4,104	+7%	Yes
K12 Inc.	1999	In 27 states and the District of Columbia: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming	K-12	67,000	+20%	Yes
National Network of Digital Schools	2005	Pennsylvania	K-12	10,000	+11%	Yes
Pinnacle Education	1995	Arizona	9-12	4,731	+4%	Yes

Table 4: A list of education management organization operating full-time statewide online schools

Full-Time Online Schools						
Name	Partner / Vendor	Start date	Organization type	# FTE enrollments: 2009-10	Part-time students?	Grade levels
Agora Cyber Charter School (PA)	K12 Inc.	Fall 2006	Charter	Between 5,000-7,499	Primarily full-time	K-12
Arizona Virtual Academy	K12 Inc.	Fall 2003	Charter	6,369	Primarily full-time	K-12
BlueSky Online School (MN)	Independent	2001	Charter	Between 1-49	Primarily full-time	6-12
Georgia Cyber Academy	K12 Inc.	Fall 2007	Charter	5,000	Primarily full-time	K-8
Hoosier Academies (IN)	K12 Inc.	Fall 2008	Charter	200	Primarily full-time; 3 part-time students	6-12
Hope Online Learning Academy CO-OP (CO)	Independent	Fall 2005	Charter	2,873	Primarily full-time	K-12
Insight School of Kansas	Insight Schools	Fall 2008	Charter	Between 1,000-1,999	Primarily full-time	9-12
INSPIRE Connections Academy (ID)	Connections Academy	Fall 2005	Charter	400+	Primarily full-time	K-12
Minnesota Virtual High School (Advanced Academics)	Advanced Academics	2007	Run by a district	Between 3,000-3,999	Primarily full-time; approx 500 part-time	6-12
Ohio Distance and Electronic Learning Academy (OHDELA)	White Hat Management	Winter 2002	Charter	2,400	Primarily full-time	K-12
Primavera Online High School (AZ)	AdvancEd	Fall 2001	Charter	11,223	Primarily full-time; 1,000 part-time	9-12
South Carolina Connections Academy	Connections Academy	Fall 2008	Charter	1,800	Primarily full-time	K-12
TRIO Wolf Creek Distance Learning Charter School (MN)	Independent	Summer 2002	Charter	Between 100-249	Primarily full-time; approx 60 part-time	9-12
Washington Online School Network	Advanced Academics	Fall 2005	Multi-district	Between 1,000-1,999	Primarily full-time	6-12

Table 5: A sample list of full-time online schools; this list is not meant to be comprehensive

Enrollment in Virtual Charter Schools*
By School Year

Virtual Charter School	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Appleton eSchool	9	24	33	13	13	12
Kiel eSchool	8	4	2	4	5	2
Monroe Virtual High School	10	29	63	147	270	337
Wisconsin Connections Academy	238	375	468	432	451	432
Wisconsin Virtual Academy		450	684	759	764	865
iQ Academy Wisconsin			211	589	739	841
Northeast Wisconsin Online Charter School			10	15	14	8
Grantsburg Virtual School			3	6	4	
Rural Virtual Academy				10	9	11
JEDI Virtual High School					6	14
Monroe Virtual Middle School					26	37
Honors High Online of Wisconsin						86
Insight School of Wisconsin						245
Janesville Virtual Academy						31
Kenosha eSchool						26
Total	265	882	1,471	1,972	2,303	2,951

* Full-time pupils on the third Friday of September, as reported by Department of Public Instruction.

Table 6: Student enrollment in online charter schools in Wisconsin, 2002-08.⁶

Categories of states with full-time online schools

States fall into three categories that relate to full-time online schools. They are:

Category 1: Stable. Full-time statewide online schools operate under a policy and reporting framework. The policy may still be the subject of political debate.

Category 2: In flux. Full-time schools are operating, but no policy exists, or it's in question.

Category 3: Not yet created. No full-time statewide schools exist.

In Figure 6 (on page 28), the white states are in Category 3. The beige states fall into the first two categories. Table 7 provides full-time online school enrollment in select category 1 and 2 programs.

Category 1 states (full-time statewide online schools operate under a policy and reporting framework) are California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Minnesota, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin. These states usually have an online learning law that regulates online schools; in some cases the law may have been passed in response to an audit of online schools or a lawsuit (e.g. Colorado and Wisconsin, respectively). Most states that have full-time online schools have experienced growth in the number of schools, the number of students per school, and the overall number of online students. Table 6, showing the growth of online schools in Wisconsin from 2002 to 2008, shows a pattern that is fairly common—although certainly not universal.⁷

State policies in the **Category 1** states have most of the following attributes:

- A clear law under which online schools operate.
- Open enrollment allowing students to choose an online school outside their district of residence.
- A reporting requirement for online schools that lets the state, parents, and educators know which online schools are available to students, including student achievement results.

⁶ Wisconsin Virtual Charter Enrollment Numbers, retrieved October 17, 2010, <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/LAB/reports/10-3full.pdf>

⁷ Wisconsin is not an exemplar state because of the cap on the number of students in online charter schools in the state. When the cap was created it was significantly higher than apparent demand among students, but as of August 2010 it appears total enrollment is nearing the cap.

Category 2 states have at least some full-time online schools, but there is some factor that is limiting online school enrollment. Example states include:

- **Michigan** is allowing two full-time online schools for the first time in fall 2010, but it has an enrollment cap of 400 students.
- **Georgia** has been unable to determine the level of funding for online students, at one point in 2010 setting online student funding so low that several schools that were slated to open declined to do so. As of September 2010 the funding situation has not been resolved.
- **Oregon** has capped growth of online charter schools.
- **Arkansas** has only one full-time online school, which is limited to 500 students.
- **Indiana** allows full-time online schools under a limited pilot program.
- **Florida** has created a requirement that school districts offer full-time online schools, which has created confusion and inefficiencies across the state. The belief that students should be able to choose an online school has been put into practice through a mandate to districts that in practice is cumbersome, inefficient, and poorly understood within the state.

Most **Category 3** states—the ones which have no full-time statewide online schools—have no charter school law, or a charter law that prohibits online charter schools, do not allow students to enroll across district lines, or have another policy that prohibits full-time online schools.

Statewide Full-Time Online School Enrollment				
State	2008-09	2009-10	Percent Change	% of state students in FT online schools
Arizona	30,076	30,338	+0.9%	2.79
Arkansas	500	500	0.0%	0.10
California	10,502	n/a	n/a	0.17
Colorado	11,641	13,093	+12.5%	1.60
Florida (VIP, not FLVS)	1,079	2,392	+122%	0.09
Georgia	4,300	5,010	+16%	0.30
Hawaii	500	500	0.0%	0.28
Idaho	3,611	4,709	+30%	1.71
Minnesota	5,042	8,248	+63.6%	0.99
Nevada	3,377	5,950	+76.2%	1.37
Ohio	27,037	31,852	+17.8%	1.75
Oklahoma	1,100	2,500	+127.3%	0.39
Oregon	6,000	7,000	+16.7%	1.22
Pennsylvania	22,205	24,603	+10.8%	0.63
Texas	1,650	4,500	+58%	.09
Washington	13,000	n/a	n/a	1.25
Wisconsin	3,100	3,927	+26.7%	0.45
Wyoming	100	807	+707%	0.93

Table 7: Student enrollment numbers reported are statewide, in states that track and report these data.

The Washington state legislature requested extensive data collection for all online programs in the 2008-09 school year that was not required for 2009-10. Arizona student count includes both full- and part-time students.

Single-district programs

Single-district programs (those that serve students who reside within the district that is providing the online courses) represent an important and emerging segment of online and blended learning. Although data showing their presence and growth are limited,⁸ available numbers and anecdotal evidence suggest that district-level online programs are a major area of growth—perhaps the fastest growing within the online landscape—and that district-served online enrollments will continue to climb rapidly over the next few years.

Published reports⁹ suggest that 50% or more of all districts across the country have at least one student taking an online course. The sources of these courses vary widely, and include private vendors providing online courses to the district, full-time online schools, and state virtual schools. The number of districts that have a well-established program with a program director, program website, and formal course catalog, is well under 50%. The number is growing, however, as in many cases districts are building on a small online program that is largely outsourced to develop a more comprehensive online offering.

While there is a broad range of online offerings at the district level, most single-district programs share the following attributes:

- Often combine fully online and face-to-face components in blended courses or programs.
- Are mostly supplemental, with some serving full-time students. However, the distinction is blurred in a single-district program because many of the students are full-time, but they are likely to be mixing online and face-to-face classes.
- Often are focused on credit recovery or at-risk students.
- Funded primarily by the district out of public funds intermingled between the online program and the rest of the district. In most cases, there is no difference in funding between online students and students in the physical setting.
- Grade levels are primarily high school, with some middle school. A smaller number of districts are beginning to create online and blended options for elementary students.

Table 8 provides a snapshot of a few single-district online programs from around the country that responded to the *Keeping Pace 2010* survey.

In an effort to understand and analyze the growth of district-level online programs in greater detail, *Keeping Pace* examined the online learning programs in the largest school district in each state, plus the District of Columbia. We chose this research method to counteract two drawbacks to much of the reporting that has been done on K-12 online learning:

1. Most surveys have been voluntary and respondents self-selecting, leading to a likely survey bias in that districts with online learning programs are more likely to respond than districts without such programs, and
2. Case studies and anecdotes that highlight the largest and most successful online programs may create a sense that K-12 online learning is more prevalent than it actually is.¹⁰

⁸ *Keeping Pace 2009* discussed limitations of available data describing district online programs. The data limitations have not changed significantly in the past year.

⁹ For example, see Picciano, A.G. and Seaman, J. (2010) *Class Connections: High School Reform and the Role of Online Learning*; and Taliaferro, L., and the editors of Simba Information, (2010) *Moving Online: K-12 Distance Learning Market Forecast 2010*.

¹⁰ We are not claiming that *Keeping Pace* is an exception to either of these drawbacks; in fact the district research effort was done partially in response to these shortcomings.

Single-District Programs				
Name	Start date	Grade levels	# Course enrollments or students, 2009-10	% Annual change
CCPSOnline (Chesterfield, VA)	Fall 2009	9-12	Primarily supplemental; between 1,500-1,999 course enrollments	No change (within 5% of previous year)
Cobb Virtual Academy (Cobb County, GA)	Summer 2001	9-12	Supplemental; between 1,000-1,499 course enrollments	Decrease 5-10%
Los Angeles Unified (CA)	2003	6-12	Primarily supplemental; between 2,000-2,999 course enrollments	Increase 25-50%
Fairbanks B.E.S.T. (AK)	Fall 2008	6-12	Primarily full-time; between 250-499 students; approx 175 part-time	n/a
Hamilton County Virtual School (Chattanooga, TN)	Summer 2005	K-12	Primarily supplemental; 833 course enrollments	No change (within 5% of the previous year)
Institute for Online Learning (Naperville, IL)	Fall 2001	6-12	Primarily supplemental; 300 course enrollments	Increase 10-25%
Massillon Digital Academy (Massillon, OH)	Fall 2003	K-12	Primarily full-time; 113 students	n/a
Northside Virtual High School (San Antonio, TX)	Fall 1999	9-12	Primarily supplemental; between 100-249 course enrollments	Decline 5-10%
Riverside Virtual School (CA)	Fall 2006	6-12	Supplemental; 3,661 course enrollments	Increase more than 50%
St. Johns Virtual Charter School (St. Augustine, FL)	Spring 2008	K-12	Primarily supplemental; 1,200 course enrollments	Increase 10-25%
WOLF (Washoe Online Learning for the Future; NV)	Fall 2005	6-12	Primarily full-time; between 1,000-1,999 course enrollments; approx 900 part-time	n/a

Table 8 provides a snapshot of a few single-district online programs from around the country.

Methods

We first identified the largest district in each state based on student population, meaning that we have 50 districts when Washington DC is included.¹¹ For each district, we reviewed the school district website and whenever possible interviewed administrators in the district. We used existing studies, including the *Keeping Pace* program survey, and also contacted the state virtual schools in many states to determine if the largest district in their state used the state virtual school. In addition, we spoke with major content and software providers to determine if any of the largest districts were among their users.

The districts range in size from just over 3,500 students to over one million in the largest school district (New York City); the average number of students was just over 110,000. We examined full-time, supplemental, and blended online learning programs.¹² Whenever possible we attempted to understand the total number of course enrollments in the online programs, although this proved significantly challenging for the blended programs.

Findings

As of fall 2010 the level of online learning varies significantly among districts, which fall into four categories:

- Established (11 districts, 22%)
- Maturing (13 districts, 26%)
- Early development (22 districts, 44%)
- Absent (4 districts, 8%)

Descriptions of these categories follow. The overall landscape suggests that about half of the largest districts have online learning programs that are established or well on the way to becoming significant; while half are in early stages or have not yet created any online opportunities. Given that the districts reviewed are the largest in each state, we believe that these percentages are likely higher than the national average.

Established (11 Districts) – These online learning programs have been in existence for many years, some for over a decade. They often combine two or more program types: supplemental, full-time, and blended offerings. All programs in this category report annual course enrollments greater than 4,000 or are among the highest on a per student basis. A few have more than 10,000 annual online enrollments; these include Mesa in Arizona and Jefferson County in Kentucky. Although many of these programs began by targeting credit recovery student populations, most have expanded to serve all student groups. Even in these established programs, the percentage of overall district course enrollments attributed to online learning was rarely greater than one percent. Figure 7 shows key statistics for the established school districts.

¹¹ We are not including Hawaii in this analysis, because Hawaii has only one, statewide, school district. Washington DC is also a single district, but it is more similar to other typical large districts than Hawaii is.

¹² We considered a program blended or hybrid if students were engaged with at least 30% of the course content online. In situations where online content did not meet this threshold of instruction, we did not consider these students as participants in a blended course.

Established District Programs

(All statistics from 2009-10 school year unless noted)



Supplemental
course enrollments



Full-time students



Blended
course enrollments

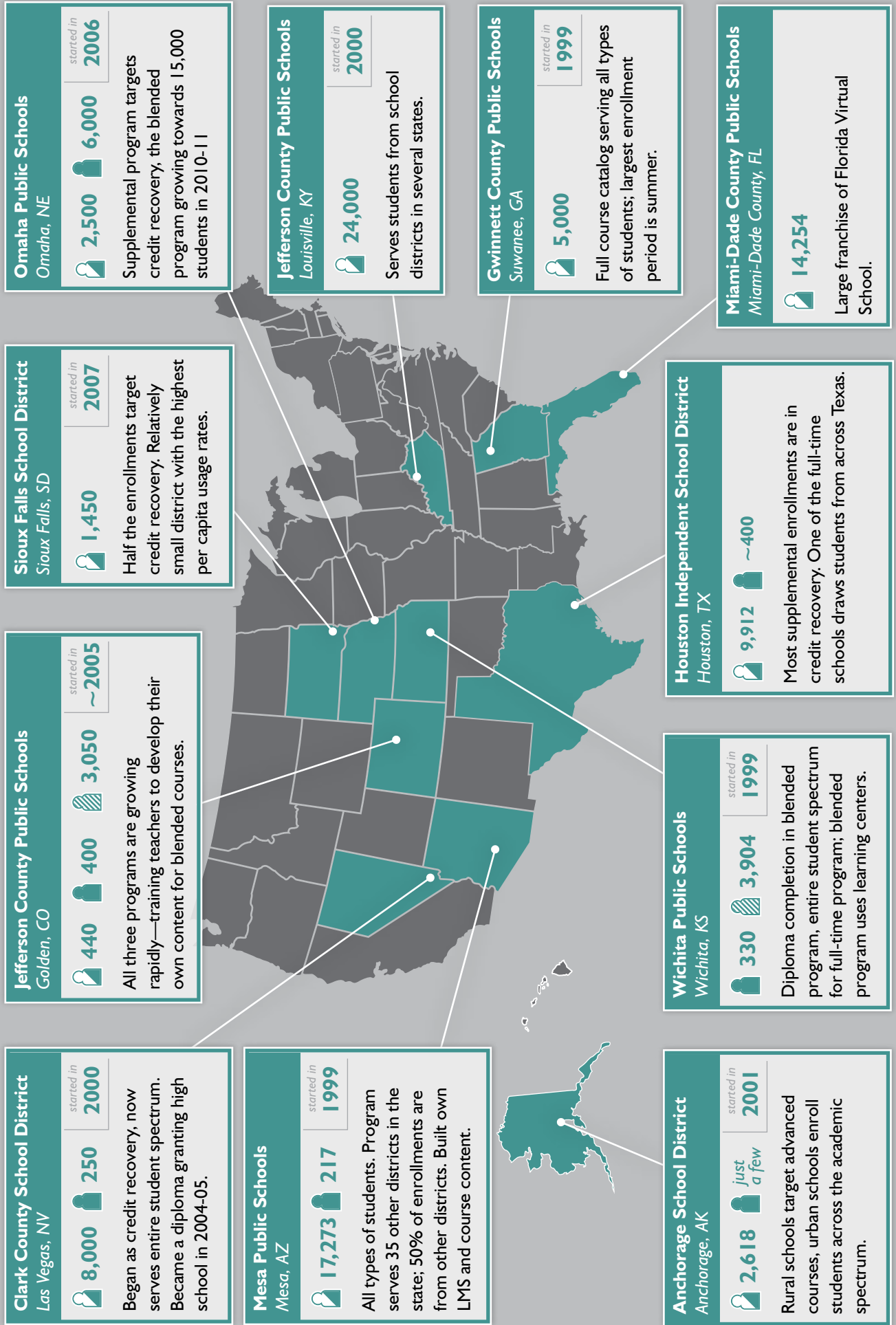


Figure 7: Established District Programs

Maturing (13 Districts) – These district programs have fewer than 5,000¹³ enrollments per year, and a lower level of online enrollment on a per student basis. Many have significant near-term plans for expansion. For several of them, the main provider of online courses is the state virtual school. The districts in this category are:

- Mobile County Public Schools; Mobile, Alabama
- Los Angeles Unified School District; Los Angeles, California
- Joint School District #2; Boise, Eagle, Meridian and Star, Idaho
- Chicago Public Schools; Chicago, Illinois
- Des Moines Public Schools; Des Moines, Iowa
- Montgomery County Public Schools; Rockville, Maryland
- St. Louis Public Schools; St. Louis, Missouri
- Albuquerque Public Schools; Albuquerque, New Mexico
- New York City Department of Education; New York, New York
- Wake County Public School System; Raleigh, North Carolina
- Greenville County Schools; Greenville, South Carolina
- Jordan School District; Jordan, Utah
- Fairfax County Public Schools; Falls Church, Virginia

Early Development (22 Districts) – This is a large group of districts that have small online learning programs. Most of these programs are not shown on the district website, suggesting that parents and students may not be widely aware of them. Many in this group offer self-paced online courses targeting credit recovery students.

Absent (4 Districts) – The online learning programs from this group were not responsive to multiple contact attempts, and there was little or no evidence of the existence of an online program on the district website.

The growth of district-level online and blended programs shows that districts are seeking to meet the needs of their students through a variety of approaches. This includes expanding course offerings, more options for students in need of credit recovery, taking advantage of online instruction to expand the school day, and using technology to personalize learning. We expect to see significant growth in the number and size of district-level online programs in the coming years.

¹³ Readers may notice that the lower threshold for the number of course enrollments in “established” districts is lower than the upper threshold for “maturing” districts. This is because the number of course enrollments is one measure used; another is the number of enrollments in proportion to the size of the district.

Consortium programs

Some online programs do not fit neatly or exclusively into the categories of state virtual schools, full-time online schools, or single-district online programs. These consortium online programs may be run by a group of school districts, by a non-profit organization that works with schools, or by another intermediate education agency. They are usually funded by member schools or by course fees, and are usually supplemental. In most cases the consortium works across a state, although the Virtual High School Global Consortium (VHS) operates internationally. Some consortium programs, such as VHS and the Wisconsin eSchool Network, have been operating for many years, while others have started recently (see Table 9).

Some of the recent consortium offerings appear to be a next generation version of state virtual schools, as some of the most recent state-level online learning options build heavily on districts to offer courses and instruction. For example, the Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative, which *Keeping Pace* categorizes as a state virtual school because it is led in part by the state education agency, is managed by a group that includes school districts and post-secondary institutions. Similarly, the Minnesota Learning Commons (MnLC) is a joint project of the University of Minnesota, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, and the Minnesota Department of Education. The Alaska Virtual Learning Network is being run by several organizations led by an Alaskan school district; other state-level operations, such as the Texas Virtual School Network, also work closely with districts. Finally, other consortium programs are led by intermediate service units, such as boards of cooperative educational services (BOCES) in New York state.

Consortium Programs						
Name	Organization type	Start date	Grade levels	Funding	# Course enrollments or students	Growth rate
Virtual High School Global Consortium (VHS)	Independent non-governmental	Fall 1997	6-12	Course fees and collaborative model; member schools pay an administrative fee and pay for professional development	Supplemental; 12,893 course enrollments	Increase 10-25%
Wisconsin eSchool Network	Independent non-governmental	Spring 2002	6-12	Education formula funding and grants	Both supplemental and full-time; 4,641 course enrollments, 2,116 students	Increase 10-25%
Oregon Virtual Education Center (ORVED)	Education services district	2010	9-12	Fees are paid by students' local host district	New in 2010	n/a

Table 9: Consortium programs

Emerging issues & trends

Several important issues are emerging as online learning becomes more widespread and evolves into offerings at the district level. A key issue is the role of blended learning—a mix of online and face-to-face instruction. Other issues are competency-based learning, school turnarounds, and mobile learning.

Blended learning

One development capturing the online learning limelight is blended learning—schools, courses, and programs that combine online and supervised brick-and-mortar elements. (Such programs are often also described as “hybrid”—*Keeping Pace* has chosen to consider the terms interchangeable, though some practitioners point to degrees of difference.)

The emergence and growth of blended learning creates a set of definitional, policy, and practice questions that in some ways mirror the questions that were being raised around online learning ten years ago. They include:

- What is blended learning? Can it be precisely defined?
- Does blended learning use significantly different practices than either online or face-to-face instruction?
- Should blended learning be treated differently from online learning in terms of policy?

In the following sections we address each of these questions.

What is blended learning?

The simplest definition of blended learning is that it is an educational practice that combines elements of online and brick-and-mortar teaching and learning, but this definition is not nearly comprehensive. The International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) defines blended learning as having three dimensions that demarcate the concept:¹⁴

1. Scope may be a “blended learning program” or a “blended course”;
2. Blended learning combines two delivery modes of instruction, online and face-to-face; the communication in both modes is enhanced by a learning management system;
3. The role of the teacher is critical, as blended learning requires a transformation of instruction as the teacher becomes a learning facilitator; instruction involves increased interaction between student-and-instructor, student-to-content and student-to-student.

Although “blended learning” is a noun, the term “blended” can also be an adjective that describes different units of education. “Blended” may describe:

¹⁴ *A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning (Version 2, 2010)*, by Matthew Wicks and published by the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL). Available at www.inacol.org.

- A course that combines face-to-face instruction and online instruction.
- A school that combines some fully face-to-face courses and some fully online courses.
- A school that offers mostly or entirely blended courses.
- A student's coursework, if the student is self-blending by taking *a la carte* courses from a virtual school while also attending a traditional brick-and-mortar school.

Because blended combines online and face-to-face instruction, primarily at either the course or school level, one might argue that any course that is not *entirely* face-to-face or *entirely* online is by definition blended. Although this may be true in a semantic sense, it is not helpful in terms of defining practices or creating policies.

Two elements describe blended learning in a way that is useful in policy and practice:

1. Blended should describe courses and schools that have significant components of both online and face-to-face instruction and/or curriculum. A school that is online but has the option of a drop-in center for students, for example, should be considered online. A face-to-face course that adds a few digital resources but does not require their use, and does not shift instruction to the online environment, should be considered face-to-face.¹⁵
2. Blended learning should significantly expand or transform instruction and learning.

Both of the above points defy easy categorization. Blended learning has sometimes been defined based on the percentage of instruction that takes place online, but the precision of a number (e.g., 65% of instruction take place online) obscures the fact that in practice determining a percentage of instruction is difficult. The second point, that blended learning should expand or transform learning, may be the salient point, but the question of how to determine transformation remains.

One important way that a blended approach can transform instruction is by providing a rich data stream about a student's learning that can be used by that student's teachers—both online and offline—to provide truly differentiated instruction. For example, in a blended middle school, reading comprehension data from students' online social studies course can be used by the face-to-face language arts teacher to determine small groups in the physical classroom.

Does blended learning use significantly different practices than either online or traditional face-to-face instruction?

Blended learning can and should change educational practice in one of several ways. Among the possibilities are:

1. It can significantly expand the school day or school year by allowing instruction to take place outside of the classroom. Class discussions can occur before or after school, or conversely, can occur during school, building on assignments and learning activities that already have or will occur online, thereby using the time students and teacher are together to best advantage for meaningful conversation that furthers the work students have done in their time outside of the face-to-face classroom. Students can access their courses for self-study in the early morning, evenings or on weekends when the school is not open and a teacher may not be available. Assignments can be given and completed before school starts in the fall, or over the summer. Studies have shown correlations between student achievement and learning time; blended learning allows for an increase in instructional time without requiring school buildings to be open for longer periods.

¹⁵ We are not suggesting that there is no value in either of these practices—adding a face-to-face component to an online course, or enhancing a physical classroom course with online components. The latter, in particular, is a growing practice. We are suggesting that, for purposes of discussion and policymaking, not defining courses with a very small online component as blended is appropriate.

2. It can significantly change the method of instruction, in one or more of many ways. Blended learning can personalize instruction to each student in a classroom, freeing the teacher to focus on working one-on-one with students in particular areas that they need additional help. It can allow students to work through math problems, for example, at their own rate, moving on as they demonstrate mastery and providing additional instruction in areas where students need help—or highlighting for the teacher the students who need assistance in a particular area.
3. It can change the human capital or physical infrastructure equation in education. The role of teachers may change, shifting teachers away from mass lectures and towards one-on-one instruction. For school administrators, the role of physical classrooms and buildings may change as a significant percentage of students access their education from outside of the school building.
4. It can bridge the gap between traditional face-to-face instructional structures and practice and online structures and practice, paving the road toward mainstream online learning opportunities for all students.

Examples of blended learning from schools around the country that include some of these approaches fall into several categories, although the categories are not precise. For example:

Schools that are primarily online but require some level of face-to-face instruction.

Odyssey Charter Schools in Clark County, Nevada, requires its students to be in a classroom one day per week for four hours, where they receive face-to-face instruction and individualized attention. They then complete their coursework for the week online.

Miami Dade’s I-Prep Academy (currently in a pilot phase) provides online students with an optional “learning café” site where they can complete their Florida Virtual School courses. Participating students are provided with laptops so they can work from the site or extend their learning time to evenings and weekends. Students attend this non-traditional environment (complete with couches, comfortable chairs, and colorfully painted walls) to work individually, collaborate on projects, attend virtual tutoring sessions, or to take advantage of other planned activities. Face-to-face participation is optional, but encouraged and readily available.

Schools that are primarily face-to-face but offer a significant online component. Another school in Clark County, Valley High School, offers online credit retrieval courses taught by Valley HS teachers; the school has achieved High Achieving/Exemplary Turnaround status since implementing the online courses.

Other schools combine online and face-to-face instruction at different percentages of each; the online instruction takes place at a distance.

Schools that have students in a classroom for most of the school day, but have some or most of the instruction take place online. Rocketship Education in San Jose, California, has its elementary students spend 20% of their day working independently online, allowing students to focus on their specific learning needs. School of One in New York and VOISE Academy in Chicago also use online content extensively. For these schools, the online component is important because it allows for learning to be personalized to the student, and allows for data to be generated that guides both the online content and the face-to-face teaching. These schools often use a combination of frequent online assessments, self-paced instruction, and detailed progress monitoring systems.

Nearly 150 schools in Florida have implemented ELCs (ELearning Centers, defined as less than 50 students) or VLLs (Virtual Learning Labs, defined as 50 or more students) in partnership with Florida Virtual School. The traditional school provides scheduled time and a workspace (such as a computer lab or library) and FLVS provides the teacher and an online course. This model provides

increased curriculum options to students, and access to a highly qualified teacher who is practicing proven online methods for student success. ELCs and VLLs each have a facilitator to work in tandem with the online teacher to ensure achievement. Statewide, the number of VLLs has greatly expanded (especially in Miami-Dade) due to class size reduction legislation, as districts implement virtual options as a way to meet the amendment requirements.

Schools that are using mobile learning to extend the school day. In North Carolina, Project K-nect gives at-risk high schoolers in a small number of public schools smartphones in order to access content that aligns with their math teachers' lesson plans and course objectives. Students can communicate with each other, as well as tutors, outside the school day.

Benefits of blended learning

The most important potential benefit of blended learning is increased student engagement and learning. While many blended learning programs are so new that data over multiple years are not yet available, some programs are already showing promising results.

In addition to the most important benefit, student learning, there are several additional potential benefits:

- **Potential cost savings in physical infrastructure:** Data comparing the costs of online, blended, and face-to-face instruction are limited, but there is a lack of evidence that the operating costs of online and blended are significantly lower than the cost of face-to-face instruction. However, potential cost savings exist in physical infrastructure, as blended learning can reduce the amount of classroom space that is necessary for a school with a given number of students. For example, Albuquerque's new eCADEMY is intended to serve students with 80% online instruction and 20% onsite instruction. The building cost 1/7 as much as a new school building that is serving half the number of students entirely onsite.¹⁶
- **21st century skills development:** When blended learning is used to enhance classroom instruction, it can foster the development of 21st century literacies, which do not merely hinge on technological proficiency. Quality blended learning prepares students to think critically, to build collaborative relationships, to problem solve, and to communicate in a diverse global community.
- **Enriched experience for the student:** Experience with online learning shows that in many areas an online learning experience can match or improve upon that of a face-to-face classroom. Yet an even higher level of achievement comes when face-to-face teacher contact is involved as well. For the struggling student, this can help keep the student on track, help with specific issues, and possibly provide face time with fellow students as well to reinforce peer-to-peer support and interaction. For the solid or advanced student it helps to identify opportunities for further growth and also provides reinforcing interaction with peers.
- **Enhanced personalization of learning:** Done right, blended learning should allow students to move seamlessly and as needed from an independent, online-based instructional world to 1:1 interaction with qualified professional instructors with opportunities in-between for small group, peer-to-peer interaction online or offline. No more all or nothing, either/or.
- **Increased communication and support:** One key advantage of blended learning is an extra adult in the communication and monitoring processes. In addition to the student/parent/teacher aspect of online learning, students in blended environments potentially get an "extra parent" through a face-to-face teacher or qualified lab facilitator.

¹⁶ *Reducing the Cost of School Facilities through a Blended Approach*, Donna Hutchison, unpublished paper, July 2010.

Should blended learning be treated differently from online learning in policy?

This is a key issue—should blended learning be a policy consideration, and if so how?

There are at least two ways to approach this question. The first is to explore whether blended learning can be **defined and perhaps regulated** as its own category in terms of data tracking, instructional requirements, and other regulations.

Our sense is that the answer is no, that blended should be considered a subset of online, and that in most cases blended schools are either close enough to online or face-to-face that a separate category does not make sense. If one is inclined to argue that all learning should be moving to a mastery or competency-based model of accountability, blended learning fits that model nicely.

The second issue is whether blended learning should be **encouraged and supported**; we believe that it should be. In practice, supporting blended learning through policy is very much like supporting online learning through policy; it entails removing line-of-sight, seat-time, and student-teacher ratio requirements; allowing funding to flow to digital materials and instruction instead of being tied to textbooks; and generally moving from inputs-based measures of quality toward measuring outputs in terms of student opportunities and achievement. In addition, blended learning outcomes should be assessed based on quantitative, data-driven evaluations.

Blended learning is closely tied to competency-based learning, mobile learning, and school turnarounds—topics which are examined in the following pages.

Using blended learning as a model for school turnaround

No Child Left Behind requires that all students meet state standards of “proficiency” by 2014, and that all schools make “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) toward this goal by then as well.¹⁷ Because of the 2014 deadline, the number of schools failing to meet these objectives is set to increase dramatically; in fact, the federal Department of Education has estimated there are 5,000 low-performing schools across the country.¹⁸ While there is not one clear profile of a low-performing school, one thing is certain: its students are in desperate need of a different approach than what they have been given.

A variety of strategies are being used to address these low-performing schools: some are closed permanently; others are closed and restarted as charter or charter-like schools. However, the majority of these schools are targeted to be revamped through either “transformation” or “turnaround” strategies using entirely new educational approaches implemented by some or all of their existing staff. One of the turnaround strategies receiving a great deal of attention is to shift an entire school to a blended learning model that combines classroom and online instruction.

The typical blended learning model in a school turnaround scenario is classroom-based, and allows for independent or small-group work via an online curriculum. With a highly customizable and individualized curriculum that tracks beginning and ending points, students can easily identify their learning paths for the day. Students who are on pace with their achievement metrics proceed with their coursework accordingly, while students who are falling behind are placed into small groups with like needs. The classroom teacher provides highly focused and individualized instruction to help remediate their needs and get them back on track. This method provides an opportunity for struggling students to catch up while not slowing down the rest of the class.

¹⁷ NCLB Accountability FAQ; retrieved September 29, 2010, <http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/schools/accountability.html>

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Education; retrieved October 19, 2010, <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2010/03/whats-possible-turning-around-americas-lowest-achieving-schools/>

The benefits of a blended model are clear. It provides students with the cultural and social strengths of the traditional physical school, including Physical Education, Music, Art, lunch in the cafeteria, recess, and transportation. Teachers are more able to customize learning and allow students to learn at different paces. Students can be assessed on a far more regular basis when much of their activity is online—some schools like the School of One in New York City measure progress daily. This allows the school to measure whether or not the model is working from an individual student, classroom, grade level or whole building perspective, which is critical as it tries to change its low-performing rating.

With the increased interest in blended schools as a turnaround model, organizations with expertise in online learning are partnering with others who provide instructional, assessment, or school turnaround experience. Other educational management organizations are starting with a focus on school turnarounds using a blended approach. Examples of the former include Connections Academy, Wireless Generation, and Alvarez & Marsal partnering together, an example of the latter is City Prep Academies.

Competency-based learning¹⁹

“Both the bored and the bewildered see their motivation for achievement shredded by the system.”

“How ‘Disruptive Innovation’ Will Change the Way We Learn” by Clayton M. Christensen, Michael B. Horn, and Curtis W. Johnson. Education Week, June 4, 2008.

Competency-based learning is a second key trend affecting online learning in 2010. Though the competency-based push is not limited to online/blended learning, the two are closely linked.

Educators and policymakers are increasingly recognizing that seat time is a poor proxy for student learning. A focus on seat time leads struggling students to be socially promoted each year and find themselves in community college with 4th grade math skills. At the same time, it leads students who are accelerated to be stuck in a class that is moving more slowly than they would choose, leading to boredom and related problems. Rather than making time the constant and allowing mastery to vary, competency-based approaches make mastery the measure by which students move on to the next lesson, unit, course, or grade—regardless of how much time it takes.²⁰

Although competency-based learning can take place in a classroom without a technology component, technology makes individualized instruction and competency-based pathways available in a way not previously possible. Software can track students’ progression through a course and can identify areas in which individual students, or groups of students in a class, are facing problems. Competency-based pathways are learning-based, use meaningful assessments for students, and apply explicit and measurable objectives that empower students. Students must demonstrate learning by applying specific skills and content; this allows for mastery of different sets of skills at different paces (e.g., math vs. reading). Students are evaluated on performance and proficiency, not strictly on attendance, homework submittal, or classroom participation.

Shifting from seat time to a competency-based approach requires significant changes in both policy and practice. As of September 2010, the number of competency-based programs in place is small.

¹⁹ This section is based in part on a forthcoming white paper being published by iNACOL.

²⁰ For example, the report “The Silent Epidemic” found that nearly half (47%) of all students drop out because they are bored; Civic Enterprises (March 2006), <http://www.civicerprises.net/pdfs/thesilentepidemic3-06.pdf>.

Policy changes

Competency-based learning requires that student funding and advancement be decoupled from seat time. These changes often occur through one of three different ways: systemic redesign, credit flexibility, and waivers. According to the Education Commission of the States, 12 states have state-level policies supporting “proficiency-based credit.”²¹ For example:

- New Hampshire is the first state to formulate state policy that focuses on creating space for districts to implement competency-based systems. The state has allowed for a full high school redesign, replacing the time-based system (Carnegie unit) with a competency-based system. It has also identified the Concord Area Center for Educational Support to take a leadership role in supporting districts and schools as they redesign.
- Oklahoma’s SB2319 (2010) directs the State Board of Education to adopt rules to allow for completion based on mastery instead of Carnegie units.
- In Ohio, SB311 (2008, the Ohio Core legislation) raised the graduation requirements for high school students, while at the same time acknowledging that “credit flexibility is an essential component of innovation and autonomy and is intended to motivate and increase student learning by customizing around individual student needs and providing access to more learning resources, especially real-world experiences.”²² By March 31, 2009, the State Board of Education was required to adopt a plan that enables “students to earn units of high school credit based on a demonstration of subject area competency, instead of or in combination with completing hours of classroom instruction.” Students may earn credits by completing coursework; by testing out of or demonstrating mastery of course content; or by pursuing one or more educational options as described above. School districts, community schools, and chartered nonpublic schools “shall comply” with the provisions of the plan, phasing in its provisions during the 2009-10 school year.²³
- In June 2008, Nevada passed legislation allowing for an adult high school program, an alternative program, or a distance education program to obtain written approval from the Superintendent to use “progress or completion by pupils in a curriculum that is equivalent to the regular school curriculum. For purposes of this subsection, demonstrated competency in curriculum that meets the state standards may be considered equivalent to the regular school curriculum.”²⁴
- Other states including Alabama, Kentucky, North Carolina and Oregon are taking advantage of flexibility in the way the state allows for granting of credit. Kentucky empowers schools to award competency-based credits if the school-based council has developed criteria for determining proficiency; Oregon started with 6 pilot programs, then a 2009 policy change stated that districts are expected to offer students the option of seat-time or proficiency demonstration; the North Carolina state board of education allows schools to grant credit for on-campus work and/or e-campus work; and the Alabama State Board of Education passed a resolution in spring 2008 allowing local education agencies to accept credit based endorsements toward a high school diploma.²⁵

In these and other states, districts are beginning to implement competency-based approaches. In Chugach, Alaska, the district won a Baldrige award by developing a new instructional model,

²¹ ECS High School Graduation requirements; retrieved September 30, 2010, <http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=740>

²² Ohio Race to the Top application; retrieved September 30, 2010, <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/phase1-applications/ohio.pdf>

²³ Ohio SB311 (2010); retrieved September 30, 2010, <http://education.ohio.gov/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=1427&ContentID=61432&Content=86959>

²⁴ Nevada NAC 385.404; retrieved September 30, 2010, [http://www.leg.state.nv.us/register/RegsReviewed/\\$R134-07A.pdf](http://www.leg.state.nv.us/register/RegsReviewed/$R134-07A.pdf)

²⁵ Alabama Board of Education resolution; retrieved September 30, 2010, http://www.alsde.edu/text/boe_resolutions2.asp?id=1413

assessments, and reporting systems, all of which were aligned with standards.²⁶ It moved away from Carnegie units to a completely performance-based approach to progress and graduation. Progress was remarkable—annual teacher turnover was reduced from 55% to 12%, and the percentage of students participating in college entrance exams rose from 0% to more than 70% by 2000. Adams County 50 (Colorado) leadership believed that teacher and community buy-in to a major shift to mastery based learning was critical; the superintendent worked until she had 85% buy-in from the teachers before moving forward.²⁷

Competency-based learning does not have to be implemented as a system-wide change; it can be offered as an alternative path for individual students or schools. An additional challenge is that for systems that have had high levels of social promotion, requiring students to demonstrate competence may appear to slow their progression—but only because their progression will for the first time be based on actual learning.

Mobile learning: the next ‘next big thing’?

Ten years ago, K-12 online learning was mostly a buzz-phrase with just a handful of real world implementations. 2010’s equivalent may be “mobile learning.” While many advocates wax rhapsodic about mobile learning’s potential to truly, finally make education happen anytime and anywhere, the number of actual schools and students using such tools remains small, and we are not aware of any data that provide comprehensive mobile learning numbers. That, however, is only true as of 2010. Anecdotal evidence suggests that by 2011, mobile learning could grow as quickly as other elements of online and blended learning.

Mobile learning is generally understood to mean the act of accessing curriculum and instruction via devices that travel with students to a variety of locations beyond the school building. The typical mobile learning vision features iPods, smartphones, personal digital assistants, and other handheld devices—the kinds that are now a ubiquitous part of most students’ lives outside of school. The arrival of netbooks and iPads is blurring the mobile learning line—they are clearly mobile devices, but are not as small or as easily mobile as the other mobile devices. Ultimately, however, the way that students access learning is more important than the device. If a student uses a smartphone to start an online course in a classroom, participate in a virtual discussion on the bus home, and take an assessment from the front porch that evening, that’s clearly mobile learning. If that same student carries out the same activities on a 1.5 pound, \$300 netbook, is that any less mobile?

The other distinguishing feature of mobile learning is its content focus, which has so far not been on whole courses or even lessons so much as on discrete “learning objects” such as tutorials, practice activities, and skill-builders. The conventional wisdom is that the small screen and keyboard size of mobile learning devices makes longer-form learning tedious and possibly even bad for students’ health. (Tell that to the 15-year-old watching the entirety of “Avatar” on his Android phone.)

Among the signs that mobile learning is about to get real:

- The comparatively long history and deep catalog of iTunesU, the education channel on Apple’s iTunes sharing platform with the iPod, makes it the first outpost on the mobile learning frontier. Apple boasts “more than 250,000 free lectures, videos, films, and other resources” on iTunesU. While the balance has traditionally been heavily tilted toward post-secondary rather than K-12 education, that still leaves plenty of first-generation iPod-ready learning objects for those seeking a gentle entry into mobile learning.

²⁶ Chugach School District Baldrige announcement; retrieved September 30, 2010, <http://www.nist.gov/baldrige/chugach.cfm>

²⁷ American School Board Journal, Leveling the Field; retrieved September 30, 2010, <http://news.palmbeach.k12.fl.us/superintendent/files/2010/02/vail-Kathleen-Leveling-the-Field-American-School-Board-Journal-March-2010.pdf>

- Pockets of pioneering educators have begun creating their own podcasts as part of an eclectic, homegrown approach to virtual instruction. For example, science teachers Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams of Woodland Park High School in Colorado now upload video podcasts of their entertaining lectures so that class time can be focused on lab activities.
- The newly emerging category of education “apps” for the iPhone and Android phones takes mobile learning beyond non-interactive podcasts. Florida Virtual School has launched the first two of its “meStudying” iPhone, iPod, iPod Touch and Android apps—an Algebra 1 practice tool and meStudying: Reading for College Success. K12 Inc. recently released an app targeted at the other end of the age range, a free Timed Read Practice tool that works on the iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad.
- Along with iTunes/iPhone app developers like gWhiz and Hawk Ridge Consulting, K-12 mobile learning is being nudged along by companies from two sides of the online learning world. Companies like Emantras that cut their teeth in higher education or corporate environments are now deep in conversation with publishers to repurpose content for “mobl21” delivery to a variety of devices.
- Leading online content and platform providers from Apex Learning to Blackboard that dominate the K-12 virtual learning landscape are developing and providing mobile tools in anticipation of the next frontier. Blackboard, for example, has recently released its Mobile Learning solution promoting collaboration and productivity between teachers, students, and parents through a variety of mobile devices.

And where are the mobile learning users? It is telling that leading states and districts in the market for next-generation online learning platforms are all including mobile learning on their punch lists. As one technology coordinator for a very large urban district told a roomful of online learning providers in August 2010, “We’re ultimately looking for a platform and content that our students can access with any device they might have on hand, wherever they might be.” At some point in the imaginable future, online learning and mobile learning may be essentially synonymous.

The K-12 online learning market landscape

Paralleling the growth of K-12 online learning has been the growth in private providers and products serving online and blended programs and courses. All online programs use one or more private suppliers to provide the content, software, or hardware upon which the online school is based. The extent to which components of the online school are developed in-house versus being outsourced varies widely. The growth of these providers, and the ways in which they have expanded into new and often overlapping areas, has created confusion for many educators and policymakers.

Figure 8 attempts to alleviate some confusion by presenting a graphical depiction of the K-12 online learning market landscape. The graphic is meant to give the reader an idea of providers in three areas: Delivery and Management Systems; Content and Instruction; and Professional Development. Delivery and Management Systems encompasses several areas: Learning Management Systems, Student Information Systems, Web Conferencing, and Other Tech. Content and Instruction includes some companies that provide content without teaching, and others that provide both. In the bottom right, Education Management Organizations are included; these companies provide many of the services around the entire wheel, though some online programs may choose to contract out only one or two of their services.

The diagram shows representative companies, and does not attempt to depict a complete list of providers in each area. It is a snapshot, as of fall 2010, of a rapidly changing landscape.

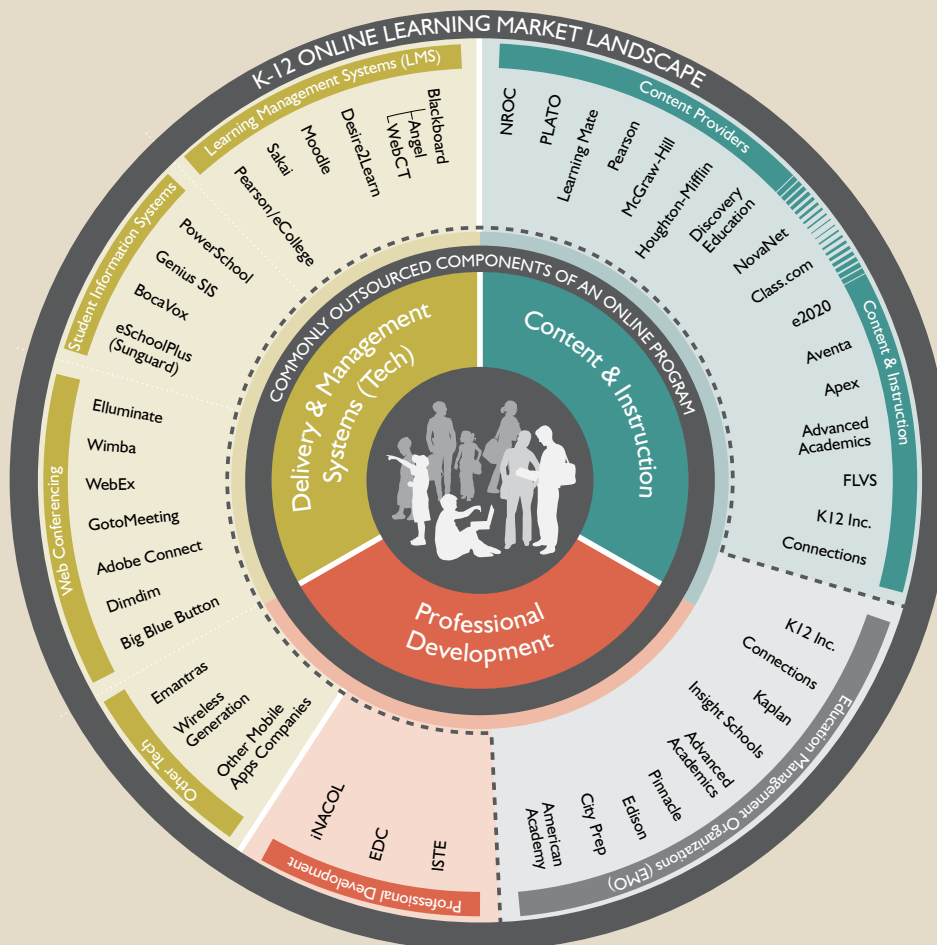


Figure 8: The K-12 online learning market landscape

Outlook & conclusion

Converging toward new powers of personalization

Among the key developments in online learning over the past year, discussed throughout this report, has been the move toward increased online and blended options offered by individual districts, which is in addition to the state-level programs and charter schools that have dominated the field in past years. This trend was mentioned by *Keeping Pace 2009*, and in the year since it has accelerated. It is being driven by a variety of factors that include:

- The increased acceptance of online learning, and the effectiveness demonstrated by early online programs;
- Perceived or real competition from state virtual schools and online charter schools;
- The increase in available content, software, and professional development, which allows more districts to start and grow their own online schools by mixing and matching elements that they outsource and develop in-house; and
- A recognition that blended learning can be a transformative factor that personalizes learning for students.

Early K-12 online learning growth centered on state virtual schools, full-time online schools managed by education management organizations, and other early adopters eager to dive into new technology. Many new district online and blended programs, however, appear to grow out of existing computer-based instruction (CBI) options—or at least driven by the same urgent needs. While online learning and CBI have developed along largely independent paths, they are now beginning to converge, albeit somewhat awkwardly at times. This convergence may be among the key driving factors in the evolution of online and blended learning.

The roots of computer-based instruction

The history of CBI is long and involved, with many organizations included; any attempt to detail its history will inevitably leave out some important developments. Most histories, however, would point to the PLATO project at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in 1963 as a major milestone in the evolution of using computers to enhance instruction. The PLATO computing platform was used to deliver instruction in topics ranging from French to Organic Chemistry. And while much of the early instruction was based on a drill-and-practice model, there were also a number of programs providing students with “Playful, open-ended activities that allow ... synthesis rather than just analysis.”²⁸

²⁸ Dr. Ruth Chabay, PLATO@50 Conference <http://www.youtube.com/user/ComputerHistory#p/u/5/rdDwoUk4oY> 13:00

The PLATO project evolved over time and eventually gave birth to two of the most widely adopted products in CBI, PLATO Learning and NovaNet (now owned by Pearson). These systems and others like them have been used in thousands of schools across the country, primarily to provide intervention and remediation for struggling students. Because these students were often recovering credit or retaking material for other reasons, they worked through the computer material with some help from a teacher, but with limited interaction with the teacher or other students.

The roots of online learning

Unlike CBI, which began with a focus on in-classroom use, online learning had its origins as a form of distance education. The early forms of distance learning were geared toward home-bound students (and vocational education at a post-secondary level), and used pre-World Wide Web methods like print materials, CD-ROMS, and video conferencing to deliver instruction and facilitate communication. As distance learning evolved with the advance of the Internet, online courses were developed for Advanced Placement students, or to provide college preparatory courses that were not available in rural or inner-city schools. In addition, the growth of online education in post-secondary and professional development contributed to the legitimacy and growth of online learning in K-12. Early forms of online learning initially centered on translating a complete classroom course syllabus to a distance education environment, including similar content and assignments,²⁹ and then evolved to allow for teacher-student interactions also similar to a traditional classroom. Examples of this type of early online learning program were often created in rural states such as Alaska, North Dakota and Nebraska. Online schools have innovated in a variety of ways, but in most cases they remain based on teacher-student interaction, and in some cases student-student interaction.

Because online courses often serve as an alternative to regular classroom instruction, education policy and oversight provisions have evolved to address online learning, while very few regulations address CBI. These online learning provisions have focused on developing best practices and professional development to support classroom teachers in evolving their teaching style to function in a distance learning model. One representative example of such a policy framework is the set of professional development requirements of the Texas Virtual School Network, which require online teachers to complete professional development with a TxVSN-approved provider.³⁰

Because of these different roots, CBI and online learning have different defining characteristics and key benefits (Table 10).

Online learning and computer-based instruction are converging

The key benefits of CBI and online learning are largely complementary, leading to the question “can we have the best of both?” In fact, not only does it seem very possible to achieve the best of both worlds, but there are a number of signs that schools, districts, and corporate partners are rapidly finding ways to take advantage of both models.

Many, if not most, online course providers have enhanced their courses over the last several years to include more technology, media, and interaction with the online content, and to enhance the way their systems use the rich streams of student learning data they produce. Programs like Florida Virtual School and K12 Inc., among others, are dedicating significant resources to produce curriculum that takes advantage of interactive technology. On the CBI side of the spectrum, PLATO Learning has recently enhanced its learning platform to support more student-teacher and student-student interactions, and other CBI providers are increasingly moving online. In short, online learning is starting to look more like the best of CBI and vice versa.

²⁹ <http://www.ncrel.org/tech/synthesis/synthesis.pdf>

³⁰ <http://www.txvsn.org/AboutTxVSN/ProfessionalDevelopment.aspx>

The convergence of online learning and CBI will lead to a whole greater than the sum of the parts. Adding the geographic scale of online learning to the instructional scale of CBI means that instructional programs are able to effectively serve even more students. When students have high quality interactions with their teachers and their peers, as well as with high-quality technology and multimedia, they are more engaged and learn more effectively. In this sense, the benefits of the convergence are additive. More compelling, though, is the multiplicative or even exponential benefits that occur when schools combine online learning with CBI to create programs that meet student needs in new and innovative ways.

Some of the leading blended learning programs are combining instructional elements that have roots in both online learning and CBI—although they may not realize it. Rocketship Education in San Jose, California, for example, uses a sophisticated computer-based instructional model for elementary school remediation, while relying on a classroom teacher for direct instruction.³¹ The result is a scalable and sustainable model, completely funded through traditional education funding, that has had great success with students at its first two schools, both in high poverty neighborhoods.

Basic characteristics and benefits of computer-based instruction and online learning

Central to many of these unique programs is a redefined role for the teacher. In the earliest models for online learning, most direct instruction depends entirely on the teacher. In the simplest models of CBI, most direct instruction depends on the computer. When the two models are combined, the ratio of teacher-delivered instruction to computer-delivered instruction can change significantly. Teachers do not become any less important, but they are able to focus on higher value-added activities than in the brick-and-mortar classroom.

Redefined models of teaching and learning also have the potential to affect the traditional classroom, especially in the case of district programs where teachers are more likely to teach in multiple delivery modes. With the rise of large-scale adoptions of learning management systems like Google Apps for Education and Moodle, many teachers now have access to technology for all of their students, regardless of the primary delivery method. They might choose to use content developed for online programs to offer targeted remediation to particular students, allowing for individualization by expanding the range of tools available to each teacher.

In this early stage of blended program development, there are still relatively few exemplary programs or well-documented best practices from which to learn. However, early results at schools like Rocketship, School of One in New York City, and VOISE in Chicago are promising, suggesting that they are well worth the effort and risk of innovation.

Educators are building on the early days of CBI and online learning to create a vision for blended learning that focuses on educational efficacy, personalized learning, and supporting the development of 21st century skills. Adding an online component to a physical classroom does not inherently transform learning. However, schools can use technology to assess students' knowledge and mastery of core skills and adapt to their skill level to either further challenge them or go deeper into areas where they are having problems. These instructional advances, along with real-world challenges, team projects, and inquiry-based activities, can and are changing education. These practices are changing the relationship of student to content, student to teacher, and student to student. In a blended environment, students are no longer passive consumers of content—instead, they become producers of content, using a wiki to collaboratively create a class study guide for an AP course, or creating vocabulary podcasts for English-language learners. Teachers

³¹ Rocketship Education; retrieved September 30, 2010, <http://www.rsed.org/about/>

are no longer the experts “feeding” information to students, but instead work with students as they learn to learn; helping students develop digital media and research literacy skills as students gather, authenticate, validate, synthesize, and present information they need to solve problems. Teachers help students learn to communicate and collaborate online so that learning can extend beyond the school day and school location, developing in students an appreciation for global diversity and connectedness. Blogging with other students—from their own classroom or one across the world—about environmental, political, or economic issues not only gives students the opportunity to communicate globally, but also engages them with new and diverse points of view. The relationship of students to one another can also change. As students work collaboratively, either within a classroom or globally, they develop team and leadership skills, for working side-by-side or at a distance.

Blended teaching and learning involves the integration of online resources, technologies, and content into classroom-based or school-based instruction in an effective and meaningful way with the possibility of transforming the educational experience. The focus should be on developing blended learning activities that facilitate personalization, improve student outcomes, foster team work, deepen learning, connect with real-world applications, and develop innovation and creativity skills. The role of policymakers is to develop a framework to allow and encourage 21st century blended teaching and learning that uses digital and other resources to enhance, expand, and transform learning experiences in ways that are meaningful to students, igniting their passion for learning using real-world applications, stimulating their creativity and innovation, and communicating on the global stage. This will take us all beyond the class walls and beyond the class period in order to open new possibilities for both teaching and learning.

Basic Defining Characteristics		
	Computer-based instruction	Online learning
Direct instruction	Provided by the computer	Provided by the teacher via a learning management system
Teacher role	Supervision, guidance, coaching, and motivation	Deliver instruction, assess progress, and personalize the experience
Personalization	Provided automatically by the system, based on assessment and performance allowing students to go at their own speed	Provided primarily by the teacher based on assessment
Interactivity	Defined by the degree to which the student is required to interact with the computer-based content	Defined by the degree to which the student interacts with the teacher and/or other students
Benefits	Scalable instruction	Flexible learning provided by a teacher
	Immediate feedback and scaffolding	Geographic scale to aggregate demand
	Automatic personalization	Student connections across states and beyond

Table 10: Characteristics and benefits of CBI and online learning

State policy profiles

Alabama

Essentially all the online education activity in Alabama is through the state virtual school, ACCESS (Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, & Students Statewide) Distance Learning. Alabama does not have a charter school law. In 2008, the Alabama State Board of Education established a rule that, "...beginning with the ninth-grade class of 2009-10 (graduating class of 2012-13), students shall be required to complete one online/technology enhanced course or experience in either a core course (mathematics, science, social studies, or English) or an elective with waivers being possible for students with a justifiable reason(s)."³² The Alabama State Department of Education (SDE) has published guidelines³³ on the essential characteristics of a quality online learning experience, specific course standards to meet the graduation requirement, and guidelines for online teachers.

In 2010 Alabama created a limited allowance for each student in grades 9-12 to receive one credit based on mastery of the content without specified instructional time.³⁴ "One credit may be granted in grades 9-12 for required or elective courses consisting of a minimum of 140 instructional hours or in which students demonstrate mastery of Alabama course of study content standards in one credit courses without specified instructional time ... (c) One-half credit may be granted for required or elective course consisting of a minimum of 70 instructional hours or in which students demonstrate mastery of Alabama course of study content standards in one-half credit courses without specified instructional time." The seat time waiver applies to all delivery methods.

ACCESS is a supplemental program started in fall 2005. Course enrollments have grown from approximately 7,300 in 2006-07 to more than 31,000 in 2009-10, an increase of 11% in the past year, with another 15,339 non-credit course enrollments. ACCESS has funding for approximately 32,000 enrollments in 2010-11, but does not plan to cap enrollments in 2010-11 if course enrollments continue to grow. Rather the program will adjust its internal budget to accommodate

ALABAMA

State virtual school
ACCESS Distance Learning

Other statewide programs

No; no charter school law

Other significant online programs

No

State-level policy

State code includes numerous provisions regarding online courses that govern ACCESS

³² Alabama State Code, 290-3-1-.02-(8)(d)4; retrieved August 31, 2010, <http://www.alabamaadministrativecode.state.al.us/docs/ed/McWord290-3-1.pdf>

³³ High School Distance Learning: Online/Technology Enhanced Course or Experience Guidance; retrieved August 31, 2010, <ftp://ftp.alsde.edu/documents/61/OnlineGuidance.pdf>

³⁴ Alabama Administrative Code(AAC), Chapter 290-3-1, page 3-1-35; retrieved August 11, 2010, <http://www.alabamaadministrativecode.state.al.us/docs/ed/McWord290-3-1.pdf>

growth. ACCESS is also allowed to carry over budget dollars from the preceding fiscal year, which ended October 1, 2010. ACCESS offers 70 unique courses, including over 20 original courses developed in partnership with the University of Alabama. Five remediation modules for the *Alabama High School Graduation Exam* are also available to students. ACCESS provides courses for grades 9-12 via Web-based instruction (WBI) and interactive videoconferencing instruction (IVC) along with the technical infrastructure to deliver these courses. As of fall 2010, ACCESS will offer select courses to accelerated 8th grade students. These students will be able to take the first part of a Foreign Language (Spanish I, German I, French I, Latin I, or Mandarin Chinese I), Business Technology Applications, and Algebra I. ACCESS operates from delivery school sites and offers courses to receiving school sites that otherwise would not have an Alabama certified teacher to instruct the course.

ACCESS has adopted a “transformational model” as it blends traditional high school instruction, online instruction, and interactive videoconferencing instruction to tailor the instructional process based on the needs of students. The delivery model is determined at the local school level by the school counselor by examining the learning style and needs of each student. This blended model enables ACCESS interactive videoconferencing teachers to use the learning management system for assignments, communication, testing, lesson reviews and projects. All Web-based course content is available to teachers for use in both models. In the Web-based course delivery model, teachers are incorporating real-time, teacher-to-student time using Web conferencing software or interactive videoconferencing systems to help meet the face-to-face needs identified for each student.

ACCESS will begin a partnership with eLearning for Educators to offer online professional development to both ACCESS teachers and teachers who teach in face-to-face environments beginning in fall 2010.

A significant difference between ACCESS and other state virtual schools is the focus on development of the technology infrastructure for receiving online and video courses at school sites throughout the state, which means that a significant portion of the relatively high level of funding (compared to other state virtual schools) is going towards technology infrastructure, including bandwidth, tablet computers, and IVC equipment. ACCESS also provides funding for professional development. All ACCESS courses are now offered in a blended learning format with both WBI and face-to-face or synchronous components to provide flexibility for any instructional mode. IVC courses provide students with supplemental online resources in the learning management system and access to drop boxes for assignments, discussion boards, e-mail, online assessments, and other asynchronous components. Another distinction of ACCESS is that it provides online courses to students in public school classrooms during a set school period, not primarily at home.³⁵ Additionally, ACCESS utilizes three support centers that are strategically located throughout the state to hire, train, and provide ongoing professional development for teachers, and to train facilitators, counselors, and administrators.

In anticipation of expected enrollment increases as all Alabama high schools meet the new state requirement for an “on-line/technology-enhanced course,” Alabama has implemented a Web-based statewide registration and enrollment system to manage student enrollment and class and staff scheduling for ACCESS that integrates with the existing statewide student information system as well as ACCESS’ learning management system.³⁶ The new registration system significantly reduces the time needed to register students, and expedites access to course information and grades. The registration system is linked to the state’s database serving all physical schools, allowing a seamless flow of student data whether students are taking online or face-to-face courses.

³⁵ AAC Rule 290-3-1-.02(12)(b)2, AAC Rule 290-3-1-.02(12)(b)4, and AAC Rule 290-3-1-.02(12)(d)1; retrieved July 26, 2010, <http://www.alabamaadministrativecode.state.al.us/docs/ed/McWord290-3-1.pdf>

³⁶ Alabama Department of Education press release; retrieved July 26, 2010, <http://www.sti-k12.com/press/infolive.pdf>

State policies

State code includes a section on online education that governs ACCESS; policies listed below are from this code, the Alabama Administrative Code (AAC) Rule 290-3-1-.02(12) for Online Courses.³⁷

Funding

The ACCESS state appropriation for 2010-11 is \$19,078,600, a slight increase over 2009-10 which was \$18,510,000 after 7.5% proration. ACCESS also received a one-time appropriation of \$11 million in capital bond funding from the State Superintendent of Education during 2009. Capital bond funding is distributed to educational programs at the discretion of the state Superintendent, who made a priority of completion of 21st Century ACCESS labs in schools across the state a year ahead of schedule.

Governance, tracking, and accountability

Because all activity is through ACCESS, there is no need for additional tracking.

Quality assurance, teaching, and curriculum

- Courses must be delivered by ACCESS or from institutions accredited by one of several accrediting organizations.
- Students must complete all scheduled tests and labs “during a regular class scheduled within the normal school day.” “The normal school day shall include night school, summer school, or other scheduled extended day periods as approved by the local school.”
- “All online courses shall have an adult facilitator approved by the local school who has completed professional development in online methodology and technical aspects of Web-based instruction and serves as a liaison to on-line teachers and providers.”
- Teachers must be certified and highly qualified, or must be “faculty members of an institution of higher education” and “must have participated in in-service education, sponsored by the providing institution, pertaining to instructional methodology and technical aspects of online delivery.”
- Core courses other than those provided by the SDE must be “approved and registered” by the State Department of Education; elective courses do not need to be approved but must be registered.
- “Schools enrolling students in online courses will provide students with appropriate technology, adequate supervision, and technical assistance, in accordance with SDE online technology requirements for local implementation.”
- “Homebound students may participate in approved online courses upon request and notification to the SDE of students’ homebound status by the local school system superintendent.”

³⁷ AAC Rule 290-3-1-.02(12) for Online Courses; retrieved August 5, 2010, <http://www.alabamaadministrativecode.state.al.us/docs/ed/McWord290-3-1.pdf>

Alaska

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (EED) released a request for application (05-10-055³⁸) in June 2010 that uses \$1.2 million of Enhancing Education through Technology (E2T2) funds to establish a consortium of Alaska districts to develop the Alaska Virtual Learning Network (AVLN). The application stated that the successful grantee would be responsible for the following activities:

- Developing and delivering synchronous, asynchronous, and blended courses, including dual-credit offerings, and conducting a needs assessment to determine course offerings needed.
- Providing professional development in online teaching to district personnel, and conducting a needs assessment to determine the online professional development opportunities needed through either in-service and pre-service.
- Administering AVLN, including overall management, and developing the plans necessary for AVLN's sustainability.

In late August the Department announced that it had selected Chatham Schools to receive the award.


The funding period is tentatively set to be through June 2011, but continuation of the grant is possible depending on success of activities, compliance with grant procedures, and the availability of federal funding.

Online programs

The grant effort to create the AVLN is the first large-scale effort to create online learning opportunities for students in Alaska. The state's schools, however, have historically offered correspondence courses to support students working at home, and increasingly these courses are being offered online (Table 11). There are 24 charter and correspondence programs that offer distance learning courses, which include fully online, video, and blended learning courses; there were over 11,000 enrollments in distance learning courses across Alaska in 2009-10. Ten of those programs serve students statewide; five of those programs offer online courses. Of those, one offers students statewide a full-time online option (Delta Cyber School) and a growing number of districts offer a full-time online option to their students.

There are two statewide fully online, full-time correspondence schools. The Delta Cyber School operates out of the Delta/Greely School District and is available to students ages 5-19. In 2009-10 it served 242 students, a 31% drop from 350 students in 2008-09. The Alaska Virtual Academy at Wrangell opened fall 2009, and served students in grades K-8 under the management of K12 Inc.

The Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District opened Fast Track for the 2009-10 school year, a correspondence school that served 43 students in grades K-12 with print, online, and homeschool courses. Fairbanks North Star Borough School District launched Building Educational Success Together (B.E.S.T.) in fall 2008, a full-time district program for students in grades 7-12 with services provided by Advanced Academics.³⁹ Anchorage's MyHigh and the Kenai School District have also expanded their online options for students within their districts.



ALASKA

State virtual school
Alaska Virtual Learning Network (September 2010)

Other statewide programs
Delta Cyber School, Alaska Virtual Academy and Fast Track

Other significant online programs
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District's Building Educational Success Together (B.E.S.T.)

State-level policy
State regulation 4 AAC 33.410 established rules for correspondence programs and reporting requirements for out-of-district and part-time students

³⁸ American Recovery & Reinvestment Act, E2T2 application; retrieved August 4, 2010, www.eed.state.ak.us/forms/EdTech/05-10-055.docx

³⁹ Fairbanks B.E.S.T. program; retrieved July 21, 2010, <http://www.fairbanksbest.com/main.html>

State policies

In 2008, the Department of Education and Early Development (EED) established new regulations (4 AAC 33.410)⁴⁰ governing correspondence programs, including online learning programs. School districts offering a correspondence program must give the EED a written statement assuring that it will comply with state laws, and it will be approved to offer the program indefinitely unless the district implements a change in its program.⁴¹ The regulations establish reporting requirements for districts enrolling out-of-district students and part-time students, and ensure standards for curriculum, instruction, and student assessment are consistent with state standards. The regulations require online programs to develop individual learning plans for students.

Funding

Districts receive 80% of the standard per pupil funding for all students served in a correspondence program. Tuition-based courses are also available for public school students.

Distance offerings in Alaska School Districts				
District	Grades served	Primary delivery method	Course types	Vendors / partners
Anchorage School District	10-12	Online	All core, some electives	FLVS; Apex
Bering Strait School District	9-12	Blended	High school, dual credit, pre-vocational	Alaska districts, Univ. of Alaska Fairbanks, Harvard, Yonsei University
Craig City School District / PACE *	Correspondence: K-12; Online: 9-12	Online, correspondence	Many, including Alaska History and Native cultural courses	Odysseyware and 12 others
Delta Greely School District (including Delta Cyber School*)	K-12	Online, blended	Credit recovery, advanced, full-time high school	Blackboard, Elluminate, FLVS, Apex, Aventa, Giant Campus, others
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (B.E.S.T.)	7-12	Online	Full-time 7-12	Advanced Academics
Galena City School District	9-12	Online, correspondence	Two math and language arts multimedia courses	
Kenai Peninsula Borough School District*	9-12	Video conference, distance, online	Core and electives (supplemental)	Apex, Blackboard, Elluminate
Ketchikan School District (Fast Track)	K-12	Online, blended, distance	Full-time	E2020, Compass Learning
Kodiak Island Borough School District	9-12	Blended, online	Core, enrichment	Moodle, VTC
Kuspuk School District	9-12	Blended, video conference	Core, electives	Moodle
Lower Kuskokwim School District	9-12	Blended, video conference	Core, advanced, robotics, visual art	Moodle
Matanuska Susitna Borough School District	K-12	Blended, online	Required, credit recovery, correspondence, advanced	PLATO Learning, Compass Learning, Moodle
Petersburg School District	6-12	Online, blended	Electives	VHS
Southwest Region School District	K-12	Video conference, blended	Enrichment, dual credit	Moodle
Wrangell School District*	K-12	Online	Full-time K-12, advanced	K12 Inc.
Yukon-Koyukuk School District*	K-12	Online, blended, video conference	Individualization, advanced, electives, credit recovery, core	Odysseyware, Successmaker, Raven Correspondence School

Table 11⁴² This table is meant to highlight significant efforts in each district, and may not be comprehensive.

* Denotes programs offered statewide.

⁴⁰ Department of Education and Early Development; retrieved July 21, 2010, http://www.eed.state.ak.us/regs/filed/4AAC_33.405_4AAC_33.490.pdf

⁴¹ 4AAC 33.420; retrieved August 27, 2010, http://www.eed.state.ak.us/regs/filed/4AAC_33.405_4AAC_33.490.pdf

⁴² Alaska Distance Education Models; retrieved August 30, 2010, www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_documents.asp?session=26&docid=4394

ARIZONA

State-led initiative

Department of Education pilot

Other statewide programs

36 online programs in Arizona Online Instruction; 29 school districts and seven charter schools

Number of online students in 2009-10 school year

Full-time and supplemental: 30,338

State-level policy

Legislation in 2009 (SB1196, Arizona revised statutes 15-808) removed TAPBI from “pilot” status, changes the program name to Arizona Online Instruction (AOI), eliminates the cap on the number of districts and charter schools that can operate AOI programs and changes funding

Arizona

Although Arizona does not have a state virtual school, over the last several years the state first passed and then updated⁴³ legislation creating the Technology Assisted Project-Based Instruction (TAPBI) program,⁴⁴ a pilot program consisting of 14 school districts and charter schools offering online courses. In July 2009, the legislature passed an omnibus education bill (SB1196⁴⁵) that removed TAPBI from pilot status, changed the name of the program to Arizona Online Instruction (AOI), and eliminated the cap on the number of districts and charter schools that can operate AOI programs.

Movement toward removing TAPBI from pilot status was slowed as a result of a program audit conducted by the State of Arizona Office of the Auditor General and released in November 2007. It concluded that the TAPBI program had been overfunded by \$6.4 million dollars due to the way TAPBI students are counted (but not due to accounting practices of the online schools).⁴⁶ The audit made recommendations to the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) and the Arizona State Board of Charter Schools. The ADE agreed with each of the Office of the Auditor General recommendations and is implementing its recommendations under AOI,⁴⁷ including a revision of the Student Accountability Information System (SAIS).⁴⁸ The Arizona State Board of Charter Schools (ASBCS) also agreed to most of the findings in the audit.

Online programs

Under the original TAPBI program, there were 14 online programs consisting of seven charter schools and seven school districts (Table 12). These 14 participants were grandfathered into AOI, including Mesa Distance Learning Program which served over 9,000 students and 18,573 course enrollments in 2009-10⁴⁹ and Arizona Virtual Academy with over 4,000 students. In 2008-09, 30,076 students were enrolled in online courses through TAPBI, a drop of almost 5%; in the first full year of AOI, 2010, enrollments grew by 1% to 30,338 (Figure 9).

AOI now allows any of the state’s 227 districts and 500 charter schools to apply to offer online courses to any student statewide. Public school districts apply to the State Board of Education (SBE); charter schools apply to ASBCS. In 2010, 36 public school districts applied, and 29 were approved to offer online courses as soon as fall 2010.⁵⁰ Courses offered will be largely supplemental, and use a mix of existing online

⁴³ SB422; retrieved July 21, 2010, <http://www.azleg.gov/legtext/47leg/1r/bills/sb1422h.pdf>

⁴⁴ ARS 15-808; retrieved July 21, 2010, from <http://law.justia.com/arizona/codes/title15/00808.html>

⁴⁵ SB1196; retrieved July 21, 2010 <http://www.azleg.gov/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/legtext/49leg/1r/laws/0095.htm>

⁴⁶ TAPBI Audit, State of Arizona Office of the Auditor General; retrieved July 21, 2010, http://www.auditorgen.state.az.us/Reports/School_Districts/Statewide/tapbi/Oct07/tapbi_execsumm.htm

⁴⁷ Arizona Department of Education, Update on TAPBI Audit implementation; retrieved August 17, 2010, http://www.azauditor.gov/Reports/School_Districts/Statewide/tapbi/Oct07/TAPBI_4thFollowup.pdf

⁴⁸ SAIS plan; retrieved July 21, 2010, http://www.ade.az.gov/sais/Downloads/FY-09_SAIS_Overview.doc

⁴⁹ Personal communication with Dr. Doug Barnard, Executive Director, Mesa County Online; August 2, 2010

⁵⁰ AOI application; retrieved July 23, 2010, <http://www.backbonecommunications.com/news/arizona-online-instruction-aoi-application-virtual-schools/>

providers and in-house course development. In addition, nine virtual charter school applications will be considered in fall 2010.

The ADE began directly offering online courses for the first time in fall 2009 through a pilot program; it originally offered AP US History and AP Calculus AB;⁵¹ Calculus is being dropped in 2010 due to budget cuts.

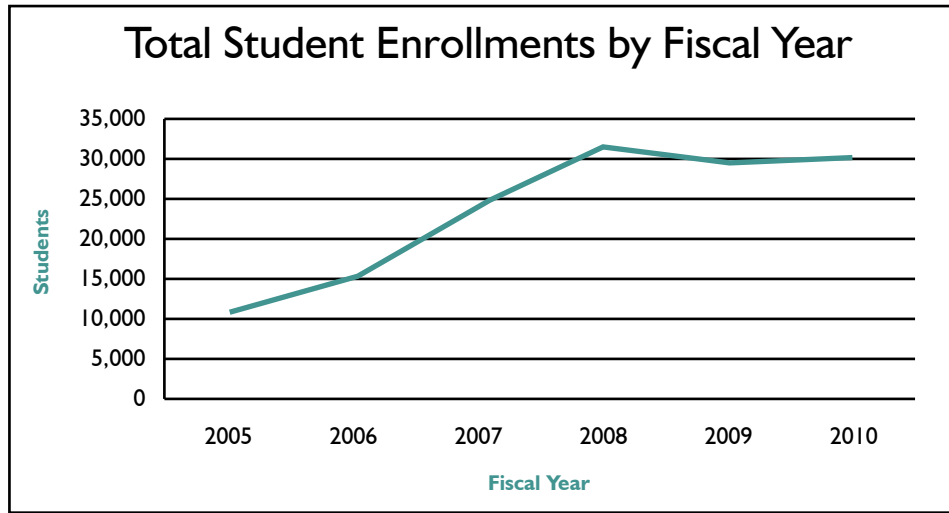


Figure 9: Total student enrollments by fiscal year⁵²

State policies

State policies are based on SB1996, modifying ARS 15-808. In addition, HB2129⁵³ passed in 2010, changes the definitions of full- and part-time students, and SB1039,⁵⁴ also passed in 2010, requires the ASBCS to charge a processing fee to charters wishing to change their contracts in order to start an online program.

Funding

- Average daily membership (ADM) of a pupil in an AOI program cannot exceed 1.0 FTE.
- Online schools receive funding at 85% of the normal base support level for part-time students and 95% of the normal base support level for full-time students.
- FTE funding follows the student and may be split between an AOI school and another charter school or district based on the attendance data that determines the percentage of ADM the student spends in each school.⁵⁵
- Pupils in AOI do not incur absences for the purposes of calculating ADA and may generate ADA during any hour and any day of the week. For funding purposes, programs must maintain a daily student log describing the amount of time spent by each pupil on academic tasks.

⁵¹ ADE catalog of all K-12 online courses; retrieved July 23, 2010, <http://ade.az.gov/technology/onlinecatalog.asp>

⁵² Personal communication with Cathy Poplin; August 18, 2010

⁵³ HB2129; retrieved August 2, 2010, http://www.azleg.gov/DocumentsForBill.asp?Bill_Number=2129

⁵⁴ SB1039; retrieved August 2, 2010, http://www.azleg.gov/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/legtext/49leg/2r/summary/s.1039ed_asenacted.doc.htm

⁵⁵ FTE funding; retrieved August 3, 2010, http://www.azauditor.gov/ASD/PDF/Charter_Schools/USFRCS_Memo_%2083.pdf

- Virtual charter schools receive funding based on current year enrollments (ARS15-185-B-2), whereas virtual public schools receive funding based on prior year enrollments (ARS15-901-A-13).

Governance, tracking, and accountability

- The application process and standards for districts interested in instituting an AOI online program were developed jointly by the SBE and ASBCS, and include a wide-ranging set of criteria.⁵⁶
- As of July 1, 2010, schools participating in AOI must provide an annual report describing the program and how student achievement will be measured.⁵⁷ Schools must also survey students annually and include survey information in their reports. The SBE and ASBCS will deliver individual reports to the ADE for review; a compilation of all reports will then be presented to the Governor and Legislature on November 15 of each year.
- Students must participate in state assessments. If a student does not take the state assessment and the school has less than 95% participation in the assessments, the student may not continue in the online program.

Total TAPBI / AOI Student Enrollments by Fiscal Year						
Entity Name	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Arizona Connections Academy	201	402	668	928	1,123	1,714
Arizona Virtual Academy	1,021	2,042	3,696	4,879	5,697	6,369
Havasonline		203	239	273	310	666
Hope High School Online	109	168	518	900	328	296
Humanities and Sciences Academy Arizona	589	1,176	962	445	170	112
Marana Distance Learning	46	97	76	75	99	202
Mesa Distance Learning Program	1,544	1,495	1,283	2,263	2,061	1,492
Peoria eCampus	40	160	391	358	468	478
Pinnacle Virtual High School	4,069	4,082	5,674	8,576	6,472	5,206
Primavera - Online	2,040	3,934	7,296	9,652	10,699	11,223
Sequoia Choice School Arizona Distance Learning School	1,149	1,313	2,361	2,204	1,662	1,796
TAPBI		71	234	162	352	457
Technology Assisted Project Based Instruction Program			459	314	238	131
TUSD - Distance Learning Program	6	46	256	542	397	196
Grand Total	10,814	15,189	24,113	31,571	30,076	30,338
Growth		40.46%	58.75%	30.93%	-4.74%	0.87%

Table 12: Total TAPBI / AOI student enrollments by fiscal year

⁵⁶ SB1996, online school approval criteria; retrieved July 23, 2010, <http://www.azleg.gov/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/legtext/49leg/1r/laws/0095.htm>

⁵⁷ Arizona Legislation 15-808; retrieved July 23, 2010, <http://www.azleg.gov/ars/15/00808.htm>

ARKANSAS

State virtual school

Arkansas Virtual High School

Other statewide programs

Arkansas Virtual Academy

State-level policy

Formal rules covering AVHS; Act 1420, limits enrollments in virtual charters

Arkansas

Arkansas has a state virtual school, the Arkansas Virtual High School (AVHS), and one full-time, statewide charter school, the Arkansas Virtual Academy (AVA). AVHS was started in spring 2000; it had approximately 5,000 high school course enrollments in 2009-10, a 6% decrease from 5,300 in 2008-09.

AVHS is funded through an annual Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) grant; funding was steady at \$740,000 annually from 2007–2009, however, in 2009-10 the funding decreased to \$590,000, leading to a decrease in enrollments. AVA serves grades K-8 across the state, is limited by legislation⁵⁸ to 500 unique students, and maintains a waiting list of students interested in attending. AVA operates as its own school district and is thus funded through the same student FTE formula as a physical school, \$5,905 per student, but it does not receive money from property taxes. In addition to AVHS and AVA, online courses are available through a number of the state's Educational Service Cooperatives (ESC), though the district must provide the instructor for these.

Act 827 (2009) creates a three-year pilot program that will explore mobile learning with students who must ride a school bus for long distances to and from school. Each participating district will equip up to three school buses with wireless Internet service, 15 laptop computers, 40 portable video storage devices, two media screens, and math and science software for the computers.⁵⁹ Teachers will be available for student questions and to meet weekly with students in a community classroom environment. Success will be monitored by the number and type of courses completed, number of AP courses completed, AP scores, Arkansas benchmark assessments for pilot students, and subsequent score comparison with non-pilot districts, and through surveying pilot student interest in math/science/technology careers.

State policies


Governance, accountability, and tracking

ADE rules regarding distance learning include:

- The ADE must approve all distance learning courses prior to the course being offered or taught by a public or charter school. Courses must have a licensed or approved primary instructor.
- An adult facilitator must be present to proctor any assessments used to determine a student's final grade. A student's final grade is determined by the teacher of record for a course.
- Class size for synchronous distance learning courses shall be the same as for courses not taught by distance learning as specified in the Arkansas Standards for Accreditation. Class size requirements do not apply to asynchronous distance learning instruction.
- Class loads are to be held to a ratio of no more than 30 students per class and 150 students each day for both synchronous and asynchronous courses.
- An adult facilitator must be present whenever a group of distance learning students meets. As a charter school, Arkansas Virtual Academy must adhere to all charter school accountability rules, which includes administration of all state-mandated testing.

⁵⁸ Act 1420 (SB290); retrieved July 7, 2010, <http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2009/R/Pages/BillInformation.aspx?measureno=SB290>

⁵⁹ Arkansas Act 827 (HB1273); retrieved July 7, 2010, <http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2009/R/Pages/BillInformation.aspx?measureno=HB1273>



CALIFORNIA

State-led initiative
UC College Prep initiative

Other statewide programs
Charter schools cannot operate statewide; they may serve students in their county and contiguous counties

Other significant online programs
Numerous online charter schools and district programs

Number of online students in 2008-09 school year
Full-time: 10,502

State-level policy
Most online programs are governed by independent study regulations that cover all non-classroom-based instruction; charter laws also apply to some programs

California

California has extensive online education activity, including a state-led initiative and roughly 25 online charter schools and district programs, many of which are supplemental. Online learning is regulated via a combination of laws and regulations that are explained below and did not change in 2010.

Online programs

The University of California College Prep (UCCP) is a statewide initiative operated by the University of California Santa Cruz and funded through the state academic preparation program. UCCP began as a response to the lack of availability of AP courses in many high schools across California, and grew to offer a variety of high school courses and instruction. In 2007, UCCP shifted its focus away from providing instruction and toward providing open educational resources to California schools. In 2009-10, UCCP provided 120 educational nonprofit partners across the state—including 14 county offices of education, about 50 school districts and 40 schools—its online curriculum with instruction and course credit.⁶⁰ UCCP is working with the K-12 High-Speed Network (K12HSN), an agency of California Department of Education tasked with providing districts with Internet 2 access, to distribute all of its courses at no cost to over 5 million students at any California school through the Calaxy website beginning in fall 2010. This opens online learning to many small and rural schools that lack the resources and personnel to run online courses. UCCP and K12HSN have also started a project called RAMP-UP, which will provide these services and others to rural and later urban schools lacking college prep resources. Online college prep courses must meet “a-g” policy standards⁶¹ in order to satisfy the UC and CSU entrance requirements.

California also has numerous online charter schools and district online programs; these include the California Virtual Academies, a network of nine online charter schools affiliated with K12 Inc.; as well as schools affiliated with Connections Academy, Insight Schools, and Advanced Academics. Full-time online charter schools reported 10,502 K-12 enrollments in 2008-09 (See Table 13). Independent district programs include Riverside Virtual School (3,661 enrollments in 2009-10) and Clovis Online High School; in addition, the Los Angeles Unified School District offers the Los Angeles Academy to students throughout the

district, and is opening the City of Angels Virtual Academy full-time online program in fall 2010, which expects to enroll 650 9th and 10th graders. Some programs like Pacific Coast High School have formed consortia for sharing online courses developed by their member schools.

⁶⁰ Personal communication with Curt Johnson, UCCP; August 4, 2010

⁶¹ a-g policy website; retrieved July 29, 2010, http://www.ucop.edu/a-gGuide/ag/online_course.html

Grades	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
K-12	5399	7454	10,502
9-12	773	1618	2992

Table 13: Number of students in full-time online charter schools in California
The K-12 total includes the 9-12 figure. Research shared by Rob Darrow, Clovis Online School; paper yet to be published; <http://elsighome.ning.com/profiles/blogs/california-timeline-of-k12>.

In 2009 Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger promoted a digital textbook initiative as part of comprehensive budget reform to allow school districts to shift funds from textbook allocations to other areas.⁶² The initiative required an approval process to ensure each textbook is aligned with at least 90% of the appropriate state standards; the first 10 digital textbooks, all in math and science, were approved by the California Learning Resource Network (CLRN) in August 2009, and an additional 13 are expected to be approved in August 2010.⁶³

State policies⁶⁴

Online programs in California are governed by one or two sets of laws:

- Independent study regulations for all non-classroom based instruction, and
- Charter school laws, some of which are specific to online programs (see SB740, below) and others that are not. Online charter schools are governed by charter school law and the independent study provisions.

The University of San Diego Center for Educational Policy and Law published *A Summary of Existing and Pending Law Involving Online Learning in California Public Schools* in November, 2009, a helpful profile of legislation affecting online learning in California.⁶⁵

Funding

- Online curriculum may be presented either in a classroom setting or through independent study; the appropriate method of attendance accounting for such classes is dependent upon the instructional setting utilized.
- For online courses in a classroom setting, in which students are under the “immediate supervision and control” of a teacher, regular average daily attendance funding applied through the provisions of AB294.⁶⁶ That law sunsetted in 2007, and no new law has passed in its place. For online courses not offered in a classroom setting, independent study attendance accounting applies.

Quality assurance, teaching, and curriculum

Online courses delivered outside the classroom are subject to independent study provisions, including that the student-teacher ratio for independent study cannot exceed the ratio of classroom-based students to classroom-based teachers. “Independent study is an alternative

⁶² Office of the Governor; retrieved July 29, 2010, <http://gov.ca.gov/index.php?/fact-sheet/12455/>

⁶³ California Learning Resource Network; retrieved July 29, 2010, <http://www.clrn.org/fdi/>

⁶⁴ This section based on the report *The State of Online Learning in California: A Look at Current K-12 Policies and Practices*, published by the University of California College Prep Online, 2006; retrieved July 29, 2010, from http://www.k12hsn.org/files/research/Online_Learning/SOLC.pdf

⁶⁵ University of San Diego, retrieved September 2, 2010, <http://www.sandiego.edu/soles/documents/CEPALOnlineLearningLegislation020810.pdf>

⁶⁶ AB294; retrieved July 29, 2010, http://info.sen.ca.gov/pub/03-04/bill/asm/ab_0251-0300/ab_294_bill_20030909_enrolled.html

instructional strategy, not an alternative curriculum. Students work independently, according to a written agreement and under the general supervision of a credentialed teacher.”⁶⁷

In 2005 new regulations were created⁶⁸ that allow schools to avoid the student-teacher ratio provisions of the law if the school “has and maintains an 8 or above Academic Performance Index (API) rank in either its statewide or similar schools ranking and has no less than a 6 in the other of these two rankings.” In this case the school must spend at least 85% of its budget on instruction but is freed from other expenditure requirements. Other elements of the law include:

- Instruction must include “standards-based guided lessons, lesson plans, initial testing of students, [and] periodic assessment of student achievement...”
- Each student must have an individualized learning plan.
- All students must be given “access to a computer, Internet service, printer, monitor, and standards-aligned materials.”
- All students eligible for special education services must receive these services, and the charter school must recruit a student population with ethnic and racial representation similar to the counties served by the program.

Online charter schools are governed in part by provisions of SB740, passed in 2001, which require a charter school to:

- Spend 80% or more of total revenues on instruction.
- Spend 40% or more of public revenues on certificated staff salaries and benefits.
- Have a pupil-teacher ratio equal or lower than 25:1 or equal to or lower than the pupil-teacher ratio in the largest unified school district in the county or counties in which the school operates.

⁶⁷ Independent study requirements; retrieved July 29, 2010, <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/is/>

⁶⁸ California Administrative Code, Title 5, 11963.5.

Colorado

Colorado has a state virtual school, numerous full-time programs, and district-level programs with a total of 13,093 full-time online students,⁶⁹ as well as extensive policy activity. The number of total online students in 2009-10 represents a 12.5% increase from 2008-09, which followed a 26% increase from 2007-08. Each year the Colorado Department of Education Unit of Online Learning releases its Summary Report of the Operations and Activities of Online Programs in Colorado, which is among the best examples of reporting of online program activity in any state. The 2010 report was released on February 1, 2010.

The current online learning policy framework dates to December 2006 when the Office of the State Auditor released an audit reviewing full-time online programs and the performance of the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) in overseeing online programs.⁷⁰ The Trujillo Commission,⁷¹ formed in response to the audit, and a task force formed by the State Board of Education,⁷² suggested recommendations for legislators and expressed concerns about the lack of oversight of full-time online programs. In response, the legislature passed SB215⁷³ in May 2007, which made numerous changes to online education regulations. The key elements, among many details of the bill, were:

- A distinction between multi-district online programs and single-district programs; while both types of programs must submit an annual report to the CDE, the multi-district online programs are subject to greater oversight because the authorizers of multi-district programs must be state certified as demonstrating capacity to run an online program.
- A requirement that online programs that use physical facilities in which students meet enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the district in which the physical facility is located.
- Removal of the existing prohibition on funding online students who were not public school students in the prior year, as of June 2008. According to the 2009 summary report, “the repeal of this requirement allowed an additional 2,031 students to enroll in Colorado’s Online Programs for the 2008-09 school year.”⁷⁴

Another important provision of the law was the creation of a new division within CDE to facilitate certification of multi-district online programs. The Unit of Online Education began operations in October 2007 and was tasked with first addressing the statutory requirements of SB215, including the creation of new quality standards that are now a cornerstone of the rules for the online program accreditation process. The Unit is focused on facilitating the certification of programs; as well as providing support for parents, students, authorizers and other entities related to online learning by providing information and access to available data.

⁶⁹ CDE, Unit of Online Learning, Summary Report of the Operations and Activities of Online Programs in Colorado, February 1, 2010; retrieved June 10, 2010, http://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/download/2010_AnnualReport_OnlinePrograms.pdf. Unless otherwise noted, many of the numbers in this profile are taken from this report.

⁷⁰ Report of the State Auditor; retrieved July 13, 2010, [http://www.leg.state.co.us/OSA/coauditor1.nsf/All/6D2762978BB1D6DF8725723E005ED7D4/\\$FILE/1768%20Online%20Ed%20Perf%20rel%20Dec%202006.pdf](http://www.leg.state.co.us/OSA/coauditor1.nsf/All/6D2762978BB1D6DF8725723E005ED7D4/$FILE/1768%20Online%20Ed%20Perf%20rel%20Dec%202006.pdf)

⁷¹ The Trujillo Commission’s report; retrieved June 14, 2010, <http://www.dkfoundation.org/PDF/TrujilloCommissionOnlineEducationFinalReport-2-15-2007.pdf>

⁷² Online Education Interim Report; retrieved June 14, 2010, <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdecomm/download/pdf/OnlineReportInterimReport.pdf>

⁷³ CDE website; retrieved June 14, 2010, <http://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/download/SB215.pdf>

⁷⁴ CDE, Unit of Online Learning, 2009 Summary Report of the Operations and Activities of Online Programs in Colorado; retrieved July 9, 2010, http://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/download/2009_Annual_Online_Report_FINAL.pdf

COLORADO

State virtual school
Colorado Online Learning

Other statewide programs
22 multi-district full-time programs

Other significant online programs
Numerous district programs

Number of online students in 2009-10 school year
Full-time: 13,093

State-level policy
SB215 and HB1066 passed in 2007; HB1037 passed in 2010

A second online education law, HB1037,⁷⁵ passed in Colorado in 2007 and was initially written to sunset in 2010; however, HB1066⁷⁶ was passed in 2010 to repeal its deadline. HB1037 provides \$480,000 annually to fund a Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to contract with a provider to provide online courses to school districts across the state for no more than \$200 per student per semester. Colorado Online Learning (COL), a 501(c)3 organization that grew out of the Colorado Online School Consortium in response to a series of task forces created by the state over several years, was selected as the statewide provider by the Mountain BOCES at the conclusion of its original RFP process. It has been renewed each year since 2007.

These House bills all modify Colorado revised statute 22-2-130 (8).⁷⁷

Online programs

The CDE is aware of 22 full-time multi-district, eight single-district, and one statewide supplemental (COL) online programs, listing many of them on their website.⁷⁸ COL had 1,379 course enrollments in 2009-10, a decrease from 1,777 course enrollments in 2008-09. As budgets tightened this year, COL believes districts were simply not able to pay tuition for their students to take online courses.

State policies

Funding

- Per-pupil revenue (PPR), an FTE funding model that sets a minimum level of funding and is adjusted upward based on a number of factors for brick-and-mortar districts, remains at the state minimum for most online students. Funding is limited to 1.0 FTE per student and may be split in half but not into smaller units.
- In cases where students are taking more than half of an FTE class load in two schools, the districts involved negotiate the payment split or, in rare cases, the split is determined by the CDE.
- Single-district online schools are funded at the district PPR rate, receiving the same funding as the brick-and-mortar schools in that district.

Governance, tracking, and accountability

- Multi-district program authorizers must be certified by the CDE; this includes any program with more than 10 students from outside of the original district; single-district programs do not require certification.
- All online programs must adhere to quality standards that have been created by the Unit.
- The supplemental online program funding provided by HB1066 requires an annual report to the legislature noting number of students taking courses and other information.
- Quality standards created by the Unit of Online Education with the State Board of Education include “standards-based curricula and data-driven instructional practices,” and are used in accreditation and program reporting.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ HB1037; retrieved July 6, 2010, http://www.leg.state.co.us/CLICS/CLICS2010A/csl.nsf/fsbillcont3/584ABEF08DBB8FB4872576A80026B247?Open&file=1037_enr.pdf

⁷⁶ HB1066 (2010); retrieved July 6, 2010, http://www.leg.state.co.us/CLICS/CLICS2007A/csl.nsf/fsbillcont3/F9696758891E5C2B87257251007B2A8F?Open&file=1066_enr.pdf

⁷⁷ Colorado 220-2-130 (8); retrieved July 6, 2010, <http://www.michie.com/colorado/lpext.dll?f=templates&fn=main-h.htm&cp=>

⁷⁸ Personal communication with Della Shorman, CDE, July 8, 2010; CDE, Unit of Online Learning, list of online programs; retrieved June 14, 2010, <http://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/schools.htm>

⁷⁹ 1CCR301-71, The Quality Standards for Online Programs can be found as section 3.0; retrieved June 14, 2010, http://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/download/FINAL_permanent_rules_as_AMENDED_10.08.pdf

Connecticut

Connecticut passed its first online learning legislation in 2010 as part of the high school reform act, Public Act 10-111.⁸⁰ The high school reform formally includes online learning as an option for earning high school credit, as well as for middle school students taking high school courses for credit. For online courses to meet high school graduation requirements, a district board of education must adopt a policy for granting credit. The policy must ensure that online courses 1) require a workload equivalent to that of a similar course taught in a traditional classroom setting; 2) be “rigorous and aligned with curriculum guidelines;” 3) engage students and include interactive components, “which may include, but are not limited to, required interactions between students and their teachers, participation in online demonstrations, discussion boards or virtual labs;” 4) be taught by Connecticut teachers or a teacher certified in another state and who have “received training on teaching in an on-line environment.” The legislation does not require the district’s online policy be submitted to the State Department of Education.

The new legislation also requires districts with a dropout rate of 8% or higher to establish an online credit recovery program as of July 1, 2010. The law does not define “online credit recovery program,” leaving local districts to define the program within the parameters of section 10-221⁸¹ of the general statutes. Each school in the school district must designate an online learning coordinator to administer the credit recovery program.⁸² Beginning in 2013, the law directs districts to provide student support and remedial services for students beginning in 7th grade, including online learning options.

Online programs

The Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium (CTDLC), an organization within the Department of Higher Education, in partnership with the State Department of Education, operates two statewide online learning programs in Connecticut. The Connecticut Adult Virtual High School (CTAVHS) is a statewide online program that provides students enrolled in Connecticut’s Adult Credit Diploma Programs the option of earning credits online. This program is funded with Title II (Workforce Investment Act) dollars through the CT State Department of Education’s Bureau of Adult Education. The CTAVHS had over 2,300 course enrollments in 2009-10; enrollments are limited by funding.

The CT Virtual Learning Center (CTVLC) is the state virtual school, also operated by the CTDLC. The Virtual Learning Center was launched by the Connecticut Department of Education in 2008 to offer supplemental online courses to public high schools.⁸³ CTVLC had about 250 course enrollments in 2009-10; about 85% of these were evenly split between credit recovery and AP courses. Startup funding of \$845,000 was provided by an appropriation from the State General Assembly. CTVLC initially received two years of funding (for the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school

⁸⁰ Public Act No. 10-111; retrieved June 17, 2010, <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2010/ACT/Pa/pdf/2010PA-00111-R00SB-00438-PA.pdf>

⁸¹ 10-221; retrieved September 1, 2010, <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2005/pub/chap170.htm#Sec10-221.htm>

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ Online Courses Available to Connecticut High School Students, Connecticut State Department of Education; retrieved June 19, 2010, http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/word_docs/Pressroom/OnlineCourses_Available_CTHigh_School_Students.doc

CONNECTICUT

State virtual school
CT Virtual Learning Center

Other statewide programs
CT Adult Virtual HS

Other significant online programs
Nearly 60 high schools (27%) are members of Virtual High School Global Consortium

State-level policy
Public Act 10-111 (2010) requires schools with a dropout rate of 8% or higher to provide online programs for credit recovery

years), but the second year was later retracted due to state budget constraints. Without an annual appropriation CTVLC now offers courses for \$295 per semester course enrollment to all of the state's public school students, and \$320 for private high school and homeschool students.⁸⁴ Funding CTVLC through course fees has impacted course enrollments. School district budgets must be submitted a year in advance, leaving districts with little opportunity to budget or plan for the use of CTVLC online services. The CTDLC will continue to provide technology infrastructure and other operational support for the CTVLC program despite the budget cuts.⁸⁵

Two other online programs exist in the state. The Connecticut Regional Educational Service Center (RESC) has a partnership with Massachusetts-based Virtual High School Global Consortium (VHS) to provide VHS membership to school districts at reduced rates to 60 high schools (27% of the high schools in the state). In addition, the Virtual Learning Academy, a RESC program, offers online credit recovery and special needs courses.

DELAWARE
State virtual school No
Other statewide programs No
Other significant online programs No
State-level policy No

Delaware

In January 2008, Delaware launched the Delaware Virtual School as a pilot program offering six online courses through 27 high schools and serving nearly 300 students, but the Virtual School's budget was eliminated. A limited version of the pilot program continued through the 2008-09 school year, but the program did not receive funding for 2009-10 due to an \$800 million state budget deficit, and has not received funding for 2010-11. Delaware does not have any online charter schools. Some districts use vendor courses on a limited, as-needed basis, and some high schools participate in the University of Delaware's Online High School, which provides dual enrollment courses for high school students across the state at a cost of \$545 per course.

⁸⁴ Personal communication with Gretchen Hayden, Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium; June 24, 2010

⁸⁵ Ibid



FLORIDA

State virtual school
Florida Virtual School

Other significant online programs
School District Virtual Instruction Programs
District Franchises of FLVS

State-level K-8 Virtual School Program

Number of online students in 2009-10 school year
97,183

State-level policy
Section 1002.37, Florida Statutes (FLVS); Section 1002.45, Florida Statutes and HB5101 (School District VIP), Sections 1001.42 and 1002.20 (School Choice), and Section 1011.61, Florida Statutes (funding based on successful completions)

Florida

Florida has a variety of online options for its students (Table 14). Florida Virtual School (FLVS) is the largest state virtual school in the United States; in addition, through the School District Virtual Instruction Program (VIP), all Florida school districts offer full-time virtual instruction programs for students in grades K-12. School districts may also offer individual online courses through their district VIP for grade 9-12 students enrolled in dropout prevention and Department of Juvenile Justice programs, core courses to meet class size requirements, and community college courses (latter two added by HB5101⁸⁶ in 2010). In addition, many districts also operate franchises of Florida Virtual School. Two state-level virtual schools serve full-time students in grades K-8; however, these two schools are being phased out in favor of the district full-time virtual programs.

All of Florida's virtual schools and programs are designated by law as school choice options⁸⁷ for Florida families. Teachers in these programs must hold Florida teaching certificates and the curriculum must meet state standards. Full-time public school students participate in state assessments, and full-time schools and programs receive school grades through Florida's accountability system. All except the two state-level K-8 schools are funded based on performance (successful completions).⁸⁸

Online programs

Florida Virtual School (FLVS) had 213,926 course enrollments and 97,183 students in 2009-10, an increase of 35% and 38% from the prior year, respectively. In 2000, legislation established FLVS as an independent education entity. Legislation enacted in 2002 and 2003 granted parental right for public school choice, listed FLVS as an option, and defined full-time equivalent (FTE) students for FLVS based on "course completion and performance" rather than on seat time. In the 2009-10 school year, FLVS received approximately \$101.3 million in funding. The school has 898 full-time and 55 part-time teachers.

FLVS offers online courses and a full-time program for students in grades 6-12. In addition, FLVS partnered with Connections Academy to provide full-time services for students in grades K-8.

Thirty-nine school districts operate franchises of FLVS serving grades 6-12 (as of fall 2010); they reported 17,394 enrollments in 2009-10 (these are in addition to the FLVS enrollments reported above). Although districts may use their franchises to meet VIP requirements, the franchises also serve home education, private school, and other public school students. The number of district franchises has more than doubled each of the last two years—eight to 17 from 2008-09 to 2009-10 and to 39 in 2010-11.

⁸⁶ HB5101; retrieved August 19, 2010, http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?FileName=_h5101er.docx&DocumentType=Bill&BillNumber=5101&Session=2010

⁸⁷ School choice options; retrieved August 19, 2010, <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-5250/dps-2009-007.pdf>

⁸⁸ Florida statute 1011.61; retrieved August 19, 2010, http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/FileStores/Web/Statutes/FS07/CH1011/Section_1011.61.HTM

Florida's Public K-12 Virtual Education Options, 2009-10					
	Florida Virtual School (FLVS)*	District Franchise of FLVS	District Virtual Instruction Program (VIP)	Other District Programs	State-level K-8 Virtual School Programs (FCA and FLVA) <i>Transitioning Out</i>
Level	State	District	District	District	State
Statutory Authority	1002.37	1002.37	1002.45	1002.45(9)	1002.415
Start Date	1997	2001	2008		2003
Type of Program	Primarily Supplemental	Part-time/full-time	Primarily full-time Part-time or full-time for DOP, AI, DJJ, and core courses in 9-12; community college courses	Supplemental in district schools	Full-time
Grade Levels	Grades 6-12	Grades 6-12	Grades K-12	Varies	Grades K-8
Student Eligibility	Public, private, and home education students	Public, private, and home education students	Public school students, military dependents and siblings	Public school students in district public schools	Only returning students as program is phasing out
Funding	FEFP based on successful completions (courses passed or credits earned)	FEFP based on successful completions (courses passed or credits earned) Limited to 1.0 FTE	FEFP based on successful completions (promotion for K-5, courses passed (6-8), credits earned (9-12) Limited to 1.0 FTE	FEFP	Previously by Line Item 2009-10 FEFP Based on seat-time (enrollment and attendance) Limited to 1.0 FTE
Accountability	Performance funding Not in state or federal accountability because program is supplemental Accountability goes to school of record in district	Performance funding If full-time, same accountability as other public schools in district If part-time, accountability goes to school of record	Performance funding District-operated: virtual program in accountability Provider-operated: provider receives statewide grade Grade D or F for one year—submit SIP to DOE Grade D or F for 2 of 4 years—contract or program terminated	Part of school's accountability	In-state and federal accountability Grade D or F for one year—submit SIP to DOE Grade D or F for 2 of 4 years—Contract terminated

Table 14: Florida's public K-12 virtual education options.
If FLVS contracts to operate District VIP program, they must meet requirements of section 1002.45, FS.

Beginning in 2009-10, all 67 Florida school districts offered a full-time virtual education option for their students through the School District Virtual Instructional Programs (VIP). School districts had a number of options to offer virtual instruction for their students. They were able to contract with FLVS, establish a franchise of FLVS, contract with online learning providers approved by the Department of Education (DOE), enter into an agreement with another school district for the services, enter into a multi-district agreement, or operate their own programs. Most districts operated more than one virtual program under the VIP umbrella in 2009-10. Approximately 2,400 full-time students participated in the first year of full implementation with an undetermined number of additional students exercising this option through district franchises of FLVS. In 2010-11, school districts will also be able to contract with community colleges to provide virtual instruction programs for their students.

State policies

Information in this section comes from Florida Statute 1002.45⁸⁹ and the DOE public virtual education website.⁹⁰ Additional state policies address the operations, funding, and governance of FLVS, most of which are not covered below.

Funding

- The School District Virtual Instruction Program (K-12) is funded through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) based on successful completions. For grades K-5 students this is based on grade promotion. Districts receive the FEFP funding for each student and may negotiate with virtual instruction providers for a cost at a rate less than the per-pupil funding.
- For Florida Virtual School, per student funding was cut by approximately 10%, including class size funding, for 2009-10, to \$469 per semester course for a total of \$101.3 million. Funding for 2010-11 will decrease per student to \$432 per semester course for a total of \$116.7 million. FLVS will still receive an 11.4% add-on to FTE funding to account for students who do not complete their courses, but only for public school students.

Governance and tracking

FLVS is governed by Florida Statute 1002.37;⁹¹ students retain the right to choose FLVS courses to satisfy their educational goals. Under Florida Statute 1002.45 students may also choose to participate in a district virtual program. The following rules and policies apply to district virtual programs:

- Students must have been Florida public school students the previous year, military dependents who recently moved to Florida, or siblings of students already in the virtual program.
- Students must be provided the necessary instructional materials and when appropriate the equipment and Internet access necessary to participate.
- Providers must be approved by the DOE based on a set of qualifications.
- A provider of digital or online curriculum used to supplement instruction of students not enrolled in this program does not have to meet the requirements of this law.

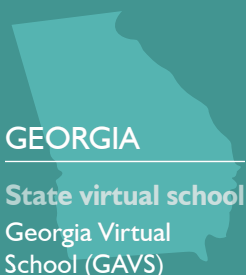
Quality assurance, teaching, and curriculum

- Instructional staff must be Florida-certified, and curriculum and course content must be aligned to Florida's state standards.
- School district virtual instructional programs must participate in the statewide assessment program and in the state's education performance accountability system.
- Districts will receive a school grade or school improvement rating for district-operated programs.
- Each approved provider will receive a school grade or school improvement rating based on the aggregated assessment scores for all students served by the provider statewide. The provider's contract must be terminated if the provider receives a school grade of 'D' or 'F' or a school improvement rating of 'Declining' for two years during any 4-year period.
- The performance of part-time students in grades 9-12 "shall be included in the school grade of the non-virtual school providing the student's primary instruction."

⁸⁹ Florida Statute 1002.45; retrieved August 19, 2010, http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?mode=View%20Statutes&SubMenu=1&App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=1002.45&URL=1000-1099/1002/Sections/1002.45.html

⁹⁰ Virtual education website; retrieved September 1, 2010, <http://www.fldoe.org/Schools/virtual-schools/>

⁹¹ Florida Statute 1002.37; retrieved August 19, 2010, http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/filestores/web/statutes/fs07/CH1002/Section_1002.37.HTM



GEORGIA

State virtual school
Georgia Virtual School (GAVS)

Other statewide programs
Georgia Cyber Academy (previously known as the Georgia Virtual Academy)

Other significant online programs
Several suburban Atlanta districts

Number of online students in 2009-10 school year
Full-time: 5,000
Supplemental: 14,000

State-level policy
Legislation creating GAVS; HB881 (2008) created the Georgia Charter Schools Commission

Georgia

Georgia has online learning activity in a state virtual school and several district programs; approximately 14,000 students in Georgia took online courses in 2009-10.⁹² Full-time online schools, however, are in flux in Georgia as of August 2010, due to a series of actions leading up to and including a July 2010 decision by the Georgia Charter Schools Commission.

The Georgia Legislature passed SB610⁹³ in 2006 that amended charter school law to allow for online charter schools, but only allowed local district boards to act as charter school authorizers. HB881⁹⁴ (2008) then created the “Georgia Charter Schools Commission as an independent, state-level charter school authorizing entity...empowered to approve commission charter schools,” but gave the State Board of Education the power to overrule the commission’s approval of a charter with a two-thirds vote. For the first time, HB881 provided the possibility for equal funding for local charters, but it gave the commission authority to set the funding amount for virtual charter schools.

Five schools have applied for cyber charter status to the Georgia Charter Schools Commission; in June 2010 the Commission approved two online programs to open in fall 2010: Kaplan Academy of Georgia to serve students in grades 4-12, and the Provost Academy Georgia high school.⁹⁵ However, the Commission set state funding of \$3500 per pupil less a 3% administrative fee, compared to about \$5,251 per student for other students in the state (state sources: \$4,210 per student, local sources: \$1,041 per student). As a direct result of the low funding, in July both schools announced they could not afford to open. Parents were vocal about their frustration, especially since any students who were able to attend a virtual school for middle school now did not have a virtual option for high school. In August 2010, the Commission launched a study to revisit the funding amount. This funding level also applies to the Georgia Cyber Academy, a previously opened online charter school.

Georgia Virtual School (GAVS) is the state virtual school of Georgia. It was created by legislation in 2005,⁹⁶ and in 2006 the State Board of Education created the rule that governs the school.⁹⁷ GAVS is unusual in that its students take end-of-course exams that are common across the state, and tracked by the state, allowing for a comparison of test scores between students in online courses and state averages. The State Board rule calls for the Department of Education to “develop criteria for schools or local school systems to become a Georgia Virtual School Approved Entity” in order to offer an online program.

⁹² Personal communication with Dr. Garry McGibboney, GADOE; July 29, 2010

⁹³ SB610; retrieved July 14, 2010, http://www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/2005_06/versions/sb610_AP_6.htm

⁹⁴ HB881; retrieved July 16, 2010, http://www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/2007_08/pdf/hb881.pdf

⁹⁵ Charter Schools Commission June 2010 meeting minutes; retrieved July 21, 2010, <http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/DMGetDocument.aspx/Charter%20Commission%20Agenda%20Recommendations%20-%20June%202010.pdf?p=6CC6799F8C1371F6C39988250820FCA9C3818C6BAA6B046EA06EFFFACEA02F734&Type=D>

⁹⁶ SB33; retrieved July 14, 2010, http://www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/2005_06/versions/sb33_AP_16.htm

⁹⁷ 160-8-1-.01 Georgia Virtual School; retrieved July 14, 2010, http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/_documents/doe/legalservices/160-8-1-.01.pdf

Online programs

Significant online programs include GAVS and the Georgia Cyber Academy (GCA), as well as several suburban Atlanta districts that operate their own online programs, including Gwinnett County Online Campus and Cobb Virtual Academy. In addition, iAchieve Virtual Academy opened as a full-time program serving students grades 6-12 in fall 2010. In-district students receive standard public school state funding, while out-of-district students must pay a tuition fee of \$3,000 per year, or \$300 per course for students taking four or fewer courses.

GAVS enrollments in supplemental courses increased by 18% to 12,143 in 2009-10, creating three successive growth years (9,793 enrollments in 2008-09 and 9,404 in 2007-08). This included 12,002 enrollments in high school courses and 141 in middle school courses. GAVS also offers summer school courses on a tuition basis only, with no cap on summer enrollment. GAVS served ten full-time students in 2009-10 through the hospital homebound opportunity.

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) designated GAVS as its leading partner in implementing a statewide credit recovery program that had 6,686 enrollments as of July 2010. GAVS supplies an online, teacher-less program where students progress on their own, with the program administered by the participating school districts. GaDOE guidelines require that:

- As schools enroll students for the GaDOE Credit Recovery Program, they will be prompted to agree to proctor each unit's pre-test, post-test and final exam.
- For each unit, students not passing the pre-test with a score greater than 85% must view all content items for that unit before the unit post-test will be available. In order to move out of one unit and into the next, students must score a 70% or higher on the post-test.

Currently, 140 out of Georgia's 180 school districts are participating in the online credit recovery program. The program is legislatively funded and free to students. Each semester, Georgia funds 20,000 seats for the credit recovery program and it typically operates at 80-90% capacity. The self-paced courses are available in four main academic subject areas: language arts, math, science, and social studies. Approximately 70-80% of the students who participate in the program successfully recover their credits.⁹⁸

Georgia's second-largest online program, GCA, was known as the Georgia Virtual Academy until January 2010. It is a K-8 program administered by K12 Inc., and is the online arm of the Odyssey Charter School. Odyssey was the first in the state to be approved by the state board versus a local school board. State-authorized charters operate essentially as both a school and a separate district. The current charter authorized by the state board, previous to the creation of the Charter School Commission, limited GCA to 5,000 students in 2009-10 and 6,000 in 2010-11. GCA course enrollments hit the maximum of 5000 in 2009-10, up 8.3% from 4,400 in 2008-09 and 4,300 in 2007-08. GCA received approval from the state board in August 2010 to expand to serve 9th grade in fall 2010 and raise its enrollment above the previously set cap of 6,000 to 6,660 in order to do so; as of August 2010, this is the only 9th grade virtual option for students in Georgia until funding for the other two approved schools is settled.

In 2010, GCA submitted two virtual school applications, one for K-8 and one for high school, to come under the authorization of the state's new Georgia Charter Schools Commission for fall 2011. This would open access to matching local funds from state allocations paid to the 163 districts that Odyssey serves through GCA.

⁹⁸ Personal communication with Tami Echard, GAVS; July 29, 2010

State policies

State policy in Georgia is guided by rule 160-8-1-.01.⁹⁹ GAVS students must take their online course as part of their regular school day. Courses are available on a tuition basis outside the school day and for summer school. All students who are residents are allowed to take a course with GAVS, whether public, private, or homeschool, but public students are given priority.

Funding

GAVS and the credit recovery program are funded from a state appropriation that has decreased for the first time in fiscal year 2011. The program received almost \$6 million for the 2009-10 school year, but funding is dropping to \$5.39 million for the 2010-11 school year. When students take courses with GAVS, funds are diverted from the student's home district to GAVS, which receives the equivalent of the district's FTE portion for that course segment. The state then uses those monies to pay GAVS for up to 8500 FTE, although GAVS seeks to serve 10,200 enrollments with that funding by maximizing classes. The amount that GAVS receives per course segment varies from one district to the next, based on the funding formula for each district. Districts receive \$25 per course segment to defer administrative costs. School districts can choose to disallow a local student from taking a GAVS course under this funding formula. While such a policy can suppress the district's incentive to encourage online learning as an option, current law in Georgia only allows students to take one online course per semester, or a total of two courses per school year anyway.

⁹⁹ 160-8-1-.01 Georgia Virtual School; retrieved July 29, 2010, http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/_documents/doe/legalservices/160-8-1-.01.pdf

Hawaii

Hawaii has several statewide online programs,¹⁰⁰ including the Hawaii Virtual Learning Network's partners the E-School and Myron B. Thompson Academy, the private Kamehameha Schools and Elite Element Academy, and the Hawaii Technology Academy charter school. In recent years the state has engaged in active discussions about online learning. In 2007 the Hawaii Legislature created the Hawaii Online Task Force, which reported to the 2008 legislature.¹⁰¹ In 2008 the legislature passed HB2971 SD2, which implemented the recommendations of the task force. The bill directs the Department of Education (DOE) to expand online learning opportunities for students across the state by building on existing online programs, and proclaims "online learning is a strategic vehicle that will define the Department as a 21st century learning institution."¹⁰² To that end, the Hawaii Online Task Force created the Hawaii Virtual Learning Network (HVLN) to expand and systematize online courses to offer a wide array of online courses to Hawaii's students.

The most important part of the legislation directs the charter partners including the DOE's E-School and Myron B. Thompson Academy and the University of Hawaii Online Learning Academy to expand and systematize online courses to offer a wide array of online courses to Hawaii's students. To accomplish this, the HVLN has:

- Established criteria, evaluated and approved online courses to be offered and offered training to Hawaii teachers to be online instructors.
- Provided centralized support services to online students.
- Established partnerships with institutes of higher education, private schools, charter schools, state virtual schools, and commercial vendors.¹⁰³

HVLN's more than 90 courses are available to all public schools and to private schools during summer sessions. Fifteen member schools pay a nominal membership fee and receive benefits such as online professional development courses and access to online course content.

Online programs

The DOE's E-School/HVLN, a supplemental online program offering courses to grades 7-12, had approximately 2,500 enrollments in 2009-10.¹⁰⁴ School district and charter school students may take courses at no charge during the school year. Private and homeschool students may take courses during the summer session. All students pay for courses offered during the summer session.

¹⁰⁰ Hawaii has only a single, statewide school district; therefore the multi-district designation for online schools in other states does not apply.

¹⁰¹ Online Learning Task Force Report to Hawaii State Legislature; retrieved August 12, 2010, http://doe.k12.hi.us/reports/tolegislature_2008/A20-EduOnlineLearningTaskForce.pdf

¹⁰² HB2971; retrieved August 8, 2010 from http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2008/bills/HB2971_sd2_.htm

¹⁰³ Hawaii Virtual Learning Network; retrieved August 25, 2010, <http://hvl.n.k12.hi.us/>

¹⁰⁴ Personal Communication with Hilary Apana-McKee; October 25, 2010

HAWAII

State virtual school
Hawaii Virtual Learning Network's E-School

Other statewide programs

Elite Element Academy, Hawaii Technology Academy, Myron B. Thompson Academy (MBTA), which is also part of the Hawaii Virtual Learning Network and Kamehameha Schools, a Hawaii Virtual Learning Network collaborator

Other significant online programs

No

State-level policy

HB2971 SD2, passed in 2008

Myron B. Thompson Academy (MBTA) is a full-time charter school that serves students statewide. It is mostly online though has some face-to-face requirements. The Hawaii Technology Academy (HTA) is a statewide online charter school for grades K-12 managed by K12 Inc. The academy served 500 K-8 students in its first year of operation in 2008-09, a cap set by the Charter School Review Panel, and is at 456 enrollments as of August 2010. HTA combines face-to face and online instruction through a centrally located learning center on Oahu. The Elite Element Academy¹⁰⁵ is a private K-12 virtual hybrid school, partnering with the Halau Ku Mana public charter school in Honolulu. Kamehameha Schools is a private K-12 school offering nationwide distance learning courses for high school students with a focus on Hawaiian culture through its 'Ike Hawaii Distance Learning Program.¹⁰⁶

State policies

HB2971 does not set extensive policy beyond supporting both full-time and supplemental online learning opportunities and directing the DOE to create policies to oversee online programs. It specifically directs the agency to:

- Develop and establish a mentoring and training program for online teachers, collaborating with the University of Hawaii Department of Educational Technology as needed;
- Develop and establish an online training program to increase the number of highly qualified teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals;
- Provide support and incentives to teachers who become qualified to teach online courses and for teachers who utilize online courses to incorporate project-based and work-relevant learning;
- Standardize the procedure for granting credits for online coursework;
- Assist schools with online standards-based college preparatory curriculum;
- Expand credit recovery courses and remediation courses;
- Emphasize online science, technology, engineering, and mathematics courses and aggressively work to offer certain online courses through the department, including algebra I, English I, 8th grade math and English, and career guidance;
- Expand distance education through interactive digital television;
- Establish an online course and resource center to include training modules and other support resources;
- Establish online and in-person tutoring and mentoring programs for students, partnering with the University of Hawaii as needed; and
- Develop recommendations on appropriate funding mechanisms.

In addition, the DOE is directed to assess the digital literacy of teachers, students, and other personnel in order to ensure maximum success of the online learning programs. The DOE must “systematically establish the infrastructure for online learning based on institution type, in the following order of priority: high schools (including charter high schools), middle and elementary schools, adult community schools, charter middle and elementary schools, the University of Hawaii system (particularly the community colleges), private secondary and post-secondary institutions (for a fee), and adult populations for remedial education and upgrading of workforce skill.”

¹⁰⁵ Elite Element Academy; retrieved August 13, 2010, <http://www.eliteelementacademy.com/flash.html>

¹⁰⁶ Kamehameha Schools Distance Learning; retrieved August 3, 2010, <http://ksdl.ksbe.edu/ikehawaii>

IDAHO

State virtual school
Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA)

Other statewide programs

Seven virtual charter schools

Number of online students in 2009-10 school year

Full-time: about 4,700

State-level policy

The 2007 state audit prompted the passage of HB423 in 2008; HB552 (2008) changed some of the policy provisions of IDLA; HB303 (2009) established new funding provisions, including blended learning program

Idaho

Idaho has a state virtual school, the Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA), seven statewide full-time virtual charter schools, and a state distance education academy.¹⁰⁷ In early 2010 Governor Butch Otter proposed a phase-out of IDLA funding over four years, and asked for a cap on IDLA funding. The legislature was required to approve the funding freeze because the funding formula was established as part of previous legislation. Because of budget shortfalls, the legislature also capped the funding of IDLA at the previous year's appropriation. Because the previous year's appropriation was not the actual final funding, this resulted in a 22% reduction in funds for 2010-11. The existing funding formula was temporarily removed for one year by the Idaho legislature. IDLA's funding formula will automatically go back into effect for 2011-12 unless the legislature enacts additional legislation or intent language depending upon the state budgets. The Idaho legislature did not act on the Governor's funding phase-out recommendation. IDLA course enrollments grew from 9,646 in 2008-09 to 14,345 in 2009-10, a 49% increase, and 98% of Idaho school districts have at least one student taking an IDLA course.

HB303 (2009)¹⁰⁸ included two provisions that impact online learning. The law allows school districts to use up to 5% of the funding used for teacher salaries through the "total support units" formula to provide teachers to offer virtual instruction or blended learning options to their students. In addition, HB303 specifically addresses blended learning programs. "School districts may also offer instruction that is a blend of virtual and traditional instruction.... The school district may count and report the average daily attendance of the blended program's students in the same manner as provided for traditional programs of instruction, for the days or portions of days in which such students attend a physical public school."

In 2010 HB727¹⁰⁹ significantly revised portions of HB157¹¹⁰ (2009), which had clarified the role of the Idaho Education Network (IEN).

The IEN was created to provide broadband Internet access and interactive video across the state. HB727 revised the duties of the State Department of Education and the Department of Administration in providing oversight to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The 2010 legislation also revised the membership of the Idaho Education Network Program Resource Advisory Council to include six members of the Idaho legislature and the CEO of IDLA.

A new 2010 Idaho SDE rule¹¹¹ establishes a policy that allows students to earn credit by demonstrating mastery of a subject instead of only being allowed to earn credit through seat time. Standards to achieve credits by demonstrating mastery of a subject are to be defined and approved by the local school district or LEA.

¹⁰⁷ Idaho Public Charter Schools; retrieved July 28, 2010, http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/charter_schools/regions.htm

¹⁰⁸ HB303; retrieved July 27, 2010, <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/legislation/2009/H0303.htm>

¹⁰⁹ HB727, Idaho Education Network; retrieved August 4, 2010, <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/legislation/2010/H0727.pdf>

¹¹⁰ HB157; retrieved July 21, 2010, <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/legislation/2009/H0157.pdf>

¹¹¹ IDAPA 08.02.03.105 Rules Governing Thoroughness, High School Graduation Requirements; retrieved August 5, 2010, http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/publications/weekly_newsletter_docs/2010/January%2020%20newsletter.pdf

The Idaho Standards for Online Teachers¹¹² were approved by the State Board of Education and adopted in 2010 by the Idaho legislature, establishing 10 core standards for online teacher competency.

Online programs

In addition to the state virtual school, IDLA, Idaho has seven virtual public charter schools: Idaho Virtual Academy, INSPIRE Connections Academy, iSucceed Virtual High School, Richard McKenna Charter High School (blended program formerly Idaho Virtual High School), Another Choice Virtual School, Kaplan Academy of Idaho, and Kootenai Bridge Academy, open to high school juniors and seniors ages 16-20. Idaho Distance Education Academy is similar to a virtual charter but is classified as a distance education academy by the state. The seven virtual charter schools had 4,709 students in 2009-10.¹¹³ There are few district programs, although the Bonneville District Virtual Academy launched an online program for in 2009 using K12 Inc. curriculum and now offers courses for grades K-9.

State policies

A 2007 audit of online charter schools discussed how the schools are recognized and defined in charter school law, and the lack of any similar definition or recognition of online programs that are not charter schools. The audit concluded with several recommendations, including defining virtual public schools, requiring that all online charter schools be authorized by the Public Charter School Commission (PCSC), and recommending additional reporting requirements. In 2008 HB423¹¹⁴ clarified the definition of a public virtual school as follows:

“Virtual school’ means a school that delivers a full-time, sequential program of synchronous and/or asynchronous instruction primarily through the use of technology via the Internet in a distributed environment. Schools classified as virtual must have an online component to their school with online lessons and tools for student and data management.”

The law put forward by the PCSC with the support of the State Department of Education¹¹⁵ also created new requirements for virtual schools seeking a charter, which are discussed below.

Although charter schools, including online charters, are not required to comply with some of the rules made by the State Board of Education, most voluntarily comply with the general education laws and rules of the state¹¹⁶ as well as the laws that specifically apply to charter schools. Initial oversight of virtual schools occurs throughout the petition approval process (which now includes some provisions specific to online schools). The PCSC and the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools accreditation process provide ongoing oversight of virtual schools in operation, including an annual review of authorizers, annual site visits by both the State Department of Education (SDE) and an accreditation team, and site visits from SDE teams in special areas, such as special education. Idaho statute requires that all public charter schools perform an annual programmatic operations audit and an annual fiscal audit and submit the results of those audits to their authorized chartering agency. All online public charter schools that are authorized by the PCSC submit additional audit criteria that are specific to online schools as described below.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Idaho K-12 Online Teaching Standards; retrieved August 4, 2010, http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/forms/augDocs/Online_Teaching_Standards_OSBE.pdf

¹¹³ Enrollment numbers; retrieved August 12, 2010, http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/statistics/fall_enrollment.htm

¹¹⁴ HB423; July 27, 2010, <http://www3.state.id.us/oasis/2008/H0423.html>

¹¹⁵ Personal communication with Shirley Rau, School Choice Coordinator, Idaho State Department of Education; July 11, 2008

¹¹⁶ Ibid

¹¹⁷ The Idaho Public Charter School Commission, FAQ: Annual Programmatic Operations Audits; retrieved July 30, 2010, <http://www.chartercommission.id.gov/documents/ProgAuditStandards.pdf>

The policies and quotes in this section are also based on the charter school law,¹¹⁸ HB303 (2009), and a statute addressing “technological instruction.”¹¹⁹

Funding

- Charter schools, including online charters, are funded based on average daily attendance (ADA).
- Districts offering distance learning programs may count students’ time in an online or blended course for ADA funding purposes. They are not allowed to claim more than 1.0 FTE.
- IDLA is funded through a funding formula which was temporarily removed for FY 2010-11 in order to help meet state budgets. The funding for IDLA cannot exceed \$5 million, which is a 22% reduction from 2009-10. The student enrollment formula was established in 2007, but is in a one year abeyance. Legislative intent language for 2010-11 also stated that IDLA tuition shall not increase by more than \$50 per enrollment, IDLA will provide remedial coursework for students failing to achieve proficiency in one or more areas of the Idaho Standards Achievement Test, and it will provide advanced learning opportunities for students and dual credit coursework.
- School districts may use up to 5% of their funding used for teacher salaries through the “total support units” formula to hire teachers to offer virtual instruction or blended learning options to their students.
- “School districts may also offer instruction that is a blend of virtual and traditional instruction.... The school district may count and report the ADA of the blended program’s students in the same manner as provided for traditional programs of instruction.”¹²⁰

Governance, tracking, and accountability

- All schools in Idaho must be accredited by the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools, including online schools; therefore the department has a list of full-time online learning programs.
- New virtual schools, when seeking a charter, must report on a variety of elements specific to online schools. A list of these elements was provided in the Idaho state profile in *Keeping Pace 2009*.

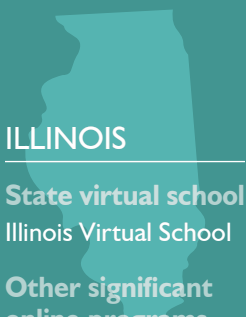
These are in addition to other data elements that must be reported for all charter schools.

Online charter schools that are authorized by the Idaho Public Charter School Commission must report a list of data elements in the annual audit; the elements are listed in *Keeping Pace 2009*. These are in addition to the annual reporting that all charter schools must do.

¹¹⁸ Idaho Statutes Title 33, Chapter 52; retrieved July 27, 2010, <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/idstat/Title33/T33.htm>

¹¹⁹ Idaho Statutes Title 33, Chapter 10; retrieved September 1, 2010, from <http://legislature.idaho.gov/idstat/Title33/T33CH10SECT33-1003C.htm>

¹²⁰ HB303; retrieved July 27, 2010, <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/legislation/2009/H0303.htm>



ILLINOIS

State virtual school
Illinois Virtual School

Other significant online programs
Chicago Virtual Charter School and the VOISE Academy through Chicago Public Schools, Indian Prairie School District

State-level policy
First online learning policy (HB2448) passed the legislature in 2009

Illinois

Illinois has a state virtual school, the Illinois Virtual School (IVS),¹²¹ and a full-time virtual charter school serving students in Chicago, the Chicago Virtual Charter School. IVS experienced a 16% decline in course enrollments from 2,898 in 2008-09 to 2,445 course enrollments during the 2009-10 school year. Funding for IVS is through a state appropriation (\$1.16 million in 2009-10), and from course enrollment fees of \$195-\$250 per enrollment.

In addition, Chicago Public Schools has a high school where all courses are delivered in a blended learning environment, the VOISE (Virtual Opportunities Inside a School Environment) Academy. In 2009, Illinois enacted its first online learning law, HB2448, that allows school districts to establish “remote educational programs,” and these enrollments may be counted towards the general state aid formula. A limited number of school districts have created a “remote educational program” as defined in HB2448. In August 2010, Chicago Public School officials announced a pilot program to add 90 minutes to the day at 15 elementary schools using online courses that are not teacher-led.

The Chicago Virtual Charter School (CVCS), with curriculum and academic services provided by K12 Inc., had its first students in fall 2006. It requires students to meet at a physical location once a week in order to address a legal provision that charter schools not be home-based.¹²² However, a June 2009 court ruling seems to indicate that other

aspects of CVCS operations are what keep CVCS from being home-based. This ruling addresses a 2006 lawsuit filed by the Chicago Teachers Union claiming that CVCS was not a legal charter school because Illinois charter school law indicates that charter schools may not be home-based. The lawsuit also claimed that the school was not meeting the requirements of state law with respect to student supervision. On June 16, 2009, Judge Daniel Riley of the Circuit Court of Cook County dismissed the lawsuit. In his ruling,¹²³ Judge Riley found that CVCS was not home-based. In addition, he found as a charter school, CVCS was not required to meet the definitions of direct supervision specified in Illinois school code. Instead the standard for CVCS is specified in the charter issued by the school district.

The VOISE Academy is a Chicago Public Schools (CPS) performance school created under the CPS Renaissance 2010 initiative. It expects to serve 600 students in grades 9-12 when it reaches capacity in the 2011-12 school year.

State policies

The remote educational programs established under HB2448¹²⁴ have to meet a variety of quality control provisions in order to qualify for state aid:

¹²¹ Prior to the summer 2009 term, the program was known as the Illinois Virtual High School.

¹²² Illinois charter school law, 105 ILCS 5/27A5; retrieved August 30, 2010, <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/fulltext.asp?DocName=010500050K27A-5>

¹²³ A key portion of the ruling states, “Homeschooling is a well-known and established means of education. While the form of homeschools may vary, the underlying substance of the education is decided by a student’s parents. Homeschools do not have to teach according to the Illinois State Board of Education’s mandated curriculum, nor are the students required to take standardized tests to meet the State’s requirements for basic skills improvement. CVCS, however, is required to teach according to the ISBE curriculum, CVCS students must meet the State’s requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, CVCS is subject to fiscal oversight by ISBE and the Chicago Board of Education. And, unlike homeschooled students, CVCS students are graded by certified teachers.”

¹²⁴ HB2448; retrieved August 18, 2010, <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/billstatus.asp?DocNum=2448&GAID=10&GA=96&DocTypeID=HB&LegID=44612&SessionID=76>

- Schools must have “criteria for determining that a remote educational program will best serve a student’s individual learning needs.”
- Students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) must “receive prior approval from the student’s individualized education program team.”
- The school must determine “that the remote educational program’s curriculum is aligned to state learning standards and that the program offers instruction and educational experiences consistent with those given to students at the same grade level in the district.”
- Teachers must meet state certification and federal highly qualified requirements. In addition they must “have responsibility for all of the following elements of the program: planning instruction, diagnosing learning needs, prescribing content delivery through class activities, assessing learning, reporting outcomes to administrators and parents and guardians, and evaluating the effects of instruction.”
- Each student must have an approved remote education plan that includes specific achievement goals for the student; a description of all assessments that will be used to measure student progress; a description of the progress reports that will be provided to the school district; expectations, processes, and schedules for interaction between a teacher and student; an adult “who will provide direct supervision of the program” and “may only engage in non-teaching duties not requiring instructional judgment or evaluation of a student;” and “a school district administrator who will oversee the remote educational program.”

Previously schools could not count online courses towards general state aid unless the student took the course while at school. This law allows for school districts to begin establishing their own full-time or supplemental online programs, either by developing their own program or purchasing services from a commercial provider. It should be noted that HB2448, as well as previous limitations on online learning, do not apply to charter schools. Charter schools are governed by their own set of regulations. However, HB2448 does not pave the way for multi-district schools that are fully online, because it states, “A student may participate in the program only after the school district... determine(s) that a remote educational program will best serve the student’s individual learning needs.” This language, and the fact that charter schools must be “non-home-based” and that students are not free to choose to enroll across districts,¹²⁵ is likely to limit the number of multi-district online schools.

¹²⁵ Illinois Charter School Laws; retrieved August 18, 2010, http://www.edreform.com/templates/dsp_cLaw.cfm?stateID=25&altCol=2

Indiana

Indiana has two statewide virtual charter pilot schools, Indiana Connections Academy Virtual Pilot School and Hoosier Academy–Virtual Pilot School; several statewide supplemental programs; two hybrid charter schools; and some district programs. In 2009 Indiana Code 20-24-7-13¹²⁶ established Indiana Virtual Pilot Schools (IVPS), and directed the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) to select operators for the virtual pilot schools. This law progresses from a previous online charter school restriction and multiple efforts to collect information on the status of virtual learning in 2008.

In 2005, legislation was passed that clarified the ability of charter schools to provide online courses, however it did not authorize funding for full-time virtual charter schools in the 2007 biennial budget.¹²⁷ One of the charter authorizers, Ball State University, generated guidelines for authorizing virtual charters that were finalized in August 2006. Ball State subsequently authorized two fully virtual charter schools that were excluded from the state school funding formula. Hoosier Academies submitted new proposals to Ball State for two hybrid charter schools that would not fall under the state's definition of a virtual school and would, therefore, be eligible for state tuition support. A virtual charter school was defined as "an entity that provides for the delivery of more than 50% of instruction to students through virtual distance learning online technologies, or computer based instruction."¹²⁸ With authorization from IVPS, Hoosier Academies opened two hybrid virtual charter campuses in fall 2008 operating through separate learning centers in Indianapolis (K-11) and Muncie (K-8), using the K12 Inc. curriculum.

The legislation denying funding for full-time virtual charter schools expired in June 2009, and virtual charters are now governed by Indiana Code 20-24-7-13.¹²⁹ The 2009 law directed the IDOE to establish a pilot program and to fund a statewide total of up to 200 students attending virtual charter schools in the 2009-10 school year, and 500 students in 2010-11.

Online programs

Hoosier Academies was the first to open a full-time virtual charter school pilot program, opening the Hoosier Academy–Virtual Pilot School in addition to their hybrid program (IVPS). IVPS served 200 students in grades 1-5 in 2009-10, and anticipates serving 220 students

in grades 1-6 in the 2010-11 school year. IVPS utilizes the same curriculum and back office systems as the Hoosier Academies, but is funded separately. IDOE provides program oversight. In addition, Rural Community Schools is opening the Indiana Connections Academy Virtual Public School

¹²⁶ Indiana education code; retrieved July 26, 2010, <http://www.in.gov/legislative/ic/code/title20/ar24/ch7.html>

¹²⁷ HB1001; retrieved July 26, 2010, <http://www.in.gov/apps/lsa/session/billwatch/billinfo?year=2005&session=1&request=getBill&docno=1001>

¹²⁸ iNACOL, Blending Learning: The Convergence of Online and Face-to-Face Education; retrieved July 26, 2010, http://www.inacol.org/research/promisingpractices/NACOL_PP-BlendedLearning-lr.pdf

¹²⁹ Indiana Code 20-24-7-13; retrieved July 26, 2010, <http://www.in.gov/legislative/ic/code/title20/ar24/ch7.html>

INDIANA

State virtual school
No

Other statewide programs

Virtual Pilot Schools; several supplemental programs including Indiana Virtual Academy, Indiana Online Academy

Other significant online programs

Hoosier Academies is a hybrid charter program; some district programs including Indianapolis Public Schools

Number of online students in 2009-10 school year

Full-time: 200

State-level policy

Indiana code 20-24-7-13 established Virtual Pilot Schools and directs the Department of Education to adopt rules to govern virtual charter schools

in fall 2010 to serve students in grades 1-8.¹³⁰ They may serve up to 280 students in the 2010-11 school year according to the pilot program guidelines.

In addition to IVPS and Rural Community Schools, there are several other online programs in Indiana that are primarily supplemental. The Indiana Virtual Academy is an initiative of the Ripley County Community Foundation to provide virtual learning opportunities for the four Ripley County School Corporations and the County Career Center, and serves online students across the state.¹³¹

Indiana Virtual Academy is a member of a broader consortium of Indiana online programs (the Indiana Virtual Learning Consortium) that also includes the Indiana Online Academy; the Indiana University High School; Ivy Tech Community College; and the Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics, and Humanities (a program of Ball State University). The Indiana Online Academy is a supplemental program of the Central Indiana Educational Service Center in Indianapolis. The Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics and Humanities is an accredited residential high school with an online outreach program offering online courses in Advanced Placement and other topics.¹³² Indianapolis Public Schools offers an online program, and the Indiana University High School is a diploma granting program providing online courses.

State policies

In addition to funding, IC 20-24-7-13 includes the following provisions:

- “At least 75% of the students enrolled in virtual charter schools under this section must have been included in the average daily membership (ADM) count for the previous school year.”
- Provided that the funding amount is the virtual charter school’s ADM multiplied by 80% of the statewide average state tuition support.
- Required the IDOE to adopt rules to govern the operation of virtual charter schools. Those rules and the application for virtual pilot school programs were released in February 2010.

The state collected information on the status of virtual learning through several mechanisms in 2008 and 2009; findings were reported in *Keeping Pace 2009*.

¹³⁰ Rural Community Schools; retrieved July 27, 2010, <http://www.doe.in.gov/news/2009/07-July/VirtualCharterExpansion.html>

¹³¹ Indiana Virtual Academy; retrieved July 26, 2010, <http://www.indva.org/>

¹³² Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics, and Humanities; retrieved July 26, 2010, <http://www.bsue.edu/academy/distance/>

Iowa

Iowa has a state virtual school, Iowa Learning Online (ILO), which offers a variety of Internet, face-to-face, video-based, and blended courses and is a supplemental program of the Iowa Department of Education.¹³³ Grant funding for a second statewide supplemental online program, the Iowa Online AP Academy (IOAPA), has ended. ILO is providing financial support for the continuation of IOAPA as it seeks new funding sources.¹³⁴ There is little state policy activity. A weighted funding provision was passed for the 2008-09 school year that will provide additional funding for schools offering distance courses to other Iowa schools through the use of the Iowa Communication Network.¹³⁵ Iowa's charter school law has been considered the weakest in the country by the Center for Education Reform, which partially explains the lack of full-time online schools.

Online programs

Iowa Learning Online is a supplemental program started in summer 2004 offering courses at the 9-12 grade level (students in grades 8-12). The IOAPA reports 611 course enrollments in the 2009-10 school year.¹³⁶ In addition to supporting eight IOAPA courses, ILO offers 12 courses with set start/end dates, both synchronous and asynchronous. Some of the program's courses in science and math are offered via the statewide video-based Iowa Communication Network. Additional courses are offered by participating Iowa school districts, with ILO providing support for promotion, registration, and any associated Iowa Communications Network fees. A new initiative in 2009-10 is offering "replacement units" for struggling learners. ILO had its first full-time director in 2008 with a mandate from the Iowa Department of Education (IDOE) to integrate the activities of ILO into the daily activities of the IDOE. A DOE-led Iowa Technology Task Force presented a white paper focusing heavily on online learning to the State Board of Education in June of 2010 for consideration during upcoming planning and policy discussions.

Kirkwood High School Distance Learning is a program of Kirkwood Community College and works with school districts across Iowa to offer online transfer credit courses largely for students looking for credit recovery opportunities. Kirkwood had 389 course enrollments and 294 unique students in 2009-10.

IOWA

State virtual school
Iowa Learning Online

Other statewide programs
Kirkwood High School Distance Learning, a program of Kirkwood Community College, provides credit recovery and adult diploma options

Other significant online programs
No

State-level policy
I.C.A. 257.11 allows a school district to establish a regional academy, which may include a virtual academy

¹³³ Iowa Learning Online; retrieved August 18, 2010, <http://www.iowalearningonline.org/>

¹³⁴ Personal communication with the Iowa Department of Education; July 30, 2010

¹³⁵ I.C.A. 257.11; retrieved October 18, 2010, <http://coolice.legis.state.ia.us/Cool-ICE/default.asp?Category=billinfo&Service=IowaCode&input=257.11>

¹³⁶ The number of course enrollments in ILO, which was reported in last year's *Keeping Pace*, was not available as of September 2010.



KANSAS

State virtual school
No

Other statewide programs

Many districts and service centers provide online courses statewide

Number of online students in 2009-10 school year

Full-time and supplemental: 4,000

State-level policy

KSDE has a well-developed set of registration and audit requirements for online programs; SB669 (2008) changes funding for online students and increases supervision of online schools by KSDE

Kansas

The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) has had a comprehensive set of policies for online schools, including extensive reporting, for several years. However, a state audit released in April 2007¹³⁷ questioned whether the Department's policies were being carried out appropriately. A law passed in 2008, SB669 (the Virtual School Act), increased supervision and regulation of all virtual schools by the department, and changed funding of online students. All virtual schools/programs are audited on an annual basis.

Online programs

The state audit and KSDE website lists 44 online programs in Kansas, divided into several types: charter schools, programs within a building, programs within a district, and buildings within a district.¹³⁸ KSDE reports approximately 4,000 students using online programs in 2009-10. All grade levels are represented in online schools.

State policies

Information and quotes in this section are based on SB669, a legislative brief and documents available on the Kansas Department of Education website, including an extensive explanation of Virtual Education Requirements.¹³⁹ Specific requirements are detailed below.

The law defines a virtual school as “any school or educational program that: (1) is offered for credit; (2) uses distance-learning technologies which predominantly use Internet-based methods to deliver instruction; (3) involves instruction that occurs asynchronously with the teacher and pupil in separate locations; (4) requires the pupil to make academic progress toward the next grade level and matriculation from kindergarten through high school graduation; (5) requires the pupil to demonstrate competence in subject matter for each class or subject in which the pupil is enrolled as part of the virtual school; and (6) requires age-appropriate pupils to complete state assessment

tests.” It establishes a new method of counting virtual student enrollment based on census date attendance within specific calendar timeframes, and states virtual “attendance may be shown by a pupil’s on-line activity or entries in the pupil’s virtual school journal or log of activities.”

KSDE requires that online programs be registered in order to claim FTE funding. Registration and claiming funding requires a desktop audit and an annual report from each program. In addition, the state has published extensive guidance and rules for online programs including site visits, personnel, and program requirements. The state also mandates that a team of at least two people evaluate each online program to ensure that guidelines have been followed.

¹³⁷ School District Performance Audit Report, K-12 Education: Reviewing Issues Related to Virtual Schools, April 2007; retrieved August 30, 2010, http://www.kslegislature.org/postaudit/audits_perform/07pa09a.pdf

¹³⁸ 2010-2011 Virtual List; retrieved August 20, 2010, from <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=455>

¹³⁹ Kansas State Department of Education; retrieved August 31, 2010, <http://www.ksde.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=vQyfSb4K6ig%3d&tabid=455> and SB669; retrieved August 31, 2010, <http://www.kslegislature.org/bills/2008/669.pdf> and Legislative brief for SB669; retrieved August 30, 2010, http://skyways.lib.ks.us/ksleg/KLRD/2008ConfCommRpts/ccrb669_001_23.pdf

Funding

Online students receive FTE funding, with the following requirements:

- SB669 sets a rate for online student funding of 105% of the base rate in the state, addressing the inequity that previously existed with online students receiving different levels of funding. “In addition, virtual schools would receive a non-proficient weighting of 25 percent multiplied by the FTE enrollment of non-proficient pupils in an approved at-risk program....”
- The law encourages Advanced Placement enrollment by funding an additional 8% of the BSAPP paid to virtual schools for each pupil enrolled in at least one Advanced Placement course, with some restrictions.
- Online programs must maintain a financial account separate from the rest of the district, addressing concerns about financial issues that were raised in the audit.
- FTE can only be claimed for students who are enrolled in a program that is registered with KSDE and has completed the online requirements application.
- Verifying “enrolled and attending” students in a virtual course is done through an Academic Activity Log or Documentation of Virtual/Online Activity.¹⁴⁰


Governance, tracking, and accountability

- Online programs are required to provide annual reports and desktop audits.
- The KSDE accredits schools and districts. If an online program is a program within the district, it must follow the state’s accrediting system called Quality Performance Accreditation (QPA).

Quality assurance, teaching, and curriculum

- “Course delivery must be based on ‘accepted’ good practice for online learning. This may include but is not limited to clearly communicating course expectations, grading policies, required/supplemental materials, etc.; establishing timelines; and regular communications with students and parents.”
- School districts are required to “provide adequate training to teachers who teach in virtual schools or virtual programs,” and provide an annual report of that training.
- “Opportunities for students to participate in group activities must be provided. These may include some face-to-face activities such as (but not limited to): field trips, study sessions, additional orientation/training assistance, open houses, conferences, end-of-year celebrations, use of parent resource center, and teacher face-to-face instruction for labs or virtual teaming opportunities.”
- “Online communication opportunities must be provided enabling students to share with others; i.e. discussion boards, chats, virtual classrooms, e-mails, group online projects.”
- Students/families must be provided a response within 24 hours during school days.
- “A person or contracted entity must be designated to implement and evaluate training provided to all staff, students and parents in the use of the online program.”
- An assessment coordinator must be designated who will ensure that students 18 and under take all required state assessments for their grade level.
- All state assessments and final assessments for high school credit are proctored by a licensed educator.

¹⁴⁰ Counting Kids Handbook, KSDE; retrieved August 30, 2010, <http://www.ksde.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=TcMBPuhMWIE%3d&tabid=455&mid=6620&forcedownload=true>



KENTUCKY

State virtual school
Kentucky Virtual Schools

Other statewide programs
No charter school law

Other significant online programs
Jefferson County district program

State-level policy
No

Kentucky

Kentucky Virtual Schools (KYVS) is the state virtual school (formerly Kentucky Virtual High School) and encompasses eLearning Kentucky (online professional development), Area Technology Centers, and other state agency partners. The virtual school program was created by the state governor in January 2000 and serves grades 9-12, although courses are made available to qualified middle school students with the recommendation of their school and approval of the course instructor. KYVS enrolled 1,615 students in 2009-10, a decrease of about 30% from the previous year. In addition, KY Virtual Area Technology enrolled 1,450 students in a blended classroom and 50 students remotely in 2009-10. KYVS offers more than 86 supplemental online courses that students can take with the permission of their resident school district, including 24 Advanced Placement courses. KYVS is funded through an annual state legislative allocation of \$800,000 as well as course fees. KYVS supports collaboration of all statewide online learning initiatives, and is expanding its focus to support blended learning environments in physical classrooms. These online education programs are all in a shared learning management system, allowing them to collaborate on teacher professional development, content development, content repositories, and technical support.

Kentucky is one of the first states to implement a common P-20 learning management system (LMS), and obtained funding to provide for 15,000 licensed users in the LMS for taking online curriculum to the classroom. KYVS provides access to a “course shell” for a teacher for a year, along with professional development and technical support. Teachers have the flexibility to enroll students in an online course environment for work both inside and outside the classroom, or use the course to bring online content into the classroom, or both.

Although the blended learning support is available to teachers across the state, a formal request must be made to provide a level of quality control. KYVS is also collaborating on a three-year blended learning research project with the Appalachian Education Laboratory and the Collaborative for Teaching and Learning to document and compare student performance and teacher engagement levels. The study uses KYVS online curriculum (algebra was the course chosen for the study), professional development, and teacher mentoring for a control group implementing a blended learning classroom methodology, while another group uses traditional face-to-face instruction. This is believed to be one of the first research studies designed to gauge the effectiveness of blended learning with secondary students. Kentucky does not have charter schools or charter school legislation. There is a prominent district online program in Jefferson County, JCPs Online, but there are no state online education policies governing that program.

LOUISIANA

State virtual school
Louisiana Virtual School

Other statewide programs
No

Other significant online programs
No

Number of online students in 2009-10 school year
Supplemental: 5,789

State-level policy
Louisiana Department of Education has published rules for distance education

Louisiana

Louisiana has a state virtual school, the Louisiana Virtual School, and district programs offering distance learning courses, including satellite and compressed video. It has charter schools, and online charter schools are not prohibited, but as of August 2010 no statewide online charter schools have been authorized. Charter schools in Louisiana may be authorized by local school districts or by the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), but a charter applicant must apply to a local district and be rejected before applying to BESE. Online charter applicants have sought authorization by BESE, which has deferred action as of August 2010. BESE formed a Virtual Education Study Group in fall 2009 in order to study the unique needs of virtual schools and the students attending them, as well as any policy revisions that may be needed to ensure these needs are being met. As of August 2010, none of the study group’s recommendations have been implemented. Additional virtual charter school applications are expected to be submitted in October 2010.

In June 2009, Louisiana lifted the cap on charter schools with the passage of HB519 (there had been a cap of 70 charter schools in the state) to improve the state’s competitiveness for federal “Race to the Top” funds.¹⁴¹ In the 2010-11 school year there will be 87 charter schools operational statewide, up from 65 in 2008-09.¹⁴²

Online programs

The Louisiana Virtual School (LVS) was started in fall 2000 and is a supplemental program for grades 6-12 offering 70 unique course titles in both block and full-year format. In 2009-10, students from 317 schools around the state participated in LVS. In 2009-10, there were

5,789 students (see Table 15) in 7,030 course seats, which accounts for 14,001 enrollments from fall 2009 through summer 2010. This is a 27% enrollment increase from 6,030 students in about 11,000 enrollments in 2008-09. A notable element of LVS is its Algebra I Online Program. The program was implemented in 2002 and provides Louisiana students with a certified Algebra I instructor and a standards-based curriculum delivered through a web-based course. The Algebra I Online Project also provides the mathematics teacher with face-to-face and online professional development opportunities that will assist with the facilitation of the in-class Algebra learning activities for students, and support their efforts toward mathematics certification.¹⁴³

Grade	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Students	9	312	444	1868	1957	1199	5789

Table 15: Louisiana virtual school enrollments

¹⁴¹ HB519 (2009); retrieved June 24, 2010, <http://www.legis.louisiana.gov/>
¹⁴² DOE charter school program; retrieved July 27, 2010, <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/charter/2624.html> and list of all Louisiana charter schools; retrieved July 27, 2010, <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/16561.pdf>
¹⁴³ Algebra I Online Project; retrieved June 24, 2010, <http://www.louisianavirtuallschool.net/?algebra>

State policies

The Department of Education has published State Standards for Distance Education¹⁴⁴ that cover online learning and other types of distance education. Policies listed and quotes in this section are from these standards; many of the policies hold distance education programs to the same standards as face-to-face programs. For example, the standards state that “distance education shall comply with all policies of the Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators.”¹⁴⁵ As all distance learning programs in Louisiana are supplemental, the policies distinguish between the provider of distance education courses and the “receiving” school or local education agency (LEA).

Funding

Louisiana Virtual School receives funding from a variety of state, federal, and foundation sources. Prior to the 2010-11 school year there were no tuition charges to students other than tuition fees assessed by university partners for dual enrollment. However, as of the fall 2010 semester, LVS will collect \$150 per course enrollment from the student’s district, school, or LEA.¹⁴⁶ LVS is primarily a BESE 8(g) funded program, and received an allocation of \$2.37 million for 2010-11, a reduction from \$2.7 million in 2009-10. In addition, LVS receives approximately \$540,000 in state legislative dollars from College and Career Readiness Advanced Placement initiatives and the Algebra I online project. In addition to state allocations, LVS was able to secure a \$480,000 grant through AT&T for its credit recovery program. The total budget from state allocations and grant funding for the 2010-11 year is approximately \$2.9 million, which is a reduction of approximately \$1.5 million compared to 2009-10.

Quality assurance, teaching, and curriculum


- The State Standards for Distance Education support the core belief set forth by the state educational technology goal that “All educators and learners will have access to technologies that are effective in improving student achievement.” They also align with the mission of the State Content Standards, i.e., “to develop rigorous and challenging standards that will enable all students to become lifelong learners and productive citizens of the 21st century.”
- Courses must incorporate state content standards.¹⁴⁷ Schools or local education agencies with students in distance education programs must “ensure that each distance education course is provided by an institution accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting body or is authorized by the LEA.”
- “Content, instruction, and assessment” of online courses must be “comparable” in “rigor and breadth to a traditionally delivered course.” Schools must provide a “facilitator” for their students taking online courses; the facilitator must hold Louisiana certification.
- Distance education providers must “judiciously address issues relative to course load and student-teacher ratio as appropriate for the particular method of delivery and particular course content.”

¹⁴⁴ State Standards for Distance Education, January 2000, published by the Louisiana Department of Education; retrieved August 25, 2010, <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/2756.pdf>

¹⁴⁵ Bulletin 741, Louisiana Handbook for Nonpublic School Administrators; retrieved August 25, 2010, <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/saa/1806.html>

¹⁴⁶ Materials and Technology Cost memo; retrieved June 24, 2010, http://www.louisianavirtuallschool.net/documents/LVS%20Memo_Programmatic%20Changes_2010-2011.pdf

¹⁴⁷ State content standards; retrieved August 25, 2010, <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/saa/1222.html>



MAINE

State-led initiative
Maine Online Learning Program

Other statewide programs
No

Other significant online programs
36 high schools are members of the Virtual High School Global Consortium

Number of online students in 2009-10 school year
Supplemental enrollments: About 1000

State-level policy
SP0531, Public law Chapter 330 (2009) created the Maine Online Learning Program; no charter school law

Maine

In 2009, the Maine Online Learning Program (MOLP) was created by SP0531¹⁴⁸ to promote online learning programs and courses for K-12 students. Goals of the program include to “create educational opportunities for students in this State;... close the achievement gap between high-performing and low-performing students, including the gap between minority and non-minority students and between economically disadvantaged students and their more advantaged peers; [and] increase the capacity of school administrative units to provide public school choice for students whose educational needs are not being met in the regular public school program.” The legislation established definitions for an online learning course or program, online learning providers, and a “proctored environment.” It also directed the MOLP to “...review the online learning initiatives established in other states and jurisdictions, including the best practices established by these online learning initiatives related to funding, governance, approval requirements for online learning providers, teacher quality, assessment of student performance, accessibility of programs, and materials for individuals with disabilities...” The Maine Department of Education (MDE) created an unpublished report that reviews online programs in Maine and around the country.¹⁴⁹

MOLP is meeting its goals primarily through establishing an approved list of online learning providers for districts. As of September 2010 online providers have begun to submit applications to the MDE for approval, and the MDE expects to have a preliminary list of approved providers in fall 2010. The MDE is required to report online data annually to the legislature including a list of programs and courses offered through the program; the number of participating students; student performance; expenditures; and the number of students who were unable to enroll in an online learning program or course because of space limitation.

Online learning has been limited in Maine, as the state has no charter school law and no major multi-district online programs. Online learning options in the state include:¹⁵⁰

- The Virtual High School Global Consortium provides online courses and services to 37 high schools (28%) in Maine, with 619 students from Maine taking courses in 2009-10.
- Between 2007 and 2010, AP4ALL was a cooperative venture between the MDE and the University of Maine that was established to provide equity of access to Advanced Placement courses for low-income students in Maine. AP4ALL also provided teachers with significant support in many aspects of teaching and learning online. AP4ALL was small but increased from 2007-08 when there were six courses with 44 enrollments, to 11 courses/100 enrollments in 2008-09, to 14 courses/187 enrollments during 2009-10. AP4ALL was funded by a federal AP/IP grant that ended in June 2010, and the program has been suspended.


¹⁴⁸ Maine public law, Chapter 330; retrieved September 7, 2010, http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/bills_124th/chappdfs/PUBLIC330.pdf; further quotes are from this source

¹⁴⁹ A Review of Online Learning Initiatives, Spring 2010, unpublished report provided by Maine Department of Education

¹⁵⁰ The descriptions of online programs in Maine are from the document “A Review of Online Learning Initiatives,” Spring 2010, unpublished report provided by Maine Department of Education

- The University of Maine's Academ-e program has had approximately 150 juniors and seniors from Maine high schools participating in University courses each semester. The program is funded through two sources: the University of Maine discounts tuition by 50% and the Maine Legislature's Aspirations Program covers the remaining 50%.
- In 2009-10 K12 Inc. started a pilot program with two Maine school districts, RSU 2 and MSAD 31. In these programs, approximately 20-25 students per semester participated in 19 courses in a wide variety of subjects.
- The Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI) has equipped all the state's 7th and 8th grade students and teachers with one-to-one access to wireless notebook computers and the Internet for the past eight years, and will be the first in the country to expand the program to provide laptops to all Maine high school students. Currently, the program is providing equipment and support to 55% of Maine's high schools. All Maine middle and high schools are provided wireless notebook computers for faculty and administrators through the program. In addition all middle and high schools are provided a state-of-the-art wireless network infrastructure. The new computers will come with software that links parents to state Department of Labor services, including their Career Centers.¹⁵¹
- The Maine Project Based Learning Program is a pilot program that started with a very small group of students in May 2010.
- The Maine distance learning project, which provided video conferences to many state schools, has been discontinued. School systems now use IP-based video conferencing equipment that leverages the State's education broadband network, the Maine School, and Library Network (MSLN). MSLN is managed by NetworkMaine, a joint venture between the MDE, Maine State Library, University of Maine, and the Maine Office of Information Technology. MSLN provides broadband services to schools and public libraries at no cost. NetworkMaine also maintains a 60-client video conferencing bridge allowing schools to host multi-point video conferences.

¹⁵¹ Maine SDE press release; retrieved September 7, 2010, <http://www.maine.gov/tools/whatsnew/index.php?topic=DOENews&id=69205&v=article>



MARYLAND

State virtual school
Maryland Virtual School

Other statewide programs
No

Other significant online programs
Several districts have online programs that use MSDE-approved online courses

State-level policy
HB1362 (2010) authorizes a district to establish a virtual school; Maryland charter school law effectively prohibits online charter schools; regulations require that all online courses for high school graduation credit in the state be approved by the Department of Education

Maryland

HB1362¹⁵², passed in 2010, authorizes school districts to establish a virtual public school subject to the approval of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The legislation does not state whether a student has the choice of enrolling in online courses in programs outside the resident school district, and it does not go into effect until fall 2011. The Governor has tasked MSDE with reviewing and recommending changes to HB1362 during the 2011 legislative session. The legislation requires that the curriculum "... have an interactive program with significant online components." The law does not define the specifics of "interactive" nor the extent to which "online components" should be incorporated in a course. Teachers in the virtual school must be state-certified, and the law does not require any additional training specifically in online instruction. A virtual school must maintain an office in the state of Maryland, and is not allowed to provide funds for the purchase of instructional programs or materials to a student, parent, or guardian. The new law does not change an existing provision of charter school law that requires that students be "physically present on school premises."¹⁵³

Maryland's state virtual school, Maryland Virtual School (MVS), is one of three Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities (MVLO) managed by MSDE. MVLO was established by HB1197 (2002), and the first set of approved¹⁵⁴ online courses was piloted in fall 2003. The three separate programs for students and teachers are MVS, a supplemental online course provider for grades 6-12; Online Professional Development; and online High School Assessment (HSA), a test preparation program covering four required course areas.

Students may take a course through MVS only with the permission of the local system and the school principal. MVS is funded largely through course fees paid by school districts that cover the cost of the content and instructor, and range from \$15 per student per course for districts that simply want to use a course that MSDE owns or leases, up to \$800 for courses that include a highly-qualified instructor provided through MVS. The average fee is \$450-\$600. MVLO does not receive a legislative appropriation, but received funding of approximately \$400,000 for 2009-10 from various divisions within the MSDE and from

Channel Capacity Leasing funds. Course enrollments declined from 927 in the 2007-08 school year to 710 in 2008-09, and declined further to 633 in 2009-10.

In addition to MVS, several districts offer local online programs using MSDE-approved courses including Anne Arundel County, Baltimore County, Frederick County, Prince George's County, Montgomery County, and Washington County Public Schools. Online courses that are used for credit must be reviewed and approved by MSDE: "For students currently enrolled in a Maryland public school, credit can only be awarded for MSDE-approved online courses."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² HB1362; retrieved June 10, 2010, <http://mlis.state.md.us/2010rs/billfile/hb1362.htm>

¹⁵³ Maryland State Code § 9-102; retrieved June 10, 2010, from <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/64999462-AD67-47E0-9366-35457DCBACF2/7967/ModelPolicyGuide.pdf>

¹⁵⁴ HB1197 required MSDE to "review courses and courseware to assure quality and alignment with the Maryland content standards and other appropriate standards." Under COMAR 13A.03.02.05D(1), Maryland schools can only award course credit for online courses approved by MSDE.

¹⁵⁵ HB1543; retrieved June 10, 2010, http://mlis.state.md.us/2009rs/fnotes/bil_0003/hb1543.pdf

Massachusetts

Massachusetts passed a sweeping education law (603 CMR 1.00)¹⁵⁶ in January 2010 that permits the opening of virtual innovation schools. In July 2010, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) adopted new guidelines for innovation schools, including virtual innovation schools, at its meeting on July 21, 2010.¹⁵⁷ The guidelines cap enrollment for online schools at 500 students, require that 25% of those students live in the district operating the school, require that no more than 2% of a school’s enrollments may come from any other single district, and give the Education Commissioner the power to approve any requests to bypass the restrictions.¹⁵⁸ Once these guidelines were completed, districts were able to move forward with plans to start online programs. Online students will have to comply with state requirements for class time, which is defined for high school students as completing 990 hours of “structured learning” annually. In addition, classes must meet the state’s academic standards, which specify what subject matter should be taught at each grade level.¹⁵⁹ Students must also take the statewide summative tests, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS).¹⁶⁰

Massachusetts Virtual Academy at Greenfield (MAVA)¹⁶¹ is the first full-time online school responding to the new law; it opens in fall 2010 in partnership with K12 Inc. after receiving a waiver from the BESE that allows it to only have 2% of its students live in the district operating the school. While the number is relatively small, it requires that a step be added to the registration process to insure that a sufficient number of local resident students are enrolled at any given time. MAVA is serving grades K-8 in 2010-11; it will serve small numbers of Greenfield students in grades 9-12 in 2010-11 and will fully serve students in grades 9-12 statewide in the future.

In 2008-09, 40% of the school districts in Massachusetts reported having at least one student taking an online course.¹⁶² This translated to 6,560 students taking an online course that was paid for or sponsored by their district.

Massachusetts has a state-led learning portal, MassONE, which offers online tools and resources to all pre-K-12 teachers in the state, and supports students in grades 5-12. Teachers roster their students into their “classes” for blended (face-to-face and online) course work. Currently 50,396 teachers and students are active MassONE users (from January 2009 – July 2010). In addition, approximately 172 high schools participate in online courses through the Virtual High School Global Consortium.

¹⁵⁶ 603 CMR 1.00; retrieved September 9, 2010, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr1.pdf>

¹⁵⁷ Board of Elementary and Secondary Education innovation school guidelines; retrieved August 18, 2010, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr48.html>

¹⁵⁸ Letter from Commissioner to Board describing changes; retrieved August 18, 2010, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/0710/item2.html>

¹⁵⁹ Massachusetts Academic Standards; retrieved July 12, 2010, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>

¹⁶⁰ MCAS; retrieved September 8, 2010, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/>

¹⁶¹ MAVA website; retrieved August 18, 2010, <http://www.k12.com/mava/>

¹⁶² Personal communication with Connie Louie, DOE; September 2, 2010



State-led initiative
Massachusetts
Online Network
for Education
(MassONE)

**Other statewide
programs**
Massachusetts
Virtual Academy at
Greenfield

**Other significant
online programs**
About 34% of high
schools in the state
are members of the
Virtual High School
Global Consortium

**Number of online
students:**
Supplemental: 6,560
in 2008-09
Full-time: 220 at
MAVA in fall 2010

State-level policy
Recommended
Criteria for Distance
Learning Courses
published by the
Department of
Education in 2003

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education continues to pilot the use of Moodle to provide teachers online professional development courses. The pilot is supported through NCLB Title II-D competitive grants, ARRA Title IID Technology Competitive grants, and the federal Special Education Project Focus grant. In the 2009-10 school year, MassONE Moodle offered 57 courses to 550 participants, more than doubling participation from 30 courses with 213 participants in 2008-09.

State policies

Massachusetts does not have any legislation that governs supplemental online courses, however, in 2003 the State Department of Education published “Massachusetts Recommended Criteria for Distance Learning Courses.” It states “Since the Department does not approve or oversee online courses, it is up to each school district to decide if it will allow students to take online courses, determine which students can take online courses, and evaluate the available online course offerings.”¹⁶³ The recommended criteria include:

- “The content of the course is aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and is equivalent in rigor to traditionally delivered courses.
- The course makes the best use of available technologies and online resources to enrich the content. Face-to-face or other real-time meetings are provided for any content that cannot be effectively delivered online.
- The course provides frequent and timely interactions between the students and the online teacher, as well as among the students.
- The course provides ways to assess students’ participation and achievement of learning goals.
- The online teacher has been trained and is skilled in methods of teaching online.
- The school designates an onsite coordinator, who manages technical and administrative issues and serves as the primary contact person between the school, the students, and the course provider.
- The learning environment and course materials are universally designed, making them accessible to all learners.”

In June 2008, the office of the Governor released the administration’s education plan, “Ready for 21st Century Success, the New Promise of Public Education.” The wide-ranging report states in its short-term action items that “the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will accelerate efforts to make available to teachers an online, formative assessment system that will provide “real-time” data on student performance as measured against state standards.”¹⁶⁴ The Department has launched its pilot program in online assessment for students who are taking the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA); 20% of MEPA schools took MEPA online in 2009-10. Each year, 20% more schools will take the assessment online, until 2014 when it anticipates the entire Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System will be offered online.

¹⁶³ Recommended Criteria for Distance Learning Courses; retrieved July 9, 2010, from www.doe.mass.edu/edtech/news03/dl_letter.html

¹⁶⁴ Page 17, Ready for 21st Century Success: the New Promise of Public Education, The Patrick Administration Education Action AGENDA - JUNE 2008; retrieved July 9, 2010, <http://www.mass.gov/Eeoe/docs/ma-edplan-finalrev1.pdf>



MICHIGAN

State virtual school

Michigan Virtual School

Other statewide programs

New cyber school legislation enacted and effective January 2010 authorizes two virtual charters for 2010-11

Other significant online programs

A Michigan Department of Education “seat-time waiver” has prompted expansion of district online offerings

State-level policy

Legislation in 2006 requiring an “online learning experience” in order to graduate; Public Act 205 (2009) allows the formation of full-time online schools

Michigan

In 2006, the Michigan Legislature was the first in the nation to pass a requirement that students have an “online learning experience” before graduating.¹⁶⁵ Michigan Virtual School (MVS) is among the larger state virtual schools. Public Act 205,¹⁶⁶ passed in 2009, allowed the formation of full-time online schools, which opened in fall 2010.

In 2006 the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) released guidelines for the online learning experience, which require students to: 1) take an online course, or 2) participate in an online experience, or 3) participate in online experiences incorporated into each of the required credit courses of the Michigan Merit Curriculum.¹⁶⁷ In addition to defining an online course, the guidelines suggest options for the “online learning experience” and state that a “meaningful online experience requires a minimum accumulation of twenty hours... for students to become proficient in using technology tools to virtually explore content.”

In 2008 Michigan’s Superintendent of Public Instruction implemented a process that allows school districts to seek a waiver of the state’s pupil accounting rules to allow eligible full-time students to take all of their coursework online. Twenty-one local and intermediate school districts have been approved to implement this “seat-time waiver,” and MVS is working with approved districts to expand the use of online resources to address specific student and school priorities. One of the approved districts, Genesee ISD, has been authorized to include other districts as partners in their waiver provided that the approved MDE policies and procedures are followed. With support from the MDE, the GenNET Online Learning portal is providing schools with access to self-directed and teacher-facilitated online courses from a list of selected providers,¹⁶⁸ including courses from MVS. Courses must be teacher-led to qualify for the seat-time waiver. GenNET extends the seat-time waiver to partner districts across Michigan through a process outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding. The project is funded through course fees and grant awards.¹⁶⁹

The online learning requirement has increased demand for teachers experienced in online instruction, and affords an opportunity to expand Michigan LearnPort[®], an existing collaboration between the

MDE and Michigan Virtual University (MVU, the parent organization of MVS). MVU is required by the Michigan Legislature to offer at least 200 hours of online professional development for classroom teachers free of charge. The LearnPort catalog contains over 350 online courses and professional development modules, and served 14,600 course enrollments in 2009-10. Through a partnership with MDE’s Office of Special Education Services, Michigan LearnPort continues to

¹⁶⁵ Public Acts 123 and 124; retrieved July 6, 2010, http://www.michigan.gov/documents/PA_123_and_124_159920_7.pdf

¹⁶⁶ Public Act 205 (2009); retrieved July 6, 2010, <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-380-553a>

¹⁶⁷ Michigan Merit Curriculum; retrieved July 21, 2010, http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Online10.06_final_175750_7.pdf

¹⁶⁸ GenNET; retrieved July 21, 2010, <http://gennetonline.geneseeisd.org/providers.htm>

¹⁶⁹ GenNET Online Learning Program Summary, personal communication with Beverly Knox-Pipes, Assistant Superintendent, Technology and Media Services, Genesee Intermediate School District; July 28, 2010

support a statewide integrated approach to improvement by providing online courses that address an array of special education services, populations, and issues.

Online programs

MVS is a private, nonprofit entity funded by annual legislative appropriations, course tuition, and private grants; it had approximately 15,060 course enrollments in 2009-10. The legislative appropriation for 2010-11 is approximately \$2.6 million in a total budget of \$5.5 million, approximately the same as in 2009-10. MVS became the first state virtual school in the U.S. to offer an online Chinese (Mandarin) language course for high school students in 2006. MVS also provides online career development tools for middle and high school students, parents, and K-12 educators, including Career Forward™ and myDreamExplorer®, both supported with funding from Microsoft's Partners in Learning Program.

Virtual charters had been prohibited by Michigan legislation, but Public Act 205 allows the formation of two full-time online charter schools. Michigan's first virtual charter schools were chartered in 2010 by Grand Valley State University and Ferris State University in partnership with K12 Inc. and Connections Academy, respectively. As charter school authorizers, public universities in Michigan have the ability to aggregate students from across the state, without the regional restrictions that apply to school districts or community colleges. School districts and community colleges are limited to serving students in their service areas. These cyber schools, or "schools of excellence" per the legislation, must meet the online learning provisions required under section 553 of the state's school code. After 2 years of operation, the cyber school must submit a report to the superintendent of public instruction "detailing the operation of the cyber school, providing statistics of pupil participation and academic performance, and making recommendations for any further statutory or rule change related to cyber schools." Each cyber school is limited to an initial enrollment of 400 pupils in its first year of operation. In the second and subsequent years of operation, "a cyber school may expand enrollment to exceed 400 pupils by adding one pupil for each pupil who becomes enrolled in the school of excellence who is identified as a dropout in the Michigan student data system maintained by the Center for Educational Performance and Information."

The MVS is launching a new instructor-supported course delivery model that will enable highly qualified educators to work with one or more students to provide coach-like assistance with their online course or learning activities. This form of course delivery places an expectation on students to take significant responsibility for their own learning. A key role of the instructor is to ensure that students are engaged and making progress in their online course or activity.

In 2010-11 MVS will be working with Cornerstone Charter Schools to provide students in the City of Detroit with online courses and content that supports an innovative new health-focused charter school. Westwood Cyber High School, a mostly online school in the Westwood Community School District also in the metropolitan Detroit area, launched in January 2009; it is modeled on the "not school" program in the United Kingdom. Students attend a physical building for two hours per week and do most of their coursework online.



MINNESOTA

State-led initiative
Minnesota Learning Commons

Other statewide programs

Twenty-four online charter schools, multi-district programs and consortia of schools are approved by the Minnesota Department of Education; this does not include single-district programs

Number of online students in 2009-10 school year:

Full-time: 8,248 students with 80,963 enrollments

Supplemental: 3,628 students with 5,532 enrollments

State-level policy

State has extensive policies and tracking of many online programs but does not track single-district programs

Minnesota

Minnesota has online charter schools, multi-district programs, intermediate districts, and organizations of two or more districts operating under a joint powers agreement, although no state virtual school. The Omnibus K-12 Education Act of 2003 (amended in 2009)¹⁷⁰ sets forth a number of policies directly affecting online education. It also directs the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to develop and maintain a list of approved online learning providers and a list of courses and programs that it has reviewed and certified. This certification effort by the MDE is the overarching state-level policy activity, covering most online learning programs except district-level programs that only offer supplemental online courses to students enrolled in the district's schools.

As of September 2010, there were 24 certified online learning public school providers—seven consortia or intermediate districts, seven charter school programs, and ten district level programs serving students statewide.¹⁷¹ The MDE reported 8,248 full-time students in 2009-10, 43% more than the 5,772 students in 2008-09. In addition, there were 5,532 supplemental course enrollments in 2009-10, up 6% from 5,234 supplemental course enrollments in 2008-09. Total course enrollments in 2009-10, both full-time and supplemental, were 86,495, a 47% increase from the 2008-09 total of 58,852.¹⁷²

The Minnesota Learning Commons (MnLC), a joint project of University of Minnesota, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, and the MDE, is a state-led initiative that provides an educational portal for consumer access to both credit- and non-credit courses available through K-20 public institutions to help students, educators, advisors, and parents access quality online programs, courses, tools, and resources.¹⁷³ Students may choose to enroll, without district approval, in up to 50% of their courses with Minnesota certified online providers listed at the MnLC. Some courses available through MnLC include course fees while other resources are provided through licenses purchased by the MnLC. The state reimburses the online providers according to an adjusted formula for that amount of the student's average daily membership. The local school district receives the remainder of the funding. MnLC funding is provided through the existing budgets of the member institutions and through grants.¹⁷⁴

In 2009 the Online Learning Law (MN statute 124D.095)¹⁷⁵ was amended to:

¹⁷⁰ 124D.09, Minnesota Statutes 2007; retrieved June 22, 2010, http://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/bin/getpub.php?pubtype=STAT_CHAP_SEC&year=current§ion=124D.09

¹⁷¹ Based on document titled Certified Online Learning (OLL) Providers, Minnesota Department of Education (MDE); retrieved September 6, 2010, from http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Academic_Excellence/School_Choice/Public_School_Choice/Online_Learning/index.htmlhttp://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=031616&RevisionSelectionMethod=latest&Rendition=primary

¹⁷² Annual Report Aggregate Online Learning Certified Program Data, Minnesota Department of Education; 2008 and 2009 reports

¹⁷³ Minnesota Learning Commons; retrieved September 6, 2010, <http://mnlc.test-hotel.software.umn.edu/about-us.php>

¹⁷⁴ Personal correspondence with Sally Wherry, MN department of Education, September 22, 2010

¹⁷⁵ Minnesota statute 124D.095; retrieved June 22, 2010, <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=124d.095>

- Define an online course syllabus as a written document available in a prescribed format that identifies the state academic standards embedded in an online course, among other requirements.
- Require online learning providers of supplemental courses to make the online course syllabus available to the enrolling district for a 10-day review to determine whether the online course meets the enrolling district's graduation standards. If the enrolling district determines that the online course does not meet local standards, an explanation must be made available to the student, parent, and online learning provider at which time the online provider can submit a response. The process for final determination of acceptance, and in particular which district has final say, is not specified in the legislation and has not been determined as of September 2010.
- Require that the student and the student's parent must notify the online learning provider of the student's intent to enroll in online learning within ten days of being accepted, at which time the student and the student's parent must sign a statement indicating that they have reviewed the online course or program and understand the expectations of enrolling in online learning.
- Increase accountability of both the online provider and enrolling district by requiring the online provider to report or make available information on an individual student's progress and accumulated credit to the student, the student's parent, and the enrolling district in a specified manner unless the enrolling district and the online provider agree to a different form of notice and notify the commissioner.
- Require that the enrolling district designate a contact person to help facilitate and monitor the student's academic progress and accumulated credits towards graduation.
- Change the online learning provider approval process. Programs must give the commissioner written assurance that: (1) all courses meet state academic standards; and (2) the online learning curriculum, instruction, and assessment expectations for actual teacher-contact time or other student-to-teacher communication, and academic support meet nationally recognized professional standards.
- Reinstatement of the K-12 Online Learning Advisory Council for another three-year period (June 30, 2010 – June 30, 2013) to continue study of issues related to online learning. The law did not address the 2008 recommendations issued by the advisory council.¹⁷⁶

The Online Learning Credit Recovery Task Force is a state-level committee formed to propose policy on providing online learning for credit recovery in conjunction with alternative learning centers that would be funded at an additional 20% beyond the normal average daily membership (ADM) for students who meet criteria that put them at-risk for graduation. The additional funding must be earned by the student in a certified alternative learning center (ALC) or program. If online learning courses are used, there must be 20% contact time (face-to-face) with an ALC teacher, and the course must be reported through an ALC as independent study.

In 2010, the Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) announced it will conduct an audit of K-12 online learning programs in the state.¹⁷⁷ The audit announcement outlines several evaluation areas that will be considered. The OLA also notes, "MDE currently dedicates a portion of one supervisor's time to oversight of online learning programs. MDE once employed a full-time online learning coordinator, but the position is currently vacant. An evaluation of K-12 online learning could provide useful information regarding a small but growing Minnesota education program."

¹⁷⁶ Online Learning in Minnesota: Summary of the Work of the K-12 Online Learning Advisory Council, September 2008

¹⁷⁷ Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor; retrieved September 6, 2010, <http://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/announce/online.pdf>

Online programs

Because Minnesota law requires that online learning providers report annually to the state, the MDE is able to provide a list of online programs on its website. Additionally, there is a searchable database of certified online learning K-12 courses and programs at <http://www.iseek.org>. MDE divides programs into several categories:

- Consortia of schools or intermediate districts: providing supplemental online classes to membership schools and students across the state;
- Multi-district programs: district-level programs providing full-time education and supplemental online learning courses to students across the state;
- Charter schools: providing full-time education and supplemental online courses to students across the state; and
- Online learning programs serving special populations and/or school districts.

State policies

The policies and quotes in this section are based on Minnesota Statutes 124D.095, Online Learning Option Act.

Funding

- Effective FY 2006, Minnesota provides general education revenue for online students. For students taking online courses from the district in which they are enrolled, funding is the same as if the students were taking all their courses in physical classrooms. For students taking supplemental online courses from outside their enrolling district, the online learning program receives basic revenue for 88% of one-twelfth of an Average Daily Membership (ADM) per completed semester course, weighted based on grade level. The other 12% goes to the student's enrolling district and generates general education revenue unless the student's total ADM has exceeded 1.0 (1.2 for students enrolled in learning year programs). Funding for supplemental courses is generated only for students who complete the online course.
- Funding is tied to the program that meets all requirements of the law explained in the sections below.

Governance, tracking, and accountability

- Minnesota annually certifies public school online learning programs. Tracking is based on student financial reporting and an annual program data report. Students register either as fully-enrolled online learning students in a comprehensive program or they access instruction as supplemental online learning students and are reported by online learning course completion files.
- A district that offers online learning classes to students enrolled in that district reports those students as enrolled in the district. No distinction is made for online learning in those cases, and these programs may not be state-certified.
- Districts must accept credit for courses from providers certified by the MDE. The law allows an enrolling district to "challenge the validity of a course offered by an online learning provider." The department must review such challenges based on the certification procedures "set forth in the online learning statute." The department may initiate its own review of the validity of an online learning course offered by an online learning provider.

- The legislation allows “an online learning student to have the same access to computer hardware and education software available in a school as all other students enrolled in the district,” and “an online learning student may participate in the extracurricular activities of the enrolling district on the same basis as other enrolled students.”
- The legislation directs the online learning provider to “assist an online learning student whose family qualifies for the education tax credit (under section 290.0674) to acquire computer hardware and educational software for online learning purposes.”
- The student’s enrolling district is responsible for ensuring that student takes the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments. If the enrolling district is the online learning provider, the online program administers annual state tests.

Quality assurance, teaching, and curriculum

- “Courses and programs must be rigorous, aligned with state academic standards, and contribute to grade progressions in a single subject. Online courses must have equivalent standards or instruction, curriculum, and assessment as other [non-online] courses....”
- The MDE certification process requires that providers list courses and assure their alignment with Minnesota state academic standards.¹⁷⁸
- The legislation “requires that a [highly qualified] teacher with a Minnesota license be the person that assembles and delivers instruction to online learning students.... The instruction may include curriculum developed by persons other than a teacher with a Minnesota license.”
- The legislation states that “unless the commissioner grants a waiver, a teacher providing online learning instruction must not instruct more than 40 students in any one online learning course or program.”
- Actual teacher contact time or other similar communication, including frequent assessment, is an expected online learning component, and the online learning provider must “demonstrate expectations for actual teacher contact time or other student-to-teacher communication.” The MDE requires that programs describe the methods and frequency of course interactivity, teacher contact, ongoing instructional assistance, and assessment of student learning to comply with the law.
- In 2009, Minnesota became one of the first states to recognize in state-level policy that there are national standards for quality online programs by requiring at the time of certification that programs “meet nationally recognized standards.”

¹⁷⁸ Online learning option act provider application, retrieved September 6, 2010, http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Academic_Excellence/School_Choice/Public_School_Choice/Online_Learning/index.html

MISSISSIPPI

State virtual school
Mississippi Virtual Public School

Other statewide programs
Some district-run online programs

State-level policy
State Board of Education rules for virtual schools

Mississippi

The Mississippi Virtual Public School (MVPS) is the state virtual school that serves students who qualify, which is determined by the local school district's policy. The virtual school was established by legislation in 2006.¹⁷⁹ MVPS was funded by state appropriation at \$1.9 million in 2008-09, with some additional grant funding, and \$1.8 million for 2009-10. MVPS served approximately 2,863 students with 6,357 course enrollments during the 2009-10 school year.¹⁸⁰ In addition, 170 students participated in a free Algebra Readiness program in 2008-09. MVPS also offers AP preparation courses. All students are required to gain approval from their local school before they can take an online course through MVPS. Private and homeschool students must meet the same requirement and must use the local public school for which they are zoned.

HB1056 passed in 2010, authorizing the “State Board of Education to select private providers, overseen by the State Department of Education, to administer, manage, or operate virtual school programs, including operation of the Mississippi Virtual Public School Program.”¹⁸¹ The Department of Education (MDE) issued a Request for Proposal in

May 2010 and selected Connections Academy to run MVPS, which is the first state virtual school to be entirely run by a private provider. (Other state virtual schools use private providers, but there are no other cases of the entire state virtual school operation being run by an outside entity.)

The State Board of Education established policy for virtual schools in 2006 and retains approval authority for all coursework and policy of MVPS and any other programs in the state. The State Board also established a set of “guiding principles” for virtual schools that is administered by the MDE.¹⁸²


There are no virtual charter schools in Mississippi.

¹⁷⁹ Mississippi Code 37-161-3; retrieved August 18, 2010, <http://michie.com/mississippi/lpext.dll?f=templates&fn=main-h.htm&cp=mscode>

¹⁸⁰ Request for Proposals, Mississippi Virtual School Public School System, Office of Data Management and Reporting, May 18, 2010

¹⁸¹ HB1056; retrieved August 18, 2010: <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2010/pdf/history/HB/HB1056.xml>

¹⁸² State Board Policy 5400; retrieved August 18, 2010, http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/SBE_policymanual/5400.htm



MISSOURI

State virtual school
Missouri Virtual Instruction Program (MoVIP)

Other statewide programs
No

Other significant online programs
Some districts offer online programs

State-level policy
SB912 (2006) created MoVIP; SB64 (2007) establishes MoVIP as a choice option; SB291 (2009) allows school districts that offer virtual courses to their students to receive state school funding and eliminates seat-time restrictions

Missouri

Due to significant statewide budget cuts, the K-12 online learning landscape in Missouri changed dramatically in 2009-10. Missouri now has two main online programs, the Missouri Virtual Instruction Program (MoVIP) and the University of Missouri-Columbia High School (MU High School); the Missouri Virtual School and St. Louis Public Schools Virtual School closed at the end of the 2009-10 school year.

MoVIP is the state virtual school that was created by SB912¹⁸³ and HB1275¹⁸⁴ in 2006; it serves both part-time and full-time students in grades K-12. MoVIP began the 2009-10 school year with a \$4.8 million appropriation, however, funding was severely cut mid-year. MoVIP course enrollments dropped 82% from 15,810 in 2008-09 to 2,900 in 2009-10 because there were no state-funded seats available. All students must now pay tuition; however, students do have a number of options by which their local district can pay their tuition.

Online programs

The majority of enrollments in MoVIP are in high school courses. All 115 counties in Missouri have students participating in MoVIP, which offers 172 different semester-length courses. In addition to MoVIP, the University of Missouri-Columbia High School (MU High School) is part of the Center for Distance and Independent Study and provides distance learning courses delivered asynchronously to 20,801 students from all over Missouri, the U.S., and from 52 countries.¹⁸⁵ Students can get credit for individual courses or a full diploma. A growing number of school districts are offering online programs, usually to meet student needs for courses required by the state for graduation (e.g., personal finance). The Columbia Public Schools Virtual Instruction Program began offering courses in spring 2010, and will offer classes through the Virtual High School Global Consortium, as well as finance and career center courses.

Missouri State University had a program called Missouri Virtual School (MVS),¹⁸⁶ which offered supplemental high school and dual credit courses emphasizing teacher interaction; it closed in spring 2010 due to lack of funding. In addition, St. Louis Virtual Public School closed its online program at the end of the 2009-10 school year.

State policies

Legislation passed in 2009 eliminated seat-time requirements for virtual education classes offered by a Missouri School District and allowed districts to collect state funds. SB291 states “for purposes of calculation and distribution of funding, attendance of a student enrolled in a district virtual class will equal, upon course completion, ninety-four percent of the hours of attendance for such class delivered in the non-virtual program.”¹⁸⁷ This legislation created increased interest in virtual education.

¹⁸³ SB912; retrieved August 6, 2010, <http://www.senate.mo.gov/06info/pdf-bill/tat/SB912.pdf>

¹⁸⁴ HB1275; retrieved August 6, 2010, <http://www.house.mo.gov/content.aspx?info=/bills061/bilsum/perf/sHB1275P.htm>

¹⁸⁵ MU High School enrollments; retrieved August 11, 2010, <http://cdis.missouri.edu/annual-report-introduction.aspx>

¹⁸⁶ Missouri Virtual School; retrieved August 6, 2010, <http://mvs.missouristate.edu/>

¹⁸⁷ SB291; retrieved August 6, 2010, http://www.senate.mo.gov/09info/BTS_Web/Bill.aspx?SessionType=R&BillID=683252

Charter schools will also receive state funding when providing virtual courses to their students. School districts and charter schools must ensure that courses purchased from outside vendors are aligned with state curriculum standards and comply with state requirements for teacher certification.

Missouri is unusual among state virtual schools in that MoVIP is accountable for all its students taking the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) tests. SB912 stated that MoVIP “will comply with all state laws and regulations applicable to school districts, including but not limited to the Missouri school improvement program (MSIP), adequate yearly progress (AYP), annual performance report (APR), teacher certification, and curriculum standards.” If a student fails to take the MAP test, MoVIP will place a hold on the student for all future courses so that the student cannot enroll in any other virtual courses. Public School Districts that use district funds to pay tuition for students to take MoVIP classes will be accountable for the MAP scores in addition to MoVIP.

Funding

Initially, MoVIP was appropriated \$4.8 million for 2009-10 (sufficient for 12,000 enrollments), a 17% decrease from \$5.8 million in 2008-09. In response, MoVIP limited the number of courses each student could take to five instead of six. However, while facing a critical shortage in state funds in October 2009, all state funding for MoVIP was eliminated, and in January 2010 MoVIP moved to a tuition-based funding model. MoVIP has received a \$600,000 appropriation for 2010-11 that is designated for medically fragile students.

Students have four funding options for attending MoVIP:

- Medically fragile students may qualify for free tuition.
- Students may choose to pay tuition directly to the vendor; that amount varies.
- If a student enrolls in a MoVIP class, the enrolling district will receive 15% of its state funding for that class rather than the full amount. The school district has the choice as to whether to allow the student to take the online course or not, except in the instance outlined below.
- SB64, passed in 2007, states that “a parent residing in a lapsed, or poor performing school district [one with provisional or uncertified status for two years or more] may enroll their child in the Missouri virtual school if the child first enrolls in the school district of residence. The school district shall include the child’s enrollment in the virtual school in determining the district’s average daily attendance. The board of the home district shall pay to the virtual school the amount required under current law to be paid for other students enrolled in the virtual school.”¹⁸⁸


MoVIP is piloting a new program in 2010-11 that allows districts to offer MoVIP courses using their own teachers. The district has full access to the learning management system and course content, and simply pays the vendor for their course.

Quality assurance, teaching, and curriculum

MoVIP is subject to the same laws and regulations as regular school districts including content standards and teacher certification. In 2009-10, MoVIP received a grant to bring in teachers from around the state as well as outside consultants to evaluate over 400 online courses using the Southern Regional Education Board rubric for online courses¹⁸⁹; from those, 172 were selected for the 2010-11 school year.

¹⁸⁸ SB64; retrieved August 6, 2010, http://www.senate.mo.gov/07info/BTS_Web/Bill.aspx?SessionType=r&BillID=136

¹⁸⁹ SREB course rubric; retrieved August 11, 2010, http://publications.sreb.org/2006/06T06_Checklist_for_Evaluating-Online-Courses.pdf



MONTANA

State virtual school
Montana Digital Academy

Other statewide programs
No

Other significant online programs
No charter school law

State-level policy
SB359; Montana Distance Learning Standard A.R.M. 10.55.907171; MCA 20-7-1201 established the Montana Digital Academy

Montana

In 2009 Montana passed HB459, now state code MCA 20-7-1201,¹⁹⁰ to form the Montana Digital Academy (MTDA), a new state virtual school that is a unit of the Montana higher education system hosted by the University of Montana's College of Education. The Academy opened to students in fall 2010, offering over 45 courses taught by 60 Montana licensed teachers. HB645,¹⁹¹ the Montana Reinvestment Act, appropriated \$2 million to the Montana higher education system to develop and launch MTDA. Funding covers start-up costs and the first year of operation. The governing board will report to the 62nd legislature (which convenes in January 2011) on future funding needs. The funding model for subsequent years will be determined following discussions with the legislature, and may blend legislative appropriations and a small tuition fee for courses. MTDA courses are provided to districts at no cost for the 2010-11 school year.

The creation of the MTDA is the latest in a series of online learning actions in the state over the last few years. In 2006, the Montana State Board of Public Education established a Distance Learning Task Force to address issues of distance learning and report in multiple phases. In September 2008, based on recommendations made by the task force and in response to the "highly-qualified teachers" requirement in No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Board of Public Education approved a new distance learning rule to amend the state administrative rules regarding teachers. It requires that the teacher delivering the online course, or a local facilitator for students in online courses, be licensed and endorsed by a state whose teacher preparation programs are regionally accredited and whose licensure requirements are equal to or greater than those of Montana.

There is no law that authorizes charter schools. Although there is an administrative rule that provides for something called "Charter Schools" there are no, and never have been any, charter schools in Montana under this rule.

Online programs

The Montana Digital Academy complements existing district-led initiatives, and state policies covering distance learning providers still exist. Approved providers have been supplying individual courses to school districts. Per an annual OPI distance learning program survey¹⁹² of approved providers, 106 Montana students took online courses from nine approved providers in 2009-10. As of September, MTDA reported approximately 1,500 students and over 2,000 course enrollments for the 2010 fall semester.

¹⁹⁰ Montana State Code, MCA 20-7-1201; retrieved July 26, 2010, <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/mca/20/7/20-7-1201.htm>

¹⁹¹ HB0645; retrieved July 20, 2010, <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/2009/billpdf/HB0645.pdf>

¹⁹² Montana OPI survey of distance learning programs; retrieved August 4, 2010, <http://opi.mt.gov/pdf/ADC/FY10/FY10DistanceLearning.pdf>

State policies

Montana policy states that districts may receive or provide distance learning, and may receive supplemental distance learning instruction “without restriction.” Enrollments in MTDA must be made by a Montana public school. Home school and private school students may enroll through their local public schools.

Funding

Effective July 1, 2006, students enrolled at district expense in online, distance, or technology delivered education are included when calculating “average number belonging” (ANB) for school districts calculating state entitlements.¹⁹³ Montana allows school districts to report to OPI the students who took distance learning courses during the year but were not enrolled on the official count dates. Information reported is used to determine the additional ANB the district is qualified to budget for the ensuing year.

Governance, tracking, and accountability

The Administrative Rules of Montana Standards of Accreditation, Rule 10.55.907,¹⁹⁴ requires online learning providers (other than Montana School Districts) to annually register with the Montana Office of Public Instruction.¹⁹⁵ At that time they must identify all Montana school districts to which they are delivering distance learning; verify the professional qualifications of course teachers; provide course descriptions, including content and delivery model, for each program and/or course; and demonstrate that students have ongoing contact with the distance-learning teachers.

Quality assurance, teaching, and curriculum

The following references are from SB359:¹⁹⁶

- “School districts receiving distance, online, and technology-delivered learning programs described in this rule shall have a distance learning facilitator as provided in this rule assigned for each course and available to the students.
- When a teacher of distance, online, and technology-delivered learning programs and/or courses is not licensed and endorsed as provided in this rule, the facilitator must hold a Montana educator’s license.
- When a teacher of distance, online, and technology-delivered learning programs is licensed and endorsed in the area of instruction, as provided in this rule, the receiving school district’s facilitator shall be a licensed teacher or a para-educator.
- The school district must see to it that the facilitator receives in-service training on technology-delivered instruction.
- A school district shall provide a report to the Office of Public Instruction documenting how it is meeting the needs of students under the accreditation standards who are taking a majority of courses during each grading period via distance, online, and/or technology-delivered programs.”

¹⁹³ Administrative Rules of Montana, Section 907 Distance, Online, and Technology Delivered Learning; retrieved July 20, 2010, <http://www.mtrules.org/gateway/ruleno.asp?RN=10.55.907>

¹⁹⁴ Administrative Rules of Montana, Standards of Accreditation, Rule 10.55.907; retrieved August 2, 2010, <http://www.mtrules.org/gateway/ruleno.asp?RN=10.55.907>

¹⁹⁵ Montana OPI registered distance learning providers; retrieved July 20, 2010, <http://opi.mt.gov/pdf/Accred/09DLProviders.pdf>

¹⁹⁶ SB359; retrieved July 20, 2010, <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/2005/billhtml/SB0359.htm>

Nebraska

Nebraska passed legislation in 2006¹⁹⁷ that created the groundwork for expanded distance education courses by:

- Increasing bandwidth into schools—opening the door for blended learning options in the classroom and high quality two-way interactive classes through videoconferencing and online courses.
- Shifting districts interested in distance learning from a consortium approach into an Educational Service Unit (ESU) model, which facilitates state funding and allows them to enter into contracts with providers.
- Creating a state-level Distance Education Council to, among other tasks, broker and facilitate courses, administer learning management systems, and provide assistance in instructional design and best practices.

The Distance Education Council oversees both videoconferencing and online learning in Nebraska. The Council has designated myelearning.org of Nebraska to implement an asynchronous, web-based learning management system to ensure statewide accessibility for the improvement of staff development and distance education for K-12 students. Nebraska schools exchange over 325 two-way interactive classes each semester through videoconferencing.


In June 2008, the Partnerships for Innovation (PFI), an innovative collaboration between elementary, secondary and post-secondary partners, received a state appropriation from Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins IV) grant funding to access online curriculum from the Monterey Institute for Technology and Education (MITE) and make it available statewide to all grades P-16 for the next three years.¹⁹⁸ The content is available through various educational organizations in the state and in a variety of learning management systems, including myelearning.org (Angel) and ESU 13 (Moodle). Also, the Distance Education Council teamed with Instructional Design and Development experts from the University of Nebraska Extension Education and Outreach Program to co-develop an “Instructional Design for Teaching via eLearning” professional development course that prepares teachers to teach distance education classes.

Online programs

There are a significant number of district-run programs in Nebraska, including Omaha Public Schools. OPS’ eLearning Program was initially designed to meet the needs of credit recovery students in grades 9-12, but has evolved into a blended learning program for all students. OPS eLearning had 9,000 course enrollments in 2009-10, an increase of 20%, and offers 80 different courses. OPS and other Nebraska schools are also using content from NROC (Monterey Institute for Technology and Education).

Nebraska also has twenty-seven high schools that offer online courses to students via the Virtual High School Global Consortium.

Nebraska is in the process of proposing a Nebraska Virtual School as of July 2010.



NEBRASKA

State-led initiative
Distance Education Council created by legislation in April 2006

Other statewide programs
University of Nebraska-Lincoln Independent Study High School, Omaha Public Schools eLearning Program, and other district-run programs

State-level policy
LB1208 (2006); LB603 (2007); LB988 (2008); LB547 (2009)

¹⁹⁷ LB1208; retrieved September 9, 2010, http://www.networknebraska.net/denu/FINAL_LB1208_1.pdf

¹⁹⁸ Partnerships for Innovation; retrieved September 9, 2010, <http://partnershipsforinnovation.org/partnerships/nroc/> and Personal Communication with Mike Kozak; June 16, 2008

State policies

Several laws, Legislative Bills 1208 (2006), LB603 (2007), LB988 (2008), and LB547 which passed in 2009 provide the mechanisms for funding statewide distance learning infrastructure and provide incentives for school districts that act to upgrade distance learning technology and curriculum:

- School districts or educational service units (ESU) can receive up to \$20,000 per high school building for upgrades in high bandwidth IP network technology and two-way interactive video.¹⁹⁹
- Incentives of up to \$1,000 for each distance learning unit can be earned by a school district or ESU based on a qualified distance learning course coordinated through the Distance Education Council. Distance Education Units (DEUs) can be earned for distance learning courses sent or received by schools.²⁰⁰ These incentives currently place emphasis on utilizing the two-way video system heavily invested in by the state; however, it is expected that many of the courses developed in the near future will use a blend of video and online, so asynchronous, Internet-delivered courses are also likely to receive a boost.
- LB603²⁰¹ clarifies and defines elementary distance education so that elementary level distance classes will qualify for the distance education incentive payments once all high school incentive programs are reimbursed.

¹⁹⁹ Nebraska Revised Statute 79-1336; retrieved August 18, 2010, <http://www.legislature.ne.gov/laws/statutes.php?statute=s7913036000>

²⁰⁰ Nebraska Revised Statute 79-1337; retrieved August 18, 2010, <http://www.legislature.ne.gov/laws/statutes.php?statute=s7913037000>

²⁰¹ Section 9.4 of LB603; retrieved August 18, 2010, <http://uniweb.legislature.ne.gov/FloorDocs/Current/PDF/Final/LB603.pdf>

Nevada

Nevada has online charter schools and district online programs. The state is unique in that approximately 70% of its students are in one district, the Clark County School District, which has a virtual high school. The state also has policies governing distance education, which include video and online delivery. Policies governing distance education apply to both district programs and charter schools. Prior to 2008, the State Board of Education had prohibited two statewide distance education charter schools from serving grades K-3; however, the State Board voted in August 2008 to open the statewide online charters to grades K-3.

Online programs

Statewide online programs include the Clark County School District Virtual High School, begun in fall 2004; Silver State Charter High School, which accepts full-time students from across the state who attend synchronous courses in a cohort and are required to meet with a teacher at a school once a week²⁰²; Odyssey Charter School, which serves grades K-12 and has a face-to-face component; and Nevada Connections Academy (with 1300 students in 2009-10) and Nevada Virtual Academy. The virtual charter schools, not including the Clark County program, had a combined enrollment of 5,950 total students in 2009-10; this is a 76% increase from 3,377 students from 2008-09, which was a 40% increase over the previous fiscal year. The 2009-10 enrollments included 1,270 elementary, 1,481 middle school and 3,199 high school students.²⁰³

State policies

Nevada online education policies set forth programmatic and reporting requirements, have the state maintain a list of courses and programs that meet certain requirements, allow the state to review or audit distance programs, and allow the state to revoke its approval of a distance education program that does not meet the requirements. Unless otherwise noted, the following information is taken from Nevada Revised Statutes,²⁰⁴ with quotes from the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) web page on distance learning.²⁰⁵

Funding

- Students must get permission from their own school district before taking part in another school district's online program when the online program is not a charter school. This allows FTE funding to go to the school district offering the online program. If the student is taking online courses as part of the school day, the two districts agree to the apportionment of

²⁰² Silver State High School; retrieved August 27, 2010, <http://www.sshs.org/html/about.php>

²⁰³ Personal communication with Richard Rasmussen, Nevada Department of Education; August 13, 2010

²⁰⁴ Nevada Revised Statutes 388; retrieved August 17, 2010, <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/nrs/NRS-388.html> and Nevada Administrative Code 388; retrieved September 9, 2010, <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/NAC/NAC-388.html>

²⁰⁵ Nevada Department of Education; retrieved August 17, 2010, http://www.doe.nv.gov/Tech_DistanceEd.htm

NEVADA

State virtual school
No

Other statewide programs
Several statewide charter schools

Other significant online programs
Some district online programs, including the Clark County School District Virtual High School

Number of online students in 2009-10 school year:
Full-time: 5,950 (virtual charters only, not including Districts such as Clark County)

State-level policy
Nevada Revised Statutes & Nevada Administrative Code set distance education program requirements

funds. The written agreement must be filed with the state to allow the student funding to go to the district providing the instruction.

- Virtual charter schools are not required to obtain permission from a student’s local school district but must inform the district that the student is enrolling in the charter school before that student begins classes. Funding follows the student from the district in which the student resides to the charter school program.

Governance, tracking, and accountability

Reporting requirements specific to distance education programs were repealed in 2008. Previously, each online program had to report to the state on a list of requirements specific to online education including program expenditures, the number of students, and more. Now each online program, whether or not it is a charter school, must annually report the same information as regular brick-and-mortar schools report to NDE.

Quality assurance, teaching, and curriculum

- The state board of education is considering changes to how attendance is kept for distance education programs as of fall 2010. The changes would shift the emphasis from a teacher/student weekly meeting and documentation, to confirmation of course enrollment and time spent in online courses, as well as work completed on a weekly basis.²⁰⁶
- “If a program of distance education is provided for pupils on a full-time basis, the program must include at least as many hours or minutes of instruction as would be provided under a program consisting of 180 days.” Courses approved by NDE meet this requirement.
- While the Nevada Administrative Code addressing student attendance has a daily minutes of attendance requirement for the student, it allows the acceptance of competency-based instruction in lieu of seat time.²⁰⁷ Distance education programs must meet the same state attendance standards as other schools unless the district “obtains the written approval of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for a program that demonstrates progress or completion by pupils in a curriculum that is equivalent to the regular school curriculum.” Approval will be granted by the Superintendent in writing if the “approved program demonstrates progress or completion by pupils in a curriculum that is equivalent to the regular school curriculum . . . [and] that meets the state standards which may be considered equivalent to the regular school curriculum.”
- Distance learning course providers must submit course outlines to NDE for a review process to ensure the course content meets state curriculum standards.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ State Board of Education June 18, 2010 meeting minutes; retrieved August 26, 2010, http://www.doe.nv.gov/BoardEd/Meetings/2010/2010-06-18_Minutes_BOE_Subcommittee.pdf

²⁰⁷ NAC 385.404; retrieved August 26, 2010, [http://www.leg.state.nv.us/register/RegsReviewed/\\$R134-07A.pdf](http://www.leg.state.nv.us/register/RegsReviewed/$R134-07A.pdf)

²⁰⁸ Nevada Department of Education approved distance learning course provider list; retrieved August 17, 2010, http://www.doe.nv.gov/Tech_DistanceEd.htm

NEW HAMPSHIRE

State virtual school

Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS)

Other statewide programs

No

Other significant online programs

One district-based charter school offering a blend of face-to-face courses and online resources; 26 schools are members of the Virtual High School Global Consortium

State-level policy

State has formal rules on distance learning, and HB688 amended provisions pertaining to “open enrollment” charter schools

New Hampshire

New Hampshire has a statewide virtual charter school that plays a role similar to state virtual schools in other states; and at least one other regional charter school, Great Bay eLearning Charter School, that offers face-to-face instruction blended with online resources for grades 8-11. The Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS) is New Hampshire’s first statewide online high school, approved in May 2007, serving grades 7-12. VLACS is predominantly supplemental, unusual for a virtual charter school, with approximately 4,000 part-time students within the nearly 8,000 course enrollments in 2009-10. There are two sections to New Hampshire charter school law: (1) open enrollment schools, which require a school district vote to authorize the charter school, and (2) a “pilot” charter program.²⁰⁹ VLACS was established under the pilot program and approved by the state board of education. Funding for VLACS comes from the state board, not from local school districts. VLACS funding per full-time student in 2008-09 was \$3,830, increasing to \$5,450 per full-time student in 2009-10. Although a moratorium has been instituted on state funding, VLACS enrollment is not limited as long as additional funding can be secured.

In 2009, HB688²¹⁰ amended existing charter school law to streamline the local approval process by removing a town vote requirement; and clarifying funding for “open enrollment” charter schools, or charter schools that “accept pupils from other attendance areas within its district and from outside its district.” Funding for online students follows the student from the resident district to the open enrollment district; “...pupil’s resident district shall pay to such school an amount equal to not less than 80 percent of that district’s average cost per pupil as determined by the department of education...” The bill also directs the state board to “convene one or more working committees to study and make recommendations regarding the implementation and effectiveness of chartered public schools with recommendations provided to the legislative oversight committee.”

A dual enrollment program, eStart, is a collaboration between the New Hampshire community college system and VLACS. Credits earned through eStart will transfer to one of New Hampshire’s community colleges, or to other colleges and universities in the state.²¹¹ For the 2010-11 school year VLACS will add dual credit courses from Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU). eStart follows a traditional college schedule with classes taught by a community college instructor; however, the SNHU/VLACS courses will have rolling enrollment (students may enroll and start courses anytime between September and February), courses are self-paced, and they must be completed by June 30. These courses are taught by VLACS instructors who have the qualifications to become SNHU adjunct faculty.

New Hampshire does not have any state policies that govern online courses specifically, but does have state rules on distance learning that have been in effect since July 2005.²¹² Most of the rules describe policies that the local school board must set for distance learning, without going

²⁰⁹ Title XV education, Section 194-B:3-a; retrieved August 11, 2010, <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/XV/194-B/194-B-mrg.htm>

²¹⁰ HB688; retrieved August, 2010, <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2009/HB0688.html>

²¹¹ Community College System of New Hampshire news release; retrieved August 10, 2010, <http://www.ccsnh.edu/news/estart.html>

²¹² Section 306.22; retrieved August 12, 2010, from <http://www.education.nh.gov/legislation/documents/ed306.pdf>

into much detail. One provision states that the School Board must create policies to address “the number of students a teacher may be required to supervise” and “monitoring of student progress, grading of assignments, and testing.” Two prescriptive provisions require that “students earning credit for distance education courses shall participate in all [state] assessments,” and “credit courses require students to meet similar academic standards as required by the school for students enrolled in credit courses offered by the school.”

One of the state rules applicable to digital learning has students develop digital portfolios as part of the state’s ICT (information and communication technologies) literacy requirements, which are designed to help meet the No Child Left Behind goal of students being technology-literate by the end of 8th grade. Several districts are implementing open source eportfolio solutions using Sakai OSP and Moodle Mahara.²¹³

NEW JERSEY

State virtual school
No

Other statewide programs
No

Other online programs
Virtual High School Global Consortium;
Hudson eSchool;
New Jersey Virtual School

State-level policy
No

New Jersey

New Jersey has no state virtual school or statewide online programs. The current statute for charter schools has geographic limits to the community of students they serve and requires a 90% enrollment in contiguous districts.²¹⁴ Some school districts contract with online learning providers and 46 high schools are members of the Virtual High School Global Consortium. The Educational Technology Plan for New Jersey, a report from the New Jersey Department of Education published by the State Board in December 2007, noted that the Department of Education will provide research and policy support for the development and use of online courses and virtual schools, and would be served by the Office of Online Education in the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE).

The NJDOE revised its Core Curriculum Content Standards for 2009 (all nine areas approved as of June 2010) to reflect strong integration of technology in all core content areas.²¹⁵ New Jersey is a member of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills initiative and is committed to increasing student achievement using 21st century technologies.

The NJDOE approves supplemental education services (SES) providers, which may include online learning options for students.²¹⁶

Monmouth Ocean Educational Service Commission (ESC) has legal ownership of the “New Jersey Virtual School” name and offers online classes, but is not a state virtual school.

²¹³ School Technology Survey; retrieved September 9, 2010, www.nheon.org/oet/survey/0910/SchoolTechSurvey0910-ICT-PD.doc

²¹⁴ Correspondence with the New Jersey Department of Education and Sue Sullivan; July 25, 2008

²¹⁵ Core Curriculum Content Standards; retrieved September 10, 2010, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/2009/>

²¹⁶ Approved SES list; retrieved July 28, 2010, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/title1/program/ss/providers/apprv-0910/index.html>

NEW MEXICO

State virtual school
IDEAL-NM
 (Innovative Digital Education and Learning New Mexico)

Other statewide programs
 None

Other significant online programs
 Some single-district programs

State-level policy
SB209/HB201
 (2007) created the statewide Cyber Academy provided through IDEAL-NM; the Distance Learning Rule of the New Mexico Administrative Code sets distance learning guidelines

New Mexico

New Mexico has a state virtual school, IDEAL-NM (Innovative Digital Education and Learning New Mexico), which was created by the 2007 Statewide Cyber Academy Act.²¹⁷ IDEAL-NM had approximately 2,063 course enrollments in 2009-10, a 36% increase over 2008-09 enrollments. Distance learning rules approved in 2008 set requirements for IDEAL-NM; the rule also allows public schools (including charters) to provide online learning courses to students in any district as long as there are written agreements in place between host and resident districts. Districts must develop processes that allow students access to online courses. The local school where the student is enrolled approves and registers students for online courses and pays course fees.

In August 2009, Governor Bill Richardson announced the “Graduate New Mexico”²¹⁸ initiative to address the drop-out rate in the state. This initiative includes an expansion of IDEAL-NM to make online courses available to up to 10,000 students who need to make up credits to graduate. IDEAL-NM will receive \$3.15 million in funding from Graduate New Mexico in addition to its \$1.4 million budget appropriation in 2010. The additional \$3.15 million in funding is being used to increase staff to meet expected increases in course enrollments generated by the state program. The additional funding also allows IDEAL-NM to place on-site staff in 10 regional service centers to provide greater student outreach and support for partner school districts.

IDEAL-NM is unusual in that it provides a statewide learning management system (LMS) by which online K-12, higher education, and state agency training courses are delivered, referred to as P-20+. School districts may use the LMS to create their own online courses, or use the content developed by IDEAL-NM to teach their own courses. Thirty-eight of New Mexico’s 89 school districts, and 21 charter schools, use the LMS as of August 2010 to create branded web portals to access all of the courses offered by IDEAL-NM at no cost, as well as shared community of resources and professional development services. In addition, a statewide eLearning Service Center supports

the use of the shared LMS among all the education and training entities, including providing technical support.²¹⁹ IDEAL-NM also provides an eLearning portal that acts as a clearinghouse for online courses and programs offered by New Mexico higher education institutions, in addition to information for K-12 and state agencies.

IDEAL-NM is working in partnership with local schools to develop a statewide network of school-based eLearning Facilitators who connect their students to online teachers and other resources, including a library of online courses and learning objects developed using iNACOL standards, a national content-sharing consortia, and web-based tools including an LMS and web conferencing tools.

²¹⁷ SB209 Bill Analysis; retrieved July 26, 2010, <http://legis.state.nm.us/Sessions/07%20Regular/LESCAnalysis/senate/SB0209%20%20Cyber%20Academy%20Act.pdf>

²¹⁸ Graduate New Mexico; retrieved July 30, 2010, http://euidev.ped.state.nm.us/sites/cyp/HighSchool/Documents/gnm_home.aspx

²¹⁹ IDEAL-NM; retrieved July 26, 2010, http://www.ideal-nm.org/home/get-content/content/about_ideal-nm

In 2009-10 several provisions of the 2007 High School Redesign bill (SB0561)²²⁰ became effective with implications for IDEAL-NM and other online learning providers:

- At least one of the 24 units required for graduation must be an Advanced Placement, honors, dual enrollment or distance learning course
- Algebra must be made available to all 8th graders (either online or classroom), and all districts must offer two years of a foreign language other than English
- All schools must now offer a health course

Online programs

In addition to IDEAL-NM, some school districts offer online programs including districts in Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, Hobbs, Taos, and Roy. A few of these districts and a growing number of new districts are utilizing course content, web-based tools, and online teachers provided through IDEAL-NM as part of their strategies to serve their students' eLearning needs.

The distance learning rules allow for creation of full-time, multi-district online schools. A number of districts in partnership with education management companies have applied for approval, but as of fall 2010 none has been approved by the New Mexico Public Education Department. Applications for charter schools that include virtual schooling as part of the charter application have increased in New Mexico, and the Charter School Division of the Public Education Department that reviews applications has asked IDEAL-NM to work as a non-voting consultant on an as-needed basis.

State policies

The Distance Learning Rule, New Mexico Administrative Code Title 6, Chapter 30, Part 8,²²¹ establishes requirements for distance learning programs taken for credit by students enrolled in a school district or charter school, and sets forth implementation of statewide e-learning courses via IDEAL-NM. It specifies that school districts cannot restrict student access to online courses. The intent of state rules is to engage the local school, community, and parents in the eLearning solutions for K-12 students. eLearning providers must work with a public school district, charter school or LEA. "School districts and charter schools providing distance-learning courses to students statewide shall enter into written agreements with students' enrolling districts or charter schools..."²²² An opinion from the Attorney General's Office issued in February 2008 found that New Mexico's open enrollment law does not apply to online schools and therefore does not conflict with the distance learning rules.²²³ A memorandum²²⁴ from the Secretary of Education to all district superintendents was issued in January 2010 to clarify distance learning programs, particularly IDEAL-NM. It noted, "In order to participate in distance learning courses, a public school student must be enrolled in a New Mexico public school district, charter school, [or] state institution ... and have written permission of the student's enrolling district, charter school, [or] state institution..."

²²⁰ SB0561; retrieved July 26, 2010, <http://legis.state.nm.us/Sessions/07%20Regular/final/SB0561.pdf>

²²¹ Administrative Code 6.30.8; retrieved July 26, 2010, <http://www.nmcpr.state.nm.us/nmac/parts/title06/06.030.0008.pdf>

²²² *Ibid*

²²³ Letter from Assistant Attorney General Andrea Buzzard to New Mexico State Representative Al Park, "Opinion request—open enrollment and distance education;" February 19, 2008

²²⁴ Memorandum from Dr. Veronia Garcia, State Secretary of Education, clarifying distance learning programs; retrieved August 3, 2010, <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/qab/dl10/Distance%20Learning%20Memo%20Emslie.pdf>

The following policy provisions are based on the Administrative Code legislation passed in September 2008, and distance learning rules.²²⁵

Funding

Public school students must have a primary enrolling, or resident district. Should a student enroll in a distance learning course offered by a district or charter school other than the student's enrolling district, any reimbursement for cross-district enrollment for distance learning courses shall be arranged between the districts or charter schools through signed written documents. Homeschool students with no enrolling district are allowed to enroll in distance learning options without a primary school district, but must pay a per course fee.

Governance, tracking, and accountability

- “Qualified distance learning students participating in asynchronous distance learning courses must log on to their distance learning courses at least the same number of days per week as the traditional face-to-face classes occur at the schools in which they are enrolled, and certify that they are the enrolled students.
- While distance learning technologies may occasionally be used as full-time educational programming for students in unusual circumstances, asynchronous distance learning shall not be used as a substitute for all direct, face-to-face, student and teacher interactions unless approved by the local board of education.
- Local distance learning sites shall provide onsite access to the necessary technology for participation in distance learning courses involving Internet-based instruction.
- Local distance learning sites shall provide accompanying electronic formats that are usable by a person with a disability using assistive technology, and those formats shall be based on the American standard code for information interchange, hypertext markup language, and extensible markup language.
- Each qualified distance learning student participating in a distance learning course or program shall be evaluated, tested and monitored and shall be subject to the statewide assessments as required in the Assessment and Accountability Act. No student shall be allowed to participate in the statewide assessments at a place other than a department authorized site.
- A qualified distance learning student may participate in and receive credit or a grade for a distance learning course that is at a different grade level than the student's current grade level. If allowed by district policy, a student may retake a course to earn a higher grade. However, credit cannot be earned twice for the same course.”

²²⁵ Administrative Code 6.30.8; retrieved July 26, 2010, <http://www.nmcpr.state.nm.us/nmac/parts/title06/06.030.0008.pdf>

New York

New York is in the early stages of addressing its lack of state-level online learning policy and initiatives. The Department of Education released a comprehensive state educational technology plan,²²⁶ approved in February 2010, which includes a provision for opening a statewide virtual high school.²²⁷ The Board of Regents has begun discussing a possible framework for an online high school (November 2009 and February 2010),²²⁸ and the state has expanded online offerings for credit recovery (CR100.5(d)(8))²²⁹ and independent study (CR100.5(d)(9)).²³⁰ In addition, New York was among the states awarded funding through the Race to the Top competition, and as of September 2010 the state plans to issue multiple Requests for Proposals. These will include one for online courses with an emphasis on credit recovery and Advanced Placement courses; and one to develop technical assistance centers that will assist with creation of online learning opportunities, including providing professional development related to teaching in an online environment and providing infrastructure analysis for LEAs.

In addition to state efforts, the New York City Department of Education—the largest school district in the country with more than one million students—is implementing an online and blended learning initiative, iLearnNYC. In the 2010-11 school year the initiative is piloting online credit recovery and Advanced Placement courses, as well as blended learning. In subsequent years the online course offerings will expand, and the Department intends to make blended learning a key component of its education infrastructure across the city's schools. New York City's efforts build on several earlier and ongoing initiatives such as the Innovation Zone and School of One.

The state and New York City initiatives are complementing several small-scale efforts in school districts and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES). For example, Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES has created Project Accelerate and AccelerateU, which provide online courses for students and professional development and instructional support for teachers. Through an agreement with other BOCES, the online courses have been available to students and teachers from other regions. Student courses are now funded by an enrollment fee paid by districts and by course fees. Districts that meet certain state requirements then receive aid back from the state in the following fiscal year, ranging from 50-75% of the amount paid. The number of students or course enrollments in supplemental online courses across the state is unknown.

New York State amended its charter school legislation in 2007 and most recently by Chapters 101, 102, and 221 of the Laws of 2010. The Board of Regents declined to authorize full-time online charter schools because they interpreted the language in the statute prohibiting multiple sites (locations) for one charter to apply to online charter schools. This interpretation still stands. The amended charter school legislation lifts the cap on charter schools to 460 (from 200), specifies a new charter school approval process, prohibits new schools from contracting a majority of their operations or services with for-profit management companies, and mandates an annual report from each charter school, among many other provisions.

²²⁶ New York Statewide Educational Technology Plan; retrieved July 27, 2010, <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/edtech/>

²²⁷ Virtual High School framework; retrieved July 27, 2010, <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2010Meetings/February2010/0210emscd1.htm>

²²⁸ Board of Regents meeting minutes; retrieved August 18, 2010, <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/archived-2010.html>

²²⁹ Commissioner's Ruling 100.5 (d)(8); retrieved September 10, 2010, <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/part100/pages/1005.html#makeupcredit>

²³⁰ Commissioner's Ruling 100.5 (d)(9); retrieved September 10, 2010, <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/part100/pages/1005.html#d9>

NEW YORK

State virtual school
None

Other statewide programs

No; past charter denials currently block online charters and there are no full-time statewide schools

Other significant online programs

iLearnNYC is a New York City online and blended district-wide initiative

State-level policy

Expanded online offerings for credit recovery and independent study

North Carolina

North Carolina's state virtual school, the North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS), grew out of the recommendations of the e-learning commission within the Business Education Technology Alliance (BETA) created by the Lt. Governor and State Board of Education. The State Board agreed with the recommendations, and State Board action in August 2005 formally created the program.²³¹ Legislation prohibits any state-funded entity from offering "e-learning opportunities" without the approval of NCVPS: "...all e-learning opportunities offered by state-funded entities to public school students are consolidated under the North Carolina Virtual Public School program, eliminating course duplication."²³² The legislation requires NCVPS to "prioritize e-learning course offerings for students residing in rural and low-wealth county LEAs." State board policy also places similar restrictions on for-credit online courses supplied by vendors: "Any K-7 e-learning course or 8-12 course taken for credit toward a diploma must first be approved for credit by the NC Virtual Public School"²³³ State policy also instructs NCVPS to "... consider whether the course meets the SREB (Southern Regional Education Board) and/or iNACOL criteria for awarding credit ..."

NCVPS officially opened for the summer 2007 session, and now offers courses in grades 9-12, with 73,658 course enrollments in 2009-10, an annual increase of more than 300%. NCVPS reports to the State Board of Education.²³⁴

The North Carolina General Assembly has also charged the State Board of Education to develop and implement a funding plan based upon average daily membership or enrollment. SB897²³⁵ establishes an allotment formula to "create a sustainable source of funding that increases commensurate with student enrollment and recognizes "the extent to which projected enrollment in e-learning courses affects funding required for other allotments that are based on ADM."

The NC Department of Public Instruction will implement the NCVPS allotment formula by:

- (1) Projecting the unduplicated NCVPS enrollment for each local school administrative unit and for each grade level.
- (2) Divide the projected unduplicated NCVPS enrollment for each unit by six in order to calculate its ADM-equivalent student enrollment in NCVPS.
- (3) Reduce the unit's ADM allotments by seventy-five percent (75%) of its ADM-equivalent student enrollment in NCVPS.
- (4) Transfer a dollar amount equal to seventy-five percent (75%) of the unit's ADM-equivalent student enrollment to NCVPS."²³⁶

²³¹ SB622, 2005-276, Section 7.41; retrieved July 22, 2010, <http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/EnactedLegislation/SessionLaws/HTML/2005-2006/SL2005-276.html>

²³² SB897, 2010-31; retrieved August 12, 2010, <http://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2009/Bills/Senate/PDF/S897v8.pdf>

²³³ State Board Policy GCS-M-001. Section 10; retrieved August 12, 2010, <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/policies/general>

²³⁴ SB1741, Sections 7.16(b) and (c); retrieved August 19, 2010, <http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/Sessions/2005/Bills/Senate/HTML/S1741v8.html>

²³⁵ SB897, 2010-31; retrieved July 20, 2010, <http://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2009/Bills/Senate/PDF/S897v8.pdf>

²³⁶ Ibid



NORTH CAROLINA

State virtual school
North Carolina
Virtual Public School

Other statewide programs
No

Other significant programs
No

State-level policy
Session Law 2005-276 (2005) created the pilot for North Carolina Virtual Public School; Session Law 2006-66 Section 7.16 funded the program; SB897 (2010) establishes funding formula for NCVPS

Education funding in North Carolina is based on forward-funding; for NCVPS the funding is reallocated from school districts to NCVPS based on enrollments in NCVPS courses from the previous year with an adjustment for projected enrollment growth. For the 2010-11 school year, the \$20 million in funds for NCVPS has already been reallocated from districts to NCVPS as of August 2010. The 2010-11 budget funds 46,000 one-credit course enrollments; NCVPS will be forced to cap enrollment at that level without additional funding. It is expected that the new funding formula will be revisited during the 2010-11 legislative session to rectify inequities between larger and smaller districts, among other changes that may occur.

SB897 also prohibits other state funding going to NCVPS, places a 15% cap on operations with 85% going to teacher pay, limits courses to those for high school grades only, and does not allow physical education to be taught online. It also confirms that NCVPS will use funds generated by the new formula to provide online courses to all students who are enrolled in North Carolina's public schools at no cost. Students must get permission to enroll in NCVPS courses through their local school district.

The NCVPS funding formula is a new and different approach to funding a state virtual school. It addresses concerns that students in state virtual school courses are being funded twice (via the local district funds and the state virtual school funds). It does not, however, include two provisions that have been central to the growth of Florida Virtual School (FLVS). In Florida, the student right to choose a course from FLVS is in statute, and the number of students who can take a course from FLVS is not limited—and therefore funding to FLVS is not limited either.

Legislation passed in 2007 established the Learn and Earn Online (LEO) program, a dual enrollment program that allows public high school students to earn college credits. In January 2008, NCVPS became the coordinator for LEO services between UNC-Greensboro's iSchool, the North Carolina Community College System, and the Department of Public Instruction. Students in grades 9-12 can now take dual enrollment courses for college credit free of charge at 45 participating community colleges and the UNC-G iSchool, regardless of the college service areas in which they reside. Over 5,000 students were dual enrolled in LEO in 2008-09 and over 11,000 students enrolled in 2009-10, totaling more than 27,000 students over the three-year life of the program. The State Board of Education allots funds for tuition, fees, and textbooks. 2010 legislation limits LEO courses to science, technology, and math, as well as requiring a funding formula to be implemented for the 2010-11 academic year.

In spring 2010, NCVPS expanded its services to include a focus on blended learning with modular and mobile instruction offered to pilot groups of students. Also, NCVPS will serve approximately 1,000 occupational study students in fall 2010 in a blended instructional effort with the exceptional children's division of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Occupational study students work in a face-to-face classroom with online curriculum and highly-qualified teacher from NCVPS to supplement areas where the face-to-face teachers are not qualified.

The North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics (NCSSM) is a public, residential high school for gifted, high performing juniors and seniors that is offering a combination of online and face-to-face courses for its students. NCVPS has a Memorandum of Agreement with NCSSM that authorizes them to offer online course to students who qualify to attend the NCSSM but cannot be accommodated due to limited space.

North Dakota

The only comprehensive online program in North Dakota is the North Dakota Center for Distance Education (ND CDE), which offers both online and print courses that are self-paced and scheduled. The Center is a partially state-funded (20%), supplemental program launched in fall 1996 (ND CDE is a reorganization of the North Dakota Division of Independent Study) and serves middle and high school students. In 2009-10 the program had 2,350 online course enrollments, a decrease of 3% from the prior year. 1,650 of those enrollments were out-of-state. Teachers are full- and part-time, and are each responsible for up to 500 students in a course. Districts that at one time sent students to ND CDE are beginning to partner with local colleges on dual credit courses, and to utilize out-of-state providers to create their own online programs and alternative school curricula.

The Center is funded via state appropriation and course fees. Local school districts must approve enrollment of local students and determine who provides the course fee—student or school. Homeschool students must pay tuition to participate in ND CDE courses.

The only legislation related to online education in North Dakota, in addition to the one that created the North Dakota Division of Independent Study,²³⁷ and the law that changed the name to the Center for Distance Education, is a law passed in 2007²³⁸ that required the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to set up a process for approving online courses. An exception is that the approval process does not “apply to a course provided electronically between approved schools in North Dakota.” The approval process requires that “courses... are aligned with state content and performance standards... if standards do not exist... the course content must be sufficiently challenging for students...; teachers... meet or exceed the qualifications and licensure requirements placed on the teachers by the state in which the course originates; and all students...have ongoing contact time with the teachers of the course.”

The resulting section NDCC 15.1-21-15 allows for a process²³⁹ for North Dakota schools to provide academic services through the use of out-of-state electronic course delivery providers. As of July 2009 all schools receiving out-of-state electronic course delivery must complete the Out-Of-State Electronic Course Delivery School Application for approval by the School Approval & Accreditation Unit of the Department of Public Instruction on an annual basis. Only those out-of-state providers that have received approval may deliver their services within the state. The application asks the provider to describe for each course:

- The cost to the student, the grade level, and type of course credit which will be awarded,
- A timeline for the course, including the expectation of time to be devoted to the course, and
- How the course is developed and evaluated to ensure quality, a description of the course delivery model(s) and student contact plan including frequency, how student work is evaluated for the course, and finally, how their progress is assessed for quality.

As of June 2010, seven applications had been submitted and approved for out-of-state providers.

NORTH DAKOTA

State virtual school
North Dakota
Center for Distance
Education

Other statewide programs
No

Other significant online programs
Several school district and regional consortia programs exist—none comprehensive in scope

State-level policy
HB1491 (2007) required the state to set up an approval process for online courses by July 2009; no charter school law

²³⁷ Chapter 15-19; retrieved August 10, 2010, www.legis.nd.gov/cencode/t15c19.pdf

²³⁸ HB1491; retrieved August 10, 2010, <http://www.legis.nd.gov/assembly/60-2007/bill-text/HBIR0400.pdf>

²³⁹ North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, school and provider application forms, instructions and rubrics; retrieved August 10, 2010, <http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/approve/electronic.shtm>

Ohio

Ohio has 27 eCommunity (charter) schools, including seven statewide schools.²⁴⁰ A community school is similar to charter schools in other states. An eCommunity school is an Internet- or computer-based community school in which the enrolled students work primarily from their residences. eCommunity schools first opened for the 2000-01 school year. Ohio eCommunity schools served approximately 31,852 students in 2009-10, representing an approximate 17.8 % increase from 2008-09.²⁴¹ Ohio also has a number of district programs in pockets across the state; OhioLearns! is a state-led initiative.

Legislation adopted in April 2003 provided additional guidance for eCommunity school operation.²⁴² Legislation enacted in 2005 imposed a moratorium on new eCommunity schools until the General Assembly adopts standards for the schools, due to a number of concerns. (The issues leading to the moratorium were reviewed in the 2009 *Keeping Pace*.)

A study by the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools²⁴³ suggests that the eCommunity schools have achieved better results than comparable traditional school districts, but as of August 2010 these findings have not yet translated into lifting the moratorium on new eCommunity Schools that remains in effect.

Legislation in 2007 and later amended in 2008 required the Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents (OBR) to establish a Distance Learning Clearinghouse (DLC) of online courses offered by school districts, community schools, higher education institutions, and commercial providers for sharing within the state for a fee set by the course provider.²⁴⁴ The K-20 clearinghouse builds upon existing technologies and experiences of the higher education distance learning community in Ohio. A consulting service has been contracted to facilitate the development of the project in phases, and to establish high-level architecture and design requirements for the next phase with support from stakeholders across the Ohio education landscape.²⁴⁵ The first phase of the DLC, named the OhioLearns! Gateway, was launched on September 1, 2010, and is administered by the Ohio Learning Network.²⁴⁶

OhioLearns! Gateway provides an online catalog of 40 online courses for high school students approved by the Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents. All courses must meet the eligibility

²⁴⁰ List of eCommunity schools; retrieved September 1, 2010, <http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/DocumentManagement/DocumentDownload.aspx?DocumentID=59539>

²⁴¹ School enrollment data; retrieved from Ohio Department of Education, Interactive Local Report Card, retrieved September 1, 2010, <http://ilrc.ode.state.oh.us/>

²⁴² Information in this section is based on and updated from the 2005-2006 Annual Report on Ohio Community Schools; retrieved August 7, 2010, <http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/DocumentManagement/DocumentDownload.aspx?DocumentID=22703>; and HB66 (2005); retrieved August 7, 2010, http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/BillText126/126_HB_66_EN1_N.html

²⁴³ The Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools study, E-schools Show Superior Results; retrieved August 7, 2010, http://www.oapcs.org/files/EschoolStudy_final6-24-09.pdf

²⁴⁴ HB119, section 3353.21, 2007 and HB562, section 3333.82, 2008; retrieved August 7, 2010, http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/BillText127/127_HB_562_EN_N.html

²⁴⁵ Personal communication with Leslie Southern, Ohio Online Learning; September 17, 2010

²⁴⁶ Ohio Learning Network; retrieved September 3, 2010, <http://www.olin.org/>

OHIO

State-led initiative
OhioLearns! Gateway

Other statewide programs

Seven of the 27 eCommunity schools enroll students from across the state

Other significant online programs
District programs

State-level policy
HB364 (2003) provided operational guidance; HB66 (2005) placed a moratorium on new eCommunity schools; HB119 (2007) established online clearinghouse; HB562 (2008) expanded the clearinghouse to K-20 and moved responsibility to the Ohio Board of Regents

requirements outlined in the Ohio Learns! Course Provider Guidelines.²⁴⁷ Advanced Placement courses are accredited by the College Board and all non-Advanced Placement courses are aligned to Ohio Academic Content Standards. Initial offerings are limited to Advanced Placement (AP) courses from three approved AP course providers: Advanced Academics, Aventa Learning, and K12 Inc. Ohio public school students are eligible to apply for a fee waiver provided through funding appropriated by the Ohio General Assembly to the eTech Ohio Commission, which is a partner state agency dedicated to enhancing learning through educational technology. Legislation creating the DLC provided funding for the design and development of the clearinghouse and for the fee waiver program, which is specifically set aside for students taking AP courses. Non-AP courses at the OhioLearns! Gateway will be made available throughout 2010-11, but are not eligible for the fee waiver program. Business models are being developed with the intent that the DLC will be self-sustaining.²⁴⁸

State policies

Funding

- Community schools, including eCommunity schools, receive state funds directly from the state; these funds have been transferred from school district allocations.²⁴⁹ eCommunity schools are funded at the same formula per-pupil as traditional districts, \$5,703 in fiscal year 2011. eCommunity schools also receive some additional funds via special education appropriation, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, state fiscal stabilization funds, EduJobs funding when available, and other federal funds.²⁵⁰
- eCommunity schools are not eligible to receive poverty-based funding; however they do receive the same special education-based funding as all community schools.
- Since FY 2007, each eCommunity school has been required to spend a designated amount for pupil instruction or face a possible fine of up to 5% of state payments to the school. The 2009 budget bill revised the language in ORC3314.85(A) adding computers and software for students as eligible instruction expenses.²⁵¹

Governance, tracking, and accountability

- Each student enrolled in an eCommunity school must have an “affiliation” with at least one “teacher of record” licensed by the State Board of Education. The “teacher of record is responsible for the overall academic development and achievement of a student and not merely the student’s instruction in a single subject.”
- No teacher of record can be responsible for more than 125 students.
- Each eCommunity school must provide a minimum of 920 hours of “learning opportunities” to students per school year. Only 10 hours in any 24-hour period can count toward this total.
- eCommunity schools can count student learning in terms of days instead of hours; in this case, a “day” must consist of at least five hours.
- Each child enrolled in an eCommunity school is entitled to a computer supplied by the school. If there is more than one child per household, the parent can request fewer computers than children enrolled in the school. eCommunity schools may not provide a stipend in lieu of a computer; they must provide an actual computer.

²⁴⁷ Ohio Learns! Course Provider Guidelines; retrieved September 18, 2010, <http://www.ohiolearns.org/pdf/CourseProviderGuidelines.pdf>

²⁴⁸ Personal communication with Leslie Southern, Ohio Online Learning, September 17, 2010

²⁴⁹ Ohio Revised Code ORC3314.08(C); retrieved August 7, 2010, <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/3314.08>

²⁵⁰ Community school funding information; retrieved August 7, 2010, <http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=878&ContentID=2305&Content=70890> and Personal Correspondence with William Nelson, Assistant Director, Community Schools, Ohio Department of Education; September 1, 2010

²⁵¹ ORC3314.085; retrieved August 7, 2010, <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/3314.085>

Quality assurance, teaching, and curriculum

- eCommunity schools must administer the state-developed achievement tests and diagnostic assessments in the same manner as school districts, and must provide students a location within 50 miles of the student's residence for the assessments.
- Whenever an eCommunity school student fails to participate in the spring administration of a grade-level achievement test for two consecutive school years, the school must withdraw that student from enrollment unless the parent pays tuition equal to the state funds the school otherwise would receive for that student. eCommunity schools must report these students to the state, the state must maintain a list of these students, and no eCommunity school will receive funds for students appearing on this list.
- Each eCommunity school "must submit to its sponsor a plan for providing special education and related services to disabled students enrolled in the school."

Oklahoma

Oklahoma does not have a state virtual school but does have two major statewide full-time online programs: the Oklahoma Virtual High School (OVHS) and Oklahoma Virtual Academy. Students from districts that do not provide online courses can transfer into a district that does during the state's annual Open Transfer period of January 1 through April 1. State funding is paid to the school district based on standard state per-pupil public school funding. Oklahoma students also have access to two established, supplemental distance-learning programs. The University of Oklahoma Independent Learning High School, started in 2000, is tuition-supported and has a diploma-granting arm known as OU High School. Some of the more than 100 courses are online; many are correspondence. Oklahoma State University K-12 Distance Learning Academy is a supplemental program offering a handful of courses for a fee; some other state universities offer online courses, most for concurrent enrollment of high school students.

According to the state Legislature's Internet-Based Instruction Task Force, "over 1,100 students were enrolled in a full-time online program during the 2008-09 school year [in Oklahoma]. This increased to over 2,500 for the 2009-10 school year, which represented a 163% increase."²⁵²

State policies

SB2319 confirms that students should be counted by their school for attendance when students are participating in online courses approved by the district board of education.²⁵³ The law, effective August 28, 2010, also directs the State Board of Education to adopt additional regulations for online courses addressing specific issues defined in law related to admissions, enrollment in appropriate courses, and mastery of competencies "rather than Carnegie Units."

Oklahoma has a formal policy that requires local school board policies for online courses and provides guidelines for those policies, which are detailed in the quality assurance section below. Internet-based programs offered for instructional purposes and/or high school credit shall be approved by and under the supervision of the local board of education where the course is offered, though the State Board of Education may request "information and materials sufficient to evaluate the proposed course(s)."²⁵⁴

²⁵² Report of the Internet-Based Instruction Task Force; retrieved September 15, 2010, http://www.oksenate.gov/publications/issue_papers/state_govt/ok_iitf_final_report_2009.pdf

²⁵³ SB2319; retrieved September 15, 2010, <http://www.oksenate.gov/legislation/votes/02626.pdf>

²⁵⁴ Information in this section is based on Oklahoma State Code 210:35-21-2: Alternative Instructional Delivery Systems; retrieved August 04, 2010, http://www.oar.state.ok.us/register/Volume-26_Issue-07.htm

In 2009, SB604²⁵⁵ created a seven-member legislative task force “to study the efficiency and accountability of the state’s Internet-based instruction program.” The Report of the Internet-Based Instruction Task Force was submitted on November 5, 2009. A follow-up state study by the Statewide Virtual School Task Force was authorized in the 2010 legislative session in SB2129,²⁵⁶ and will report to the Legislature in December 2010.

According to State Board of Education regulations, local school board policy must address “monitoring of student progress, graded assignments, and testing.” Students in an online program must be “regularly enrolled” in the school district of the online program through the state’s open transfer or emergency transfer processes; however, a district may make exceptions to that process for students who have dropped out or have been suspended if they were Oklahoma public school students at any time in the previous three years.

Quality assurance, teaching, and curriculum

- Teachers for web-based courses “shall be provided in-service training” in distance learning technology and methodology of instructional delivery.
- Each school must designate a staff member to serve as a local facilitator for students.
- The school must formally approve each student’s participation in an online course.
- Teachers may be certified in another state, or may be a faculty member at a postsecondary institution.
- Students in online courses must participate in state assessments at “the school site at which the student is enrolled.” SB2318²⁵⁷ was signed into law (effective November 1, 2010) allowing students enrolled in online courses to take assessments at an alternative testing location approved by the State Board of Education.
- Local school boards must set a policy for the number of students each instructor may be required to supervise in an asynchronous course; in a synchronous course, the number of students per class and per day is the same as in traditional courses taken on school campuses.

OKLAHOMA

State virtual school
No

Other statewide programs

Oklahoma Virtual High School and Oklahoma Virtual Academy

Number of online students

More than 2,500 full-time students in 2009-10, an increase of 163% since 2008-09

Other significant online programs

Two university-sponsored, tuition-based high school programs

State-level policy

State code in place since 2000 sets distance learning guidelines

²⁵⁵ SB604; retrieved September 15, 2010, <http://sde.state.ok.us/Law/Legis/RBletters/2009/Bill/SB604.pdf>

²⁵⁶ SB2129; retrieved September 15, 2010, <http://www.oksenate.com/legislation/votes/01721.pdf>

²⁵⁷ SB2318; retrieved September 15, 2010, <http://sde.state.ok.us/Law/Legis/RBletters/2010/Bill/SB2318.pdf>

Oregon

Oregon has a significant amount of online learning activity and programs: the Oregon Virtual School District (OVSD) provides a platform of courses, content, and teaching applications to 440 schools serving 103,000 teachers and students. The Oregon Virtual Education Center (ORVED) will offer supplemental courses (with teachers) beginning in fall 2010; about 7,000 students are enrolled in ten virtual charter schools, an increase of 17% from 6,000 students in 2008-09;²⁵⁸ and there are a number of school district and Education Service District online programs and alternative education programs. Oregon also has a history of extensive discussions about online learning policy at the state level.²⁵⁹ In addition, the state signed an agreement to make Google Apps for Education available for all schools, teachers, and students in Oregon beginning with the 2010-11 school year.²⁶⁰

In 2009 SB767 passed and created restrictions on virtual charter schools.²⁶¹ The bill placed a two-year moratorium on the growth of existing schools by restricting them to the student counts enrolled on May 1, 2009. Schools are allowed to enroll students above the cap if 50% of the students in the online school are resident in the district in which the school is chartered.²⁶² While this rule had existed previously, several online schools had the rule waived due to having been in operation prior to the original rule's creation. The bill also created additional minimum standards that apply to virtual charter schools. In addition, the law created a task force to study online charter schools and report back to the legislature.

HB3660²⁶³ passed in spring 2010, and was based on the work of that task force; it is designed to clarify language in SB767. It was effective immediately upon passage and had the following provisions:

- Enrollment cap continued from SB767
- 50% residency requirement still in place unless online schools receive a state-approved waiver. However, the new law clarifies that the State Board of Education can grant new waivers before they expire.
- Administrators at online schools must be licensed with the state Teacher Standards and Practices Commission
- Requires meetings twice weekly between teachers and students, either in person or through the use of technology; six meetings a year must be face-to-face
- Outlines record-keeping requirements when a student transfers

²⁵⁸ Enrollment numbers; Personal Communication with Steve Nelson, Department of Education, retrieved September 15, 2010.

²⁵⁹ Although now outdated, the Distance Education in Oregon Policy Brief, October 2004, provides a history of some of these efforts; retrieved July 27, 2010, http://www.ode.state.or.us/initiatives/elearning/ecs_policybrieffinal.pdf

²⁶⁰ Google Apps for Education; retrieved August 17, 2010, <http://oregonk-12.net/>

²⁶¹ SB767; retrieved July 27, 2010, www.leg.state.or.us/09reg/measpdf/sb0700.dir/sb0767.intro.pdf

²⁶² This provision had previously existed but some online schools had been exempt from this requirement. Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 338.125, section 5 (2)(b) states that "if a public charter school offers any online courses as part of the curriculum of the school, then 50 percent or more of the students who attend the public charter school must reside in the school district in which the public charter school is located." This had applied to charters established after September 2, 2005. Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 581.020-0339 (6), adopted in 2008, added a waiver provision, and subsequently the Oregon State Board of Education granted a 2-year waiver from the 50% rule to the Oregon Virtual Academy (ORVA).

²⁶³ HB3660; retrieved August 16, 2010, <http://www.leg.state.or.us/10ss1/measpdf/hb3600.dir/hb3660.intro.pdf>

OREGON

State-led initiative

Oregon Virtual School District

Other statewide programs

Oregon Connections Academy charter school, Oregon Virtual Academy Charter School

Other significant online programs

Oregon Online, Oregon Virtual Education Center, and numerous district programs

State-level policy

SB767 (2009) restricted virtual charter schools; SB1071 (2005) created the OVSD

- Online schools must use budget and accounting systems compatible with their physical counterparts in the sponsoring district

The full-time online schools, particularly those operated by education management companies, are affected by the new law passed in 2009. Both Oregon Connections Academy and Oregon Virtual Academy will continue to operate but will be capped at enrollment levels as of May 1, 2009.

Online programs

There is a wide variety of programs available to K-12 students in Oregon. Oregon State University (OSU) partners with OVSD by building and developing online courses and hosting OVSD through the OSU Open Source Lab. Full-time online charter schools include Oregon Connections Academy and Oregon Virtual Academy. The Oregon Virtual Education Center (ORVED)²⁶⁴ will begin offering courses in fall 2010 using the OVSD Platform. ORVED will be run out of the Northwest Regional Education Services District (ESD); 17 of the 20 ESDs in Oregon are paying membership fees to participate in ORVED. The Molalla Online High School is opening in fall 2010-11 with curriculum provided by Aventa Learning. Additionally, Insight School of Oregon operates as a private alternative high school, which allows the school to contract with districts to serve students around the state.²⁶⁵

In addition, there are district and ESD programs such as Oregon Online, a program of Southern Oregon Education Service District; Salem-Keizer Online (which is moving to OVSD); and Corvallis Online (Corvallis Public Schools) which serve approximately 4,200 students. OSU Extension, Portland State University Independent Study, and Chemeketa Community College Early College offer dual credit early college programs for high school students.

The OVSD is a resource for teachers to find and access courses, content, and multimedia tools, however, it does not offer courses directly. Courses are sourced from Aventa Learning, Florida Virtual School, and the National Repository of Online Courses, as well as 16,000 videos from Learn360. The site includes links to the OVSD open source course management system, the OVSD Content Library, podcasting services, Google Applications for Education, video streaming services, and a teacher professional development site through partnerships with the State's Professional Development Commission, WGBH Teacher's Domain, and PBS TeacherLine. The OVSD Repository offers teachers access to 150 middle and high school course templates, interactive learning objects, and streaming video lessons for instruction. The OVSD does not register students, but schools use OVSD to supplement their classes and provide student ePortfolios. OVSD is serving 440 schools with 103,000 users, an increase of 225% over the 25,000 users in 2008-09. Teachers have used the portal to create 2,800 custom teaching units to supplement their curriculum.

The Google Apps for Education adoption is expected to reach 63% of Oregon's 305,000 grades 6-12 students in 2010-11. It will integrate with the OVSD learning management system platform, as well as provide all students and staff access to email. Oregon's Google Agreement was sponsored through the Accelerate Oregon Technology Initiative sponsored by Intel, The Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Higher Education.

SB1071, passed in 2005, provided for the creation of the OVSD within the Oregon Department of Education (ODE).²⁶⁶ OVSD initially received \$2 million for two years beginning July 2005 in a fund separate from standard FTE funding. The budget for two years beginning in July 2009 transferred \$1.8 million from the State School Fund to continue funding OVSD operations and teacher training. SB1071 authorized the State Board of Education to create rules under which the ODE

²⁶⁴ ORVED; retrieved August 17, 2010, <http://www.orved.org/>

²⁶⁵ Insight School of Oregon; retrieved August 31, 2010, <http://www.insightschools.net/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=uSfBdwsJcg8%3D&tabid=611>

²⁶⁶ SB1071, quotes in this section are taken from the law; retrieved July 27, 2010, <http://www.leg.state.or.us/05reg/measpdf/sb1000.dir/sb1071.en.pdf>

will establish quality criteria and policies for the OVSD, including development and delivery of virtual content and teacher training. These are outlined in Oregon Administrative Rule chapter 581, division 20.²⁶⁷ Quotes in the policies listed below come from this rule.

State policies

The following policies are from Section 8, Enrolled Senate Bill (ESB) 767 (2009) and Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 342.173.

Quality assurance, teaching, and curriculum

Teachers in virtual charter schools and school districts must be licensed and highly qualified.²⁶⁸ Teacher licensing and professional development requirements are done by the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission.

- **Student/Teacher Ratio:** Online learning providers are required to have guidelines in place for reasonable student to instructor ratios that allow for regular, individualized interaction with instructors.
- **Student Teacher Interaction:** Online learning providers are required to have guidelines in place for reasonable student to instructor communication that allow for individualized interaction with instructors as needed. Communication includes, but is not limited to, electronic mail, online discussion groups, telephone interaction, and face-to-face discussions between teacher and student.
- **Timeframe for Teacher Response to Student Questions:** Online learning providers are required to have guidelines in place for the time and process that teachers will provide prompt response to student inquiries and requests for assistance.
- **Online learning providers are required to have policies for teacher professional development.** Teachers need to have appropriate training for the delivery of online instruction. Providers receiving public support must maintain Oregon teaching licensure for all teachers consistent with TSPC professional development requirements.
- **Courses must meet academic content standards.** Courses offered are governed by individual school district guidelines, including, but not limited to, courses meeting requirements for high school diploma, electives, as well as supplementary instruction.

²⁶⁷ OAR chapter 581, division 20; retrieved July 27, 2010, http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/rules/OARS_500/OAR_581/581_tofc.html

²⁶⁸ Section 8, ESB767 (2009) and ORS 342.173; retrieved July 27, 2010, www.leg.state.or.us/09reg/measpdf/sb0700.dir/sb0767.intro.pdf



PENNSYLVANIA

State virtual school
No

Other statewide programs

11 cyber charter schools and some district programs

Number of online students in 2009-10 school year

Full-time: 24,603

State-level policy

Cyber charters are approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education; HB1067 (2008) established the Virtual High School Commission to investigate the creation of a state-led online high school.

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania had eleven K-12 cyber charter schools²⁶⁹ that served 24,603 students in grades K-12 during the 2009-10 school year,²⁷⁰ an 11% increase from 22,205 students in the 2008-09 school year. One new cyber charter school will be opening in the 2010-11 school year. In addition, some district and consortium programs provide online courses for area students. In June 2010, twelve school districts received a \$500,000 federal grant to create the Pennsylvania Digital Learning Network, linking ten Pennsylvania schools into a national network to share online courses.²⁷¹

Online charter schools in Pennsylvania are authorized by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). The PDE has a system of annual cyber charter review in place²⁷² to ensure compliance with state requirements and to monitor student progress. Pennsylvania law requires that the home district of a student forward per-pupil funding allotments to the student's school of choice. In 2001, four school districts refused to pay student funds to the cyber charter schools and joined the Pennsylvania School Boards Association in filing a lawsuit that challenged the legitimacy of the cyber charter schools. The school districts lost in court, but in response to their concerns, HB4 (2001)²⁷³ was passed. The law designated the PDE as the authorizer of any new cyber charter school and of any renewing charter of an existing cyber school.

Cyber charter school oversight is regulated by a combination of charter school law that oversees all charter schools, and regulations specific to cyber charters. The Pennsylvania System of Cyber Charter Review (PASCCR) was developed by the PDE's charter school team specifically to address cyber charter school issues. Together PASCCR, the charter school's annual report to the state, and the original charter school application to PDE explain how the school meets Pennsylvania's academic standards and assessment requirements, what

technical support will be given to students, how student work will be monitored, what type of communication will be held with students and parents, and how often that communication will take place.

In July 2008, HB1067²⁷⁴ established a Virtual High School Commission to study the costs and feasibility of creating a state virtual school. The Commission's report submitted to the governor and legislative leaders on December 31, 2009²⁷⁵ recommended the creation of a "supplemental virtual learning program" to serve students otherwise enrolled in a physical school which will maintain responsibility for granting credit for online courses. The report specifies that, "Funding ... should

²⁶⁹ Cyber charter school listing 2009-10; retrieved July 21, 2010, http://www.education.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/charter_schools/7356/charter_schools___where_we're_located/508152

²⁷⁰ Enrollment Public School 2009-10; retrieved July 21, 2010, http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/document/846172/enrollment_public_school_2009-10_xls?qid=71926530&rank=1

²⁷¹ Pennsylvania Digital Learning Network; retrieved July 21, 2010, <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/10161/1064320-57.stm>

²⁷² Cyber charter review system; retrieved June 23, 2010, http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/charter_schools/7356/applying/508181

²⁷³ HB4 (2002); retrieved June 23, 2010, <http://www2.legis.state.pa.us/WU01/LI/BI/BT/2001/0/HB0004P4196.pdf>

²⁷⁴ HB1067 (2007); retrieved June 23, 2010, <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/CFDOCS/Legis/PN/Public/btCheck.cfm?txtType=PDF&sessYr=2007&sessInd=0&billBody=H&billTyp=B&billNbr=1067&pn=4199>

²⁷⁵ Virtual High School Commission report; retrieved July 20, 2010, <http://www.passhe.edu/executive/chancellor/vhssc/default.aspx>

be provided in the annual General Appropriation Act enacted by the General Assembly as it deems appropriate,” regardless of whether the PDE maintains ownership of courses or contracts to outside providers. In addition, the report requests that the statewide program create a blended school model to serve at-risk students which could include credit recovery programs, dropout prevention programs, and dropout recovery programs.

State policies

Funding

- The amount paid to a cyber charter school for each student is based on the budgeted expenditures per student of the school district of residence.

Governance, tracking and accountability

- All cyber charter schools are authorized by the PDE, and an annual report and quality review specific to online programs (PASCCR) are required. Portions of the annual reports are available on the PDE website.²⁷⁶
- A cyber charter school must satisfy requirements for compulsory attendance, but it is up to the cyber charter school to provide a description of how the cyber charter school will define and monitor a student’s school day.
- Cyber charters not making Adequate Yearly Progress must participate in state school improvement requirements.
- Cyber charter school students are required to take the Pennsylvania state assessment.

Quality assurance, teaching, and curriculum

- Curricula used by public schools must be aligned with academic standards approved by the State Board of Education.
- The PDE recommends that all schools adopt the Standards Aligned System framework.²⁷⁷
- All charter schools are required to have 75% of staff meet state certification standards. Teacher evaluations must be done by a supervisor holding a Principal Certificate or Letter of Eligibility with the PDE. There are no special provisions for online teachers, but the PASCCR includes teaching and professional development provisions.
- Cyber charters are required to implement student supports through a student services plan.

²⁷⁶ PASCCR Annual Charter School Reports; retrieved July 21, 2010, http://www.education.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/annual_reports/7357/2008_charter_school_annual_reports/508164

²⁷⁷ Standards Aligned System; retrieved September 8, 2010, <http://www.pdesas.org/>



RHODE ISLAND

State virtual school
No

Other statewide or significant online programs
No

State-level policy
No

Rhode Island

Rhode Island has no state virtual school, no statewide online schools, and little online activity. The Northern Rhode Island Collaborative, in association with the Virtual Learning Academy of the Jefferson County Educational Service Center in Ohio, has been offering online courses that are paid for by individual school districts. It serves grades 3-12 and offers over 80 courses. The program has 225 course enrollments for the 2010-11 year as of September 2010.



SOUTH CAROLINA

State virtual school
South Carolina Virtual School Program

Other statewide or significant online programs
Five full-time virtual charter schools operate statewide; the Horry and Greenville County School Districts operate their own online schools.

State-level policy
Act 26 (2007) establishes the Virtual School Program and allows virtual charter schools

South Carolina

South Carolina has a state virtual school and five online charter schools. The South Carolina Virtual School Program (the state virtual school) had 17,181 course enrollments in school year 2009-10, a 32% increase from 2008-09. The state also has five online charter schools with a total of 4,556 students enrolled as of June 2010, a 130% increase from the 1,981 students in June 2009. The online charter schools are Palmetto (operated in conjunction with Insight Schools), South Carolina Connections Academy, South Carolina Virtual Charter School operated by K12 Inc., South Carolina Calvert Academy, and Provost Academy South Carolina.²⁷⁸

Act 26 of 2007 formally established the South Carolina Virtual School Program (SCVSP).²⁷⁹ The bill makes the SCVSP available to all students under age 21, including private school and homeschool students, and limits students to three online credits per year and 12 throughout high school. The SCVSP is a supplemental high school program (middle school students may enroll), including Adult Education students, and had a budget of \$3.2 million in 2008-09.

Act 26 also allows online charter schools but with the following restriction: “no more than seventy-five percent of a student’s core academic instruction in kindergarten through twelfth grade [may occur] via an online or computer instruction program.” The law states that the 25% of non-online instruction can be accomplished through “regular instructional opportunities in real time that are directly related to the school’s curricular objectives, including, but not limited to, meetings with teachers and educational field trips and outings.” The

²⁷⁸ List of South Carolina Charter Schools 2009-10 Composite; retrieved September 7, 2010, <http://www.ed.sc.gov/agency/Innovation-and-Support/Public-School-Choice-and-Innovation/Charter-Schools/ListofCharterSchools.html>

²⁷⁹ Act 26 (2007); retrieved September 7, 2010, http://www.sccstatehouse.net/sess117_2007-2008/bills/3097.htm

terms “online,” “computer instruction,” and “real time,” were not clearly defined by legislature during the passing of the law, allowing some confusion between real time and online. The South Carolina Department of Education clarified the law by issuing guidance as to what instructional methods meet the requirement for “regular instructional opportunities in real time” to include web conferencing, audio conferencing, field trips, face-to-face group meetings, and student clubs in academic areas, and includes a requirement that online charter schools explain how they will meet this requirement.²⁸⁰ By including web conferencing and audio conferencing, the Department maintained the ability of full-time online schools to meet the law’s requirements without significant changes to their instructional methods.

The South Carolina Public Charter School District (SCPCSD) approves virtual charter school applications; there are no enrollment limits for charter schools. The SCPCSD is one of the first charter authorizing agencies in the country to be an LEA (local education agency) as well as a charter authorizer. Virtual charter schools are funded by the same formula applied to all charter schools in the state; funds are distributed by the SCPCSD.

State policies

The following requirements are specific to virtual charter school applicants per Act 26: “If the governing body of a charter school offers as part of its curriculum a program of online or computer instruction, this information shall be included in the application and the governing body shall be required to...:

- Ensure that a parent or legal guardian of each student verifies the number of hours of educational activities completed by the student each school year.
- Adopt a plan by which it will provide:
 - frequent, ongoing monitoring to ensure and verify that each student is participating in the program, including proctored assessment(s) per semester in core subjects graded or evaluated by the teacher, and at least bi-weekly parent teacher conferences in person or by telephone; and
 - regular instructional opportunities in real time that are directly related to the school’s curricular objectives, including, but not limited to, meetings with teachers and educational field trips and outings.”
- Administer to all students in a proctored setting all applicable assessments as required by the South Carolina Education Accountability Act.
- 59-40-65E states, “Private or homeschool students choosing to take courses from a virtual charter school may not be provided instructional materials, or any other materials associated with receiving instruction through a program of online or computer instruction at the state’s expense.”

All virtual charter school online courses must be reviewed and approved by the Department of Education as one of the last steps in charter school authorization.

²⁸⁰ South Carolina Charter School Application Review Guide (Start-Up Charter Schools); retrieved September 7, 2010, http://www.sccharter.com/documents/CSAC_App_Review_Template.pdf

South Dakota

The South Dakota Virtual School (SDVS), a consortium of approved distance education providers offering supplemental courses managed from within the South Dakota Department of Education, is the main online learning option for students in South Dakota. SDVS was created by HB1236 in 2006 and launched in March 2007. The SDVS acts as a clearinghouse; providers are paid directly by school districts, which have the right to refuse students' requests for an online course. Providers set course fees. SDVS had 340 semester course offerings as of May 2010, with new courses constantly in the approval process; in addition, it had 2,900 semester course enrollments in 2009-10, a 25% increase over the prior year.

The Department of Education has established criteria for approval of Distance Learning Providers (DLP), and reviews each course offered by a DLP. More than 250 different courses have been approved, equaling a complete high school graduation offering. HB1113 (2007) restricts districts from putting a grade on a student transcript unless the course was from an approved DLP.²⁸¹ This is intended to centralize quality control and will effectively limit any other programs.

Online programs and resources in South Dakota include:

- DIAL Virtual School is an initiative of the Dakota Interactive Academic Link (DIAL) consortium of schools.
- The E-learning Center provides distance delivery of Digital Dakota Network and Internet based college-prep and AP high school courses. Priority is given to small, rural schools.
- Learning Power is a South Dakota Online AP Incentives Program funded by a grant from the National Math and Science Initiative. It is led by the South Dakota Collaborative for Advanced Placement.
- High Plains Alternative School (HPA) offers students an alternative form of education. HPA targets students who otherwise would not have access to a specialized educational environment that offers flexible programs.
- Districts access DIAL, E-learning Center, Learning Power, High Plains Alternative School, and other providers through the SDVS in almost all cases; the only exception is if a district seeks a course topic that is not offered through the SDVS. In the 2009-10 school year, 125 out of 192 districts (65%) had students enrolled in a SDVS course; of those 125 districts, 56 have student populations less than 400.

State policies

The following policies are detailed in state administrative rules.²⁸²

- “The Department of Education shall review and approve each course offered by an approved distance learning provider before posting the course offering to the South Dakota Virtual

SOUTH DAKOTA

State virtual school
South Dakota Virtual School (SDVS)

Other statewide programs
DIAL, E-learning Center and Learning Power, High Plains Alternative School; no charter school law

Other significant online programs
No

State-level policy
HB1236 (2006) created the Virtual School and Advisory Council; HB1113 essentially limits districts to providers in the SDVS program

²⁸¹ A list of approved DLPs; retrieved July 21, 2010, <http://www.sdvs.k12.sd.us/Providers/About.aspx>

²⁸² From South Dakota administrative rules specific to distance learning and the virtual school; retrieved July 24, 2010, <http://legis.state.sd.us/rules/DisplayRule.aspx?Rule=24:43:12>

School.” Each course shall be approved contingent on factors including alignment with state standards, qualified instructional staff, and other factors.

- Each certified DLP is required to report on the type of courses offered, the number and names of districts served, number of course registrations, completion rates, and other information. The certification only applies to programs originating from outside the school district being served.
- Proctored exams are required.

TENNESSEE

State virtual school e4TN

Other statewide programs

Numerous district-run programs including Hamilton County Virtual School, Wilson County, Putnam County, and Dickson County

Other significant programs

Hamilton County Virtual School and other district-run programs

State-level policy

Tennessee enacted a virtual public school law (PC1096) in 2008 and State Board policies specific to distance and e-learning (2008)

Tennessee

Tennessee’s state virtual school, e4TN, is funded through an annually renewable grant that was originally awarded to the program in partnership with Hamilton County Department of Education in 2005. Funding for the 2008-09 school year was \$1.76 million of which \$1.6 million is from a federal grant. In addition, the Tennessee Electronic Learning Center (ELC) is an online learning resource for parents, students, and teachers created in conjunction with Apple. Some content is based on iTunes and has a dedicated page on iTunes U with podcasts for students. The ELC also has a GSPP (Governors Study Partners Program), which contains curriculum standards and professional development information for teachers and administrators as well as resources for parents and students. In 2008 the Tennessee Legislature passed PC1096 that created the opportunity for online charter schools, although as of September 2010 none has been authorized.

Online programs

e4TN entered its implementation phase as the state virtual school in 2008 after conducting a three-year Beta Test Pilot (BTP) with districts across the state. The early emphasis for e4TN during the pilot phase was on the development of online courses; 27 e4TN one-credit courses and two e4TN half-credit courses have been produced. Another portion of the original grant was awarded to seven school districts which were involved in piloting 59 licensed courses through the Host Membership Pilot (HMP) that also tested procedures in online learning created by Hamilton County Virtual School (HCVS) teachers and technical staff.²⁸³ The HMP pilot program created a teacher pool of 220 teachers across Tennessee that have been trained and are experienced in online learning. All aspects of the pilot programs have been consolidated under e4TN which offers courses from providers previously managed by HCVS, as well as those developed by e4TN. In 2009-10 e4TN served 1,754 students in grades 6-12 across 54 districts. This is an increase of 14.6% in student enrollment and an increase of 12.5% in service to districts during the 2008-09 year.

In addition to e4TN, there are several district level programs including Hamilton County Virtual School. Districts have the opportunity to use e4TN to set up district-level online programs

²⁸³ E4TN web site; retrieved September 21, 2009, <https://www.e4tn.org/cms/index.php?page=about>

using e4TN courses or vendor content. However, if the courses do not come through e4TN, the individual districts must apply for state approval through the TN Department of Education.

State policies

The Tennessee Legislature passed Public Chapter 1096 (SB2008)²⁸⁴ in June 2008 that directs the State Board of Education to develop policies and guidelines for the Department of Education and LEAs (Local Education Agencies) to operate virtual schools, further stating, “A virtual school would be provided equitable treatment and resources as any other public school in the state.” The bill authorizes local education agencies to use BEP (Basic Education Program) funds to implement and operate virtual education programs. The language of the statute regarding access to online courses is unclear: “participation in a virtual education program by a student shall be at the discretion of the local education agency in which the student is enrolled or zoned to attend.”

The SBE policy,²⁸⁵ published in August 2008, places the responsibility and control of implementing online learning programs in the hands of the local education agencies. The policies support the use of supplemental online learning to provide students who need more options:

“Districts are encouraged to utilize e-learning and distance learning for students with health related issues, for credit recovery, for alternative learning settings, to ameliorate issues of education equity, or for any other student need where nontraditional instructional delivery is appropriate... Students may be permitted to access distance learning and e-learning courses to expand and enhance the curricular offerings available to them. These may include highly rigorous courses that are otherwise unavailable including, but not limited to courses that lead to college credit.”

A key phrase of the SBE policy states, “In an onsite education setting, e-learning and distance learning may, in exceptional cases and in accordance with local education agency policy, be a student’s primary source of instruction.”

PC1096 requires the Department of Education to submit an annual report including the following:

- “The operation of virtual education program,
- The number of students enrolling in these programs and the success of the students,
- Efforts made to improve the programs and the delivery of classes,
- Funding received and the adequacy of the funding.”²⁸⁶

Virtual schools will be evaluated annually by sponsor organizations based on the following criteria:

- “The extent to which the school demonstrates increases in student achievement according to the goals of its authorizing contract and state academic standards;
- The accountability and viability of the virtual school, as demonstrated by its academic, fiscal, and operational performance.”

All teachers employed by a virtual school must have a current Tennessee teaching license or meet the minimum requirements for licensure as defined by the State Board of Education.

The law also limits online schools to students who were in the public education system the previous year, along with students “who are receiving hospital or homebound instruction.”

²⁸⁴ Public Charter 1096 (SB2008); retrieved September 21, 2010, <http://tennessee.gov/sos/acts/105/pub/pc1096.pdf>

²⁸⁵ Tennessee State Board of Education, Approved Board Policies, Standards and Guidelines; retrieved September 27, 2010, 3.205; retrieved <http://tennessee.gov/sbe/policies.html>

²⁸⁶ Public Charter 1096 (SB2008); retrieved September 21, 2010, <http://tennessee.gov/sos/acts/105/pub/pc1096.pdf>

Texas

SB1788, passed by the 80th Texas Legislature in 2007, established a state virtual network to provide supplemental online courses for Texas students. Courses are provided by Texas school districts, open enrollment charter schools, Education Service Centers, and institutions of higher education. The Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN)²⁸⁷ began offering courses for students in grades 9-12 in January 2009; in its 2009-10 school year, there were a total of 4,459 semester course enrollments (see Table 16).

Online programs

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) provides state-supported online learning opportunities to students across the state through the TxVSN using a network approach.

- Centralized responsibilities include leadership, administration, operations, course review, approval of required professional development for teaching online, and funding.
 - TEA administers the TxVSN, sets standards for and approves TxVSN courses and professional development for online teachers, and has fiscal responsibility for the network.
 - Day-to-day operation of the TxVSN is contracted to Education Service Center (ESC) Region 10, which serves as Central Operations for the network in collaboration with the Harris County Department of Education. Central Operations developed and coordinates the centralized TxVSN registration and student enrollment system, ensures eligibility of TxVSN Provider Districts, publishes an online catalog of approved courses, and coordinates data needed for state reporting requirements.
 - TEA contracted with ESC Region 4 to review online courses submitted by potential Providers Districts through August 31, 2010, at which time the course review functions for TxVSN were consolidated with Central Operations under contract with ESC Region 10.
 - A group of professional development providers approved by TEA offers the required professional development for teaching online for the TxVSN.
- TxVSN Provider Districts provide the courses offered through the TxVSN and are responsible for instruction.
- TxVSN Receiving Districts (student's home district) approve their students' TxVSN course requests, provide ongoing support to local students enrolled in TxVSN courses, and award credits and diplomas.

Independent school districts with a state accountability rating of Acceptable or higher; open-enrollment charter schools with a state accountability rating of Recognized or higher; regional ESCs; and Texas public or private institutions of higher education may apply to become a TxVSN Provider District. Provider Districts submit courses they developed locally or acquired through a third party to the network for review by the TxVSN Course Review. Approved courses are then added to the TxVSN course catalog, and become available to students across the state through the network's centralized student enrollment system.

²⁸⁷ TxVSN overview; retrieved July 30, 2010. http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=4840&menu_id=2147483665

TEXAS

State virtual school

Texas Virtual School Network and the Electronic Course Program

Other statewide programs

No

Other significant online programs

Some district programs

State-level policy

Texas Education Code (TEC) Chapter 30A established the state virtual school network in June 2007; sections of HB3646 amended existing state virtual school network law

In 2009-10, TxVSN launched a pilot program for courses earning both high school and college credit (dual credit); it served a total of 1,350 semester course enrollments. As of the 2010-11 school year it is a full program and is expanding; a request for qualifications was issued allowing for additional participants. In addition to courses offered through the TxVSN, the TEA is continuing to administer a full-time virtual program for grades 3-10 called the Electronic Course Program (eCP). The eCP began serving students in spring 2006. HB3646²⁸⁸, signed into law in June 2009, repealed the separate statute which created the eCP as a pilot (TEC Section 29.909²⁸⁹) and incorporated the eCP as a program under TEC Chapter 30A, which established the TxVSN. The eCP began to be phased into TEC Chapter 30A with the 2009-10 school year, moving teachers toward meeting the same professional development guidelines and gradually reviewing courses to ensure they meet the same quality standards as TxVSN courses.

The eCP allows participating public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to earn state funding based on successful completion. Interested districts and charters apply to TEA, and must meet eligibility requirements. Currently, there are two charter schools and one independent school district participating in the program for the 2009-10 school year: Houston ISD (Texas Connections Academy@ Houston); Responsive Education Solutions (IQ Academy); and Southwest Schools (Texas Virtual Academy@ Southwest).²⁹⁰ TEA released the eCP application and Terms of Participation in August 2010 that will allow new districts and charters to apply to be eCP providers, effective for the 2010-11 school year.

TxVSN Enrollments	Summer 2009	Fall 2009	Spring 2010	Summer 2009-Spring 2010	Summer 2010	2009-10 School Year
High School	189	234	590	1013	2285	3109
Dual Enrollment	0	221	633	854	496	1350
Total	189	455	1223	1867	2781	4459

Table 16: Course enrollments in the TxVSN

State policies

Texas authorizes all public schools to offer online courses to their students. Districts may grant credit for a course if they have determined that the course meets or exceeds the state’s curriculum standards for that content area. In order for the district to receive state funding—which is based on average daily attendance (ADA)—students must meet the normal attendance accounting rules of the state. TxVSN courses have already been reviewed by the state against Texas’ curriculum standards; therefore districts are not required to determine alignment. In addition to state policies for distance learning, there are specific program requirements and policies for districts participating in the TxVSN and the eCP.²⁹¹

Funding

During the 2008-09 school year, districts paid for the online courses provided by TxVSN. However, HB3646 created an allotment to fund courses provided through the TxVSN beginning with the 2009-10 school year. If a student successfully completes an online course provided through the TxVSN, the TEA will provide a payment of \$400 per semester course to the Provider District and \$80 per student to the Receiver District. The online course must be part of the student’s normal course load and meet one of the graduation requirements. In addition, a separate source of funds will supply the same funding for online courses provided above a student’s normal course

²⁸⁸ HB3646; retrieved July 30, 2010, <http://www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/81R/billtext/pdf/HB03646F.pdf>

²⁸⁹ Texas Education Code 29.909.00; retrieved July 30, 2010, <http://law.onecle.com/texas/education/29.909.00.html>

²⁹⁰ eCP information and participants, retrieved August 25, 2010, http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=4826&menu_id=2147483665

²⁹¹ TxVSN policy information; retrieved July 30, 2010, <http://txvsn.org/TxVSNFAQ.aspx>;

load. Districts will be paid half of the \$400 for initial start-up costs and the remainder after the TEA receives verification from Central Operations that the courses were successfully completed. Districts are not allowed to receive this dedicated funding to serve their own students. While some districts may have different schedules, the TEA is developing a rule to define a normal course load as seven courses earning credit toward graduation.

Additionally, public school funding is paid from Foundation School Program (FSP) funds to districts and open-enrollment charter schools based on ADA, a full-time equivalency model based on seat time. To generate this state funding, students must be physically present at school and meet the state's normal attendance accounting rules. If an eligible student who resides in Texas but is not enrolled in a Texas school district or open-enrollment charter school as a full-time student registers for a TxVSN course (other than a student in foster care or certain dependents of military personnel), no state funding is provided, the student may enroll in a maximum of two courses, and the TxVSN course fee must be paid by the student.

TxVSN funding

- For each of the 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years, \$10.15 million was appropriated for TxVSN Central Operations, Course Review, four new studies required by HB3646, and student courses.

eCP funding

- Students in grades 3-8 who participate in the eCP full-time virtual program generate state funding from the FSP based on successful program completion, per the rules of the program. Funding is equivalent to state funding for a student enrolled full-time in a traditional classroom. A funding penalty may apply based on student performance on the statewide student assessment exams. Students in grades 9 and 10 who participate in the eCP full-time virtual program generate \$400 per successful semester course completion, with grades 11-12 to be added in the future under this same successful course completion model.

Governance, tracking, and accountability

- The Commissioner of Education is responsible for the TxVSN and eCP, with staff at the TEA serving as the administering authority.
- The TxVSN is a supplemental program. The home district continues to award credits and diplomas, and the TxVSN works in partnership with the home district to meet student needs.
- Students participating in the eCP must be enrolled full-time in a Texas district or open-enrollment charter school approved to participate in the program.

Quality assurance, teaching, and curriculum

Online courses submitted to the TxVSN are reviewed to ensure they meet the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, as well as the iNACOL *National Standards of Quality for Online Courses*.²⁹² All TxVSN courses are reviewed as they are submitted; eCP courses in grades 9 and 10 were initially reviewed in 2009-10; grade 11 will be reviewed prior to being offered in 2011-12 and grade 12 prior to being offered in 2012-2013. Grades 8 down through 3 will be reviewed in the future. New eCP schools may open for grades 3-8 in 2010-11 and grades 9-11 in 2011-12 after completing course review and receiving TEA approval.

Each instructor teaching an online course through the TxVSN is Texas-certified in the course subject area and grade level or meets the credentialing requirements of the institution of higher education, and has met the professional development requirements of the network for effective online instruction, which are based on mastery of iNACOL's *National Standards for Quality Online Teaching*.²⁹³

²⁹² iNACOL National Standards of Quality for Online Courses; retrieved July 8, 2010, <http://www.inacol.org/research/nationalstandards/NACOL%20Standards%20Quality%20Online%20Courses%202007.pdf>

²⁹³ iNACOL National Standards for Quality Online Teaching; retrieved July 8, 2010, <http://www.inacol.org/research/nationalstandards/NACOL%20Standards%20Quality%20Online%20Teaching.pdf>

UTAH

State virtual school
Utah Electronic High School

Other statewide programs
Utah Virtual Academy online charter school and the Open High School of Utah

Other significant online programs
Several district programs

State-level policy
No

Utah

Utah has a state virtual school—the Utah Electronic High School (EHS)—and two statewide online charter schools.²⁹⁴ EHS, accredited by the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools since 2001, is primarily a supplemental program working with local school districts, but is able to grant diplomas to a restricted group of Utah students: those who are homeschooled exclusively, those who have dropped out of school and their class has graduated, and district referrals. All of the courses are open-entry/open-exit. EHS started in 1994 as a statewide virtual school located at the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) which funded it via USOE funds. Legislation passed in 2001 started line-item funding. This annual line-item funding was \$1.3 million for 2006, and \$2 million a year for 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010. Funding comes mainly from the \$2 million state line-item budget. EHS does not receive or compete for weighted per-pupil state funding allocations with resident school districts.

Between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010, EHS granted 15,691 quarter credits to 7,238 individual students. To put this into perspective with similar programs, this is roughly the equivalent of 7,846 individual semester course completions. This was essentially the same number as the prior year (an increase of .12%); the flat growth is a reflection of enrollment rationing due to flat \$2 million state line-item funding for each of the past four years. EHS implemented proctored final tests for every quarter credit granted beginning October 2007. EHS launched an open source content initiative in 2010 called the Utah Electronic High School Curriculum and is rolling it out gradually via iTunes U.

The Utah Virtual Academy is the largest of Utah's online charter school programs, serving almost 1,300 K-12 students in 2009-10.²⁹⁵ The Open High School of Utah, an open source online charter school initiated by professors at Utah State University, had enrolled about 125 students in 2009.²⁹⁶ Two online charter schools, Utah Connections Academy and Aspire Online Charter School, have been approved to open fall of 2011. Four districts offer online elementary courses with curriculum provided by K12 Inc. or by the local district: Davis Online, Alpine Online, Washington Online, and Uintah. The Park City Independent High School also offers online courses.

Brigham Young University runs the BYU Independent Study program that is accredited by the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (NAAS) and the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC), allowing credits earned through BYU Independent Study to transfer to other educational institutions outside of Utah that share NAAS accreditation.²⁹⁷ As of June 2010 the NCAA has announced that it will not accept online credits from BYU.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁴ K12 Inc. press release; retrieved August 02, 2010, http://www.k12.com/press__policy/utva_press_release_092607/

²⁹⁵ New charter schools; retrieved September 15, 2010, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700027899/Three-new-charter-schools-approved.html>

²⁹⁶ Enrollment numbers; retrieved September 15, 2010, http://www.schools.utah.gov/finance/other/AnnualReport/09ar/STATISTICS/Students/Enrollment_1992-Proj2010.xls

²⁹⁷ Brigham Young University Independent Study program; retrieved August 2, 2010, <http://ce.byu.edu/is/site/aboutus/accreditation.cfm>

²⁹⁸ NCAA Bars Online BYU Credits; retrieved September 15, 2010, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700035133/NCAA-bars-BYU-online-credits-for-high-school-athletes.html>

VERMONT

State virtual school
Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative

Other statewide programs
No

Other significant online programs
25 schools are members of the Virtual High School Global Consortium

State-level policy
None

Vermont

Vermont has started a state virtual school called the Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative (VTVLC); and as of June 2010, 25 high schools are using the Virtual High School Global Consortium to deliver online classes. VTVLC is an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act / Title IID-funded initiative run by the Vermont Department of Education; it will offer 18 courses to about 300 students in fall 2010. The VTVLC received \$400,000 initially with additional funding of about \$300,000 expected over the next year. The VTVLC is being managed by River Valley Technical Center School District in partnership with Springfield School District, Burlington School District, Community College of Vermont, Marlboro College Graduate School, and Learning Network of Vermont.

The VTVLC builds on several prior planning efforts. A 2008 report to the General Assembly by a task force of the Vermont Department of Education, *Managed Statewide Network for Distance Learning*, strongly supported the creation of a “Statewide Education Network.” A state-supported distance learning program would improve equity of distribution and improved cost effectiveness of broadband services to Vermont schools, provide a platform for growth of existing and new services, and maximize use of E-Rate funds.²⁹⁹ In April of 2009, The State Board of Education adopted a new state education technology plan, *“Learning with 21st Century Tools,”* which includes

the development of “flexible learning environments” as one of five key components of providing Vermont students with 21st Century Skills.³⁰⁰ This document emphasizes the use of 21st century tools to bring distance learning to students throughout the state.

Vermont does not have online charter schools or other full-time online options for students, nor major district-level online programs.

²⁹⁹ Act 66, Section 21, Statewide Network for Distance Learning; retrieved September 10, 2010, http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/laws/legislative_reports/07/act_66_sec_21_distance_learning.pdf

³⁰⁰ Learning with 21st Century Tools, Vermont State Board of Education; retrieved September 10, 2010, http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/pgm_edtech/state_plan/educ_edtech_plan_2012_part_1.pdf

Virginia

In 2010, Virginia passed its first statewide online learning policy, SB738³⁰¹, which allows local school boards to contract with approved “multidivision online providers” to provide district online learning programs. The bill directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop criteria and processes to approve and monitor multidivision online providers.³⁰² The legislation defined “online course,” “virtual school program,” and “multidivision online provider” for the first time. Approved multidivision programs may now contract with local school boards or groups of local school boards, and enroll students who reside “outside the geographical boundaries of the school division.” A local school division program, or consortium of division online programs, does not qualify as a multidivision provider if “fewer than 10 per cent of the students enrolled reside outside the geographical boundaries of the school division.” The student has the choice of enrolling in online courses in programs outside the local school district, but the enrolling program must meet requirements for Virginia’s year-end Standard of Learning test, special needs students, and all other state requirements.³⁰³ Non-public school and home instruction students must enroll in a local school district to receive access to online courses on a full-time basis.

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is creating a framework to approve and regulate multidivision providers that will set requirements for accreditation, teacher-student ratios, data reporting, and other key issues. As of September 2010 the draft VDOE guidelines³⁰⁴ define the key responsibilities for each stakeholder group in the online learning process; outline the criteria for approval as a multidivision provider in specific areas; and specify the organizational requirements for accreditation and stability, provider staffing, data reporting, accountability, curriculum and instruction standards, and technology support. VDOE guidelines must be approved and available by January 31, 2011 per SB738.

Online programs

Virtual Virginia (VVA), the state virtual school operated out of the Virginia Department of Education, has offered online courses to students across the state since 2005. Virtual Virginia’s for-credit course enrollments reached 6,276 in 2009-10, a nearly 30% increase over 2008-09 enrollments, with an additional 3,121 students enrolled in non-credit online tutorials. Demand exceeded funding for the first time in 2009-10 and students were placed on a waiting list. VVA limits enrollments to 15 students per course from an individual school.

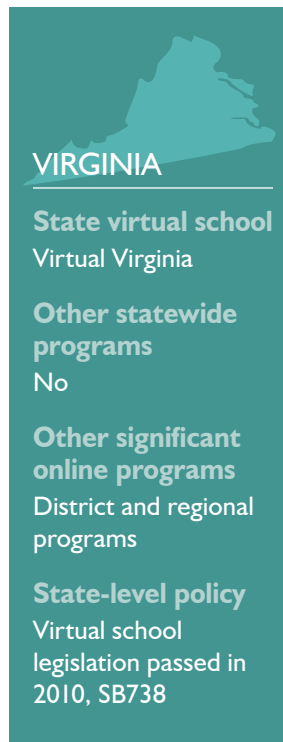
In addition to the state virtual school, a significant number of supplemental district and regional online programs exist. Virginia has a charter school law and several charter schools in operation; however, there are no full-time online charter schools. A partial list of online programs in Virginia includes Virtual Virginia, Fairfax Public Schools Online Campus, Arlington Public Schools Distance Learning, Prince William County Schools Virtual High School, Halifax Virtual Academy, Montgomery County Public Schools, Pittsylvania County Virtual Program, Roanoke County Public School, Virtual Virginia Beach (Virginia Beach City Public Schools), and York County Virtual High School. In addition, there are several virtual Virginia Governor’s Schools: Linwood Holton Virtual Governor’s School, Commonwealth Governor’s School and Blue Ridge Virtual Governor’s School.

³⁰¹ SB738; retrieved June 2, 2010, <http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?101+ful+SB738ER>

³⁰² Multidivision online providers operating prior to the implementation of the approval criteria may continue operating until the criteria are established.

³⁰³ Personal communication with Lan Neugent, Assistant Superintendent for Technology, Career and Adult Education, Virginia Department of Education; August 30, 2010

³⁰⁴ VDOE state policies are in draft form as of September, 2010, and are subject to changes and further approval.



VIRGINIA

State virtual school
Virtual Virginia

Other statewide programs
No

Other significant online programs
District and regional programs

State-level policy
Virtual school legislation passed in 2010, SB738

State Policies

Distance learning courses are governed by the Virginia Standards of Accrediting Public Schools. Each local school district starting an online program is required to establish a district distance learning plan. The plan must be approved by the local school board, incorporated into the school policy manual, and reviewed as part of the accreditation process. The accreditation standards indicate that the distance course should be “equivalent” to a regular school course and that the work must be under the supervision of a licensed teacher or a person eligible to hold a Virginia teaching license and approved by the school board.

The following policies are from SB738:

- Online instructors are required to be highly-qualified, Virginia-certified teachers, but the legislation does not require training specific to online instruction.
- Multidivision providers must provide at least one FTE teacher at a reasonable ratio to students based on grade and subject being taught, but not exceeding 150 students per FTE teacher.
- Multidivision providers must monitor student attendance, participation, and performance and report that data annually to the VDOE.
- There is no tuition for online courses offered by the school division in which a student resides, although students who do not reside within the boundaries of the online provider may be charged tuition.
- The Board of Education must report annually, beginning in November 2011, on multidivision online learning during the previous school year including data on student demographics, course enrollment, parental satisfaction, aggregated student course completion and passing rates, and activities and outcomes of course and provider approval reviews.
- The Department of Education must “maintain a website that provides objective information for students, parents, and educators regarding online courses and virtual programs offered through local school boards by multidivision online providers.”
- Districts are not required to include full-time students of approved virtual school programs when determining the assignment of instructional and other licensed personnel per state statute.

Funding

Virtual Virginia funding is largely based on state appropriations, approximately \$3 million in 2009-10, with a small amount of funding coming through course fees charged to out-of-state and non-public school students. Honors courses, electives, and world language courses are free to Virginia public school students. A per student, per course fee ranging from \$75 to \$300 is charged to school districts for AP courses based upon the local composite index. Public school students who qualify as Early College Scholars may take AP courses free of charge. Over 60% of VVA's enrollment is in AP courses.

SB738 does not provide any additional funding for districts enrolling students for online courses, nor does the legislation establish a uniform per student, per course cost or funding formula. Local school divisions are free to negotiate contract prices with approved multidivision providers. The legislation does state, “A student shall not be charged tuition for enrolling in any online course or virtual program offered by the school division in which he resides ... However, tuition may be charged to students who do not reside within the geographic boundaries of the school division offering the course or program ...” Funding through the state ADM formula follows the student to the enrolling district.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁵ Ibid

Washington

Washington's online learning policies are based on Substitute Senate Bill (SSB)5410,³⁰⁷ passed in May 2009. This legislation created the Digital Learning Department³⁰⁸ within the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), which has essentially replaced the Digital Learning Commons. The legislation directed OSPI to provide:

- Information about, and access to, online course providers and online school programs.
- A multi-district online provider review process to ensure continued access to quality programs and providers.
- Model agreements between school districts and online learning providers to increase the scope and reach of online learning options in the state.³⁰⁹
- Model policies and procedures around online learning opportunities to guide school district boards of directors.³¹⁰
- Yearly reports on the state of online courses and programs in Washington.
- Assistance to school districts, students, and parents around online learning.

The Digital Learning Department has roles in both reviewing and approving multi-district online providers, while also offering online courses from approved course providers to districts. The Digital Learning Commons, which had previously provided similar services, is now essentially inactive, with some of its services rolled into those provided by the Department.

Online programs

Approximately 15,800 Washington students took an online course in the 2008-09 school year,³¹¹ a 13% increase from the previous year; the total number represents about 1.6% of the students in the state.³¹² Online schools enrolled approximately 13,000 students who were enrolled in a mix of part-time and full-time programs, representing nearly 9,450 FTE. The remaining 2,800 students took individual supplemental online courses. Three-quarters of all online students were in high school.

There are at least 35 online programs in Washington. Washington is one of ten states that do not have a charter school law, and all of these programs are run by school districts. However, many districts have

³⁰⁶ Revised Codes of Washington, Chapter 28A.250; retrieved July 19, 2010, <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.250>

³⁰⁷ SSB5410; retrieved July 6, 2010, <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=5410>

³⁰⁸ Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction web site; retrieved July 6, 2010, <http://digitalllearning.k12.wa.us/>

³⁰⁹ Model Online Agreements; retrieved July 6, 2010, <http://digitalllearning.k12.wa.us/about/districts/agreements/>

³¹⁰ Model Policies and Procedures; retrieved July 6, 2010, <http://digitalllearning.k12.wa.us/about/districts/policies/>

³¹¹ The Washington state legislature requested extensive data collection for all online programs in the 2008-09 school year that was not required for 2009-10. A long-term data collection process is being developed for the 2010-11 school year and beyond.

³¹² Online Courses and Program reports; retrieved August 18, 2010, <http://digitalllearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/>

WASHINGTON

State-led initiative

Digital Learning Department in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

Other statewide programs

At least 15 statewide online programs run by local school districts, serving students in multiple districts

Other significant online programs

At least 20 other district-run programs serving students in their own districts

Number of online students in 2008-09 school year

Full-time: 13,000

Supplemental: 2,800

State-level policy

Online Learning laws (RCW 28A.250) and rules (WAC 392-502)

Alternative Learning Experience rules (WAC 392-121-182)³⁰⁷

partnered with for- and non-profit online learning providers to operate these schools. A report commissioned by the Washington State Legislature, delivered December 1, 2009, provides more detailed information about the online programs and offerings in the state.

WaCOL (Washington Coalition for Online Learning) consists of educational providers and participants involved in K-12 digital learning programs across the state of Washington. They foster conversation and communication on issues of common concern as well as methods of promoting improved understanding of virtual education in Washington.³¹³

State policies

All school district boards of directors were required to pass a policy and set of procedures regarding online learning by August 31, 2010. In these documents each district addressed student eligibility criteria, the types of online courses available to students through the school district, the methods districts will use to support student success, when the school district will and will not pay course fees and other costs, and the granting of high school credit, among other topics. Districts are also required to provide students with information on their online learning options.

Quality assurance

With the advice of an advisory committee comprised of key constituents in online learning across the state, the Digital Learning Department created a process and set of criteria for approving multi-district online providers, and the first set of providers has been approved.³¹⁴

Funding


Starting with the 2011-12 school year, districts will receive funding for students in online courses or programs only if the course/program meets one of these criteria:

- Offered by an OSPI-approved multi-district online provider.
- Offered by the district itself to its own students, and to fewer than 10% of out-of-district students enrolling in the program under the ‘choice’ inter-district transfer rules.
- Offered by a regional provider operating under an inter-district cooperative agreement.

School districts can also claim funding for online students using either the Alternative Learning Experience or basic education funding rules, depending on the circumstances. Funding varies by district for a variety of reasons regardless of whether the student is enrolled online or in an on-ground school.

³¹³ Washington Digital Coalition; retrieved July 7, 2010, <http://wacol.net/>

³¹⁴ Approved list of online providers and criteria for approval; retrieved July 6, 2010, <http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/approval/providers/>



WEST VIRGINIA

State virtual school
West Virginia Virtual School

Other statewide programs
No

Other significant online programs
No major district programs; no charter school law; some small district programs

State-level policy
State Board Policy 2450; State Board Policy 2510, students should complete an “online learning experience” as part of graduation requirements starting in 2008

West Virginia

Most of the online education activity in West Virginia is through the West Virginia Virtual School (WVVS), the state virtual school that serves students in grades 6-12. Created by statute in 2000, WVVS began enrolling students in the spring of 2002. WVVS is housed within the West Virginia Department of Education and is governed by statute and State Board Policy 2450.³¹⁵ It offers approximately 186 courses. Third-party providers supply all courses, except the Spanish courses. The WVVS budget, \$650,000 for the 2009-10 school year, pays for online courses on a first-come, first-served basis; after that, students may take courses if the course fee is paid by their local school or, in some cases, by their parents. Fees range from \$150 to \$850 per credit depending on the course provider. WVVS had 3,924 course enrollments in 2009-10 with 1,818 students, an increase of 24% from the previous year.

There are no other major online programs or initiatives in West Virginia, although some districts such as Kanawha County and Harrison County have online programs. West Virginia does not have a charter school law.

In summer 2008, State Board Policy 2510 was amended to recommend that beginning with students entering 9th grade in the 2008-09 school year, students must complete an online learning experience as part of graduation requirements.³¹⁶ The Office of Instructional Technology in the Department of Education has developed guidance for districts and counties for the online learning experience recommendation.³¹⁷ In order to be considered quality, the online learning experience must include a focus on 21st Century skills, teacher involvement, safety, ethics, collaboration, integration, and sustainability.

The guidance lists acceptable options including online courses from the West Virginia Virtual School and blended courses from the WVLearns e-learning platform, among others.

³¹⁵ Title 126, Legislative Rule, State Board of Education, Series 48, Distance Learning and the West Virginia Virtual School (2450); retrieved August 10, 2010, <http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/p2450.html>

³¹⁶ Title 126, Legislative Rule, State Board of Education, Series 42, Assuring the Quality of Education: Regulations for Education Programs (2510), page 19; retrieved August 10, 2010, <http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/p2510.pdf>

³¹⁷ West Virginia Virtual School Online Experiences; retrieved September 15, 2010, <http://virtualschool.k12.wv.us/vschool/documents/OnlineVirtualExperienceone-sheet.pdf>



WISCONSIN

State virtual school

Wisconsin Virtual School (WVS) is Wisconsin's Web Academy

Other statewide programs

Three statewide supplemental programs (including WVS) and 14 online charter schools

Number of online students:

6,853 course enrollments in two supplemental programs³¹⁹

3,927 students in 13 online charter schools enrolling students in 2009-10, a 26% increase from 2008-09

State-level policy

Act 222 (2008) sets policy for virtual charter school

Wisconsin

Wisconsin has a variety of online learning schools and programs that provide full-time and supplemental online options to students across the state. The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) lists four supplemental online programs, including Wisconsin Virtual School and Wisconsin eSchool Network, as well as 15 virtual charter schools.³¹⁹

The Wisconsin eSchool Network is a consortium of nine school districts, five of which are among the 10 largest districts in the state (Kenosha, Janesville, Madison, Appleton and Sheboygan), with 4,641 course enrollments in 2009-10. The Wisconsin Virtual School (WVS) is the state virtual school, created through a partnership between the DPI and Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) 9. WVS, which has been in operation since 2000, is Wisconsin's Web Academy (WWA) as called for in Act 222. WVS offers more than 170 courses for students in grades 6-12 and had 2,212 course enrollments in 2009-10, an increase of 26% from the previous year. WVS also had an increase of approximately 70% in summer school enrollments in 2010.³²⁰ WVS/WWA has an annual budget of \$594,851 and is funded largely through course fees.

Wisconsin had 3,927 students enrolled in full-time online charter schools in school year 2009-10; the state has a cap of 5,250 virtual charter students. It is expected that enrollments will approach the cap in 2010-11, and that demand will exceed the cap in 2011-12. School districts are not allowed to create non-charter full-time online schools that enroll students from other districts.

Online learning in Wisconsin gained national attention when an appeals court ruled in December 2007 that the Wisconsin Virtual Academy, a charter school established by the Northern Ozaukee School District and affiliated with K12 Inc., violated state laws and was not eligible for state funding. To prevent online charter schools across the state from being denied funding and closing, the legislature responded by enacting Act 222³²¹ in 2008 which changed charter school, open enrollment, and teacher licensing laws to allow virtual charter schools in Wisconsin to operate with public funding. It defined a virtual charter school as: "[A] charter school... in which all or a portion of the instruction is provided through... the Internet,

and the pupils enrolled in and instructional staff employed by the school are geographically remote from each other." It is unclear whether this definition would cover schools that use a blended instructional approach where students and teachers are sometimes together in a physical classroom. Act 222 also directed the Legislative Audit Bureau to perform a financial and performance evaluation audit of virtual charter schools; the audit was released in February 2010.

The audit may be more interesting for what is missing than for what it includes. State audits released in past years in Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, and elsewhere found concerns with some online schools and/or state policies and oversight. In contrast, the 2010 Wisconsin audit is largely a

³¹⁸ The Wisconsin eSchool Network and Wisconsin Virtual School combined for 6,853 course enrollments. The Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth is a hybrid program listed as an online program by the DPI. Hybrid course enrollment numbers are not an accurate comparison to the other online programs.

³¹⁹ Department of Public Instruction; retrieved August 2, 2010, <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/imt/onlinevir.html>

³²⁰ Enrollment numbers are for summer 2009 through spring 2010; they do not include summer 2010.

³²¹ Act 222; retrieved September 15, 2010, <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/2007/data/acts/07act222.pdf>

reporting of the number of students enrolled in online charter schools, student test scores, the cost of educating online students, and similar information. For example, it found that virtual charter school students typically scored higher than other public school pupils on statewide assessment exams in reading and lower in mathematics. The data provide a useful snapshot of the online charters operating across the state (although a bit outdated as the audit uses data from 2007-08), and the lack of the highlighting of any major quality or policy concerns suggests that Act 222 has been a success overall.

The audit recommends to the DPI to:

- Compile statutorily required attendance and pupil participation information and report it annually to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee;
- Analyze the academic performance of virtual charter school pupils relative to other public school pupils and annually report the results of its analysis to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee; and
- Complete the annual open enrollment report that is required by statute 118.51(15)(c), including the number of open enrollment applications, the number of denials, and the reasons for the denials.

As in most states, Wisconsin requires that any person who teaches in a public school must hold a teaching license or permit issued by the state. In the appeals court case, the plaintiffs contended that because WIVA parents engaged in teaching, they required a license. Act 222 exempts parents and other persons providing educational services in the student's home, other than instructional staff, from the licensing requirement. The Act also requires that as of July 2010 online teachers must have completed at least 30 hours of professional development designed to prepare a teacher for online teaching.³²² Other key provisions include:

- If a student fails to respond appropriately to instructional staff within five school days, the virtual school must notify the student's parent or guardian.
- If a student fails to participate three times in a semester, he or she may be transferred to another school or program.
- Teachers are required to be available for at least the minimum numbers of hours specified by grade level under current law (no more than 10 hours in any 24-hour period), and to respond to inquiries from pupils or parents by the end of the first school day following the day on which the inquiry is received.
- Online charter schools are required to report to students' resident districts the students who will be attending the charter school, in June prior to the school year.

In response to Act 222, the Department of Public Instruction established a set of criteria for quality online courses for supplemental programs in 2008-09.³²³ The criteria require that all teachers be appropriately licensed in the subject area and grade level that they are teaching. For each student, the teacher is responsible for: 1) improving learning through planned instructions; 2) diagnosing learning needs; 3) prescribing content delivery through class activities; 4) assessing learning; 5) reporting outcomes to administrators, parents and guardians; and 6) evaluating the effects of instruction. It requires class sizes of 25 students or less. Teachers must respond to all inquiries from students and parents within 48 hours. Schools may certify to the DPI that they meet the quality criteria established by the DPI as a way to demonstrate to districts and parents that the program has quality assurances, but the DPI does not certify virtual programs.

³²² Professional development guidance; retrieved July 26, 2010, http://dpi.wi.gov/imt/pdf/online_course_pd.pdf

³²³ Wisconsin Web Academy Memo of Understanding (MOU); retrieved July 30, 2010, <http://dpi.wi.gov/imt/pdf/mou08.pdf>

Wyoming

The Wyoming Switchboard Network (WSN) is a collection of distance education providers that deliver coursework to K-12 students.

The Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) established the WSN in 2008-09 in response to SB0070,³²⁴ which was based on recommendations from the Wyoming K-12 Distance Education Task Force convened in 2007. Statewide, Wyoming had 1,157 students and 7,160 course enrollments in 2009-10, an increase of 153% and 455% respectively from the 2008-09 school year³²⁵ (see Tables 17 and 18).

The Wyoming Switchboard's website³²⁶ acts as the central collection of distance education resources available to Wyoming students, parents, instructors, school districts, and distance education (DE) program providers. The site provides access to curriculum mapping for over 600 distance education courses available statewide; detailed information about the various DE program providers; and Wyoming's key policy documents and distance education information.

In accordance with two distance education statutes,³²⁷ online learning in Wyoming is overseen at the state level through the implementation of the Chapter 41³²⁸ Distance Education Rules. The WSN Resident District Handbook³²⁹ is a guide for K-12 distance education in Wyoming.

Online programs

Five Wyoming school districts operate statewide online programs: Fremont County School District #21's Wyoming "e" Academy of Virtual Education (WeAVE) serves both full-time and supplemental online high school students; Campbell County Virtual School (CCVS) serves full-time elementary student; Evanston Virtual High School in Uinta County School District #1 serves supplemental online high school students; Jackson Hole Connections Academy in Teton County School District #1 serves full-time K-12 students; and Wyoming Virtual Academy from Niobrara County School District #1 serves both full-time and supplemental K-12 students.

State policies

Wyoming Statute 21-2-202(a)(xxxi)³³⁰ charged the DOE with establishing a state network of distance education courses that meet state standards for course content and delivery by Wyoming-certified teachers. The DOE must also provide training and technical assistance to school districts for the delivery of distance education; monitor the design, content, delivery and accreditation of distance education programs provided by school districts; establish criteria and necessary components of individual student distance learning plans. Finally, the DOE must implement a reporting process to meet federal and state funding requirements, and establish necessary data collection instruments and systems to monitor and improve distance education programs statewide.

Per Wyoming Statute 21-13-330, local districts where the students reside will:

³²⁴ SB0070; retrieved June 30, 2010, <http://legisweb.state.wy.us/2008/Bills/SF0070.pdf>

³²⁵ Personal communication with Scott Bullock, WDE; August 9, 2010. Numbers given do not necessarily reflect completions.

³²⁶ Wyoming Switchboard; retrieved September 15, 2010, <http://www.WyomingSwitchboard.net>

³²⁷ Statutes 21-2-202(a)(xxxi) and 21-13-330; retrieved June 30, 2010, <http://legisweb.state.wy.us/titles/statutes.htm>

³²⁸ Chapter 41 Distance Education Rules; retrieved June 30, 2010, <http://sos.wy.state.wy.us/Rules/RULES/7334.pdf>

³²⁹ WSN Resident District Handbook; retrieved June 30, 2010, <http://wyomingswitchboard.net/Docs/WSNRDHB.pdf>

³³⁰ Wyoming Statute Title 21: Education; retrieved August 9, 2010, <http://legisweb.state.wy.us/statutes/statutes.aspx?file=titles/Title21/Title21.htm>

WYOMING

State virtual school
None

Other statewide programs

Five Wyoming school districts operate statewide online programs

Other significant online programs

Small single-district programs

Number of online students in 2009-10 school year:

Full-time: 807

Supplemental: 350

State-level policy

WSN Resident District Handbook

Chapter 41 Distance Education Rules

Wyoming Statutes 21-2-202(a)(xxxi) and 21-13-330

- Complete a distance learning plan for each student and ensure the plan is in compliance with criteria established by the DOE;
- Assign each student to a school within the district offering appropriate grade level instruction if the student is not physically attending a school within the resident district and the district has not entered into an agreement with a nonresident district of this section for that student;
- Monitor each student's progress as measured by his distance learning plan and in accordance with the district's assessment policies, administer, or ensure participation in required student performance evaluations and assessments at the same intervals required of other students at the participating student's grade level;
- Facilitate necessary instructional support for the student and notify and assist any student not performing satisfactorily or failing to achieve performance benchmarks established within his distance learning plan;
- Maintain the student's records within the district's permanent student data system including his district learning plan, equivalent attendance as specified by the Milestones (course objectives) outlined in his plan, assessment, and other performance evaluation data, immunization, and other information required by the district;
- Verify the distance education program received by the participating student complies with and fulfills the state education program and that the program otherwise meets district program standards; and
- Restrict the student's distance education to programs approved by the DOE.

	2009-10 Unique Students				2009-10 Course Enrollments			
	K-6	7-9	10-12	Total	K-6	7-9	10-12	Total
Total	337	310	510	1,157	2,612	2,280	2,268	7,160
Full-time	336	286	185	807	2,602	2,242	1,736	6,580
Supplemental	1	24	325	350	10	38	532	580

Table 17: Unique students and enrollments by grade level, 2009-10

During the 2008-09 school year, the DOE promulgated the Chapter 41 Rules and Regulations that govern the processes and procedures of distance education within the state. The following information and quotes are from either the Wyoming SB0070 or the Distance Education Program Rules for Wyoming's K-12 Students.

Funding

Wyoming Statute 21-13-330 and the Chapter 41 Distance Education Rules establish policies for funding distance education course enrollments:

- The average daily membership for a distance learning student remains in the resident district in which that student is enrolled (the student's home district)³³¹ and is based on the completion of the DE Milestones (course objectives) documented in the student's Distance Learning Plan (DLP).
- A memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the resident district and nonresident district (provider of online learning courses through the WSN) will be used to establish a funding agreement between the districts. The state does not split the funding between the districts, nor is there any established percentage provided.

³³¹ Rules and Regulations for the School Foundation Program (Section 10e); retrieved June 30, 2010, <http://soswy.state.wy.us/Rules/RULES/7210.pdf>

- It is up to the districts, acting as equals, to agree in advance on how funding is to be applied. The responsibilities of each district must be outlined in the MOU, as well as a conflict resolution agreement.
- The MOU is initiated by the nonresident district and covers “a period not to exceed one year.”

An additional \$250,000 in annual funding is available to assist distance education providers with the development and maintenance of courses available through the Wyoming Distance Education Grant (DEG) Program, which is open to all members of the WSN.

The legislation states, “Each student participating in distance education offered by the school district of residence shall be included within the average daily membership (ADM) of the resident district as computed under the education resource block grant model regardless of the origination of the district providing the distance education program for the student. The membership for a distance education student shall be prorated at less than one (1.0) ADM if the number of distance education courses in which enrolled is less than the regularly scheduled courses for that school, but the distance education program membership may be combined with any non-distance education membership to result in a larger fractional ADM not to exceed one (1.0) ADM. A resident district may through agreement provide for a student to participate full-time in distance education offered by a nonresident school district whereby the student is counted among the membership of the nonresident district... and the resident district removes the participating student from its membership for the period of time the student participates full-time in the distance education program of the nonresident district.”

	Students	Enrollments
2008-09	470	1,291
2009-10	1,157	7,160

Table 18: Total students and enrollments, 2008-09 and 2009-10

Governance and tracking

- The DOE is responsible for monitoring student distance education enrollment information and providing a summary of distance education course(s) available on the WSN. The DOE is charged with establishing a multi-step approval process, including “a course application that includes course taxonomy, course scope, standards alignment, and course quality verification” for each course submitted for approval.
- In addition, the DOE must annually survey district superintendents concerning their distance learning needs and instructional availability; and survey the nonresident distance education provider’s administrators, instructors, and students concerning the quality and effectiveness of programming available through the WSN. It will then compile the survey results and present a summary reporting to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Wyoming Legislature. It must also present a compilation report on the information collected from WSN distance education providers utilizing the DEG program.
- The nonresident district is responsible for collecting and reporting to the DOE³³² course completion rates and information for each course offered on the WSN; internal survey results if available; and reports required by the DEG.
- The resident district is responsible for student performance, accountability, state and local assessment results, and adequate yearly process (AYP) per the 41 Distance Education Rules.
- Distance education teachers must be employed by the school district supplying distance learning courses, or by a Wyoming community college or university.

³³² Wyoming Switchboard Network; retrieved June 30, 2010, <http://www.k12.wy.us/TCD/WSN/index.asp>

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