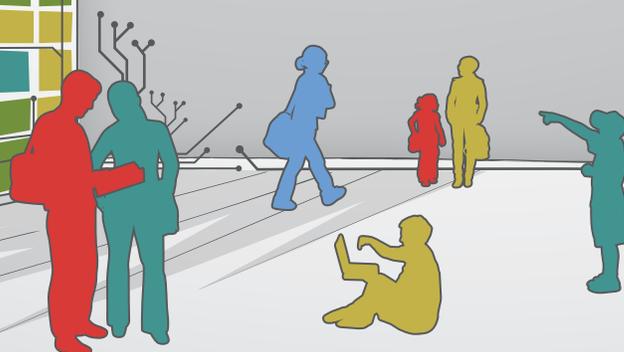
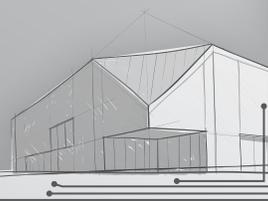


2011

KEEPING PACE

WITH K-12
ONLINE
LEARNING

An Annual Review of Policy and Practice



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2011

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Acknowledgements

This is the eighth annual *Keeping Pace* report, and as the *Keeping Pace* history grows, it becomes harder to acknowledge properly everyone who has been involved over the years. It is unlikely that when the study was first conceived anyone imagined that it would be around eight 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 (now Illinois Virtual School) 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:

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Michael C. Watkins
and Kelly Schwirzke
Santa Cruz County
Office of Education

Todd Hitchcock
Pearson

We are also grateful to the many other researchers and writers working in online learning, many of whom help spur our thinking as they engage in pondering the hard issues that are raised by innovation. While there are too many to mention all, among those who deserve our recognition and appreciation include Amy Anderson, previously of the Donnell-Kay Foundation and now with the Colorado Department of Education; Bill Tucker of Education Sector; Heather Staker and Michael Horn of Innosight Institute; Rick Ferdig of Kent State University; and Susan Patrick of iNACOL.

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 we 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.



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Executive summary

K-12 online and blended learning have evolved in new directions in the past year. While now-familiar segments of the field, such as online charter schools and state virtual schools, have continued to grow, relatively new forms such as consortium programs and single-district programs are expanding even more rapidly, as is the range of private providers competing to work with districts. As of late 2011, online and blended learning opportunities exist for at least some students in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia, but no state has a full suite of full-time and supplemental options for students at all grade levels. Key trends and events from the past year include:

Single district programs are the fastest growing segment of online and blended learning.

Growth within single district programs—run by one district for that district’s students—is outpacing all other segments. Several years ago, state-level and statewide schools and programs were driving most online learning activity. That is no longer the case; now the bulk of activity is at the district level. A second important area of growth is among consortium programs, as districts choose to combine resources to create cost-effective online opportunities.

Most district programs are blended, instead of fully online.

A corollary to the growth of district online programs is that many of these options blend online and face-to-face learning, instead of being entirely online as many state-level schools were. One reason is simple: Districts are often serving their own students, who are local, so there is limited need to bridge large distances. Even when the district is providing an online course with a remote teacher, the local school often provides a computer lab, facilitator, or other on-site resources that may define the course as blended instead of fully online. Many of the schools that have received significant media attention in 2011 fall into this category.

Intermediate units, BOCES, county offices, and other education service agencies are taking on important roles.

States have less funding available to develop state virtual schools and other state-level efforts, but many districts recognize that creating online schools requires high investment and expertise, more than small districts can provide. In states as diverse as New York, Wisconsin, Colorado, and California, educational service agencies are forming consortia to help districts gain expertise and provide economies of scale. This follows a similar pattern for dissemination of education technology since the 1980s.

Full-time, multi-district online schools continue to grow.

Even as district programs grow, multi-district schools continue to flourish as well. There are now 30 states with full-time, multi-district schools that enrolled an estimated total of 250,000 students in SY 2010-11, an annual increase of 25%. Maine, Indiana, and Tennessee are among the states that have, in the last two years, changed their laws to allow full-time online schools for the first time, or to allow significant growth in them.

State virtual schools are dividing into two tiers—those with significant impact and those without—largely based on funding model.

While 40 states have a state virtual school or similar state-led initiative, these programs are increasingly falling into two divergent categories: those that are sustainably funded at a level to have a real impact on their states, and those that do not have a level of reliable support. States in the former category include Florida, North Carolina, Michigan, Montana, Idaho, and Alabama. Other state programs are in decline, mostly due to funding cuts. These include programs in Maryland, Missouri, and California. Nonetheless, all state virtual schools together accounted for 536,000 course enrollments (one student taking one semester-long course) in SY 2010-11, an annual increase of 19%.

Several states passed important new online learning laws, some of which cited the Ten Elements of Digital Learning created by Digital Learning Now.

Florida, Utah, Idaho, Ohio, and Wisconsin were among the states passing new online learning laws that will change the education landscape in those states in coming years.

Digital Learning Now—an initiative managed by the Foundation for Excellence in Education in partnership with the Alliance for Excellent Education—released its Ten Elements of Digital Learning in December 2010. Some of the new laws cite the DLN elements.

The Common Core State Standards are taking hold, common assessments are next, and open educational resources are an increasingly important element.

The move toward the Common Core means that providers are able to create content for use across dozens of states and by millions of students. That is helping push online and blended learning, and the trend will accelerate as the common assessment consortiums progress. Open educational resources, from sources including Khan Academy and the National Repository of Online Courses, are helping districts add a digital component without investing in developing or acquiring content.

The provider landscape is changing rapidly.

Both new start-ups and consolidations are affecting the market landscape. In the past year Kaplan acquired Insight Schools, and then K12 Inc. bought Kaplan's Virtual Education division. Pearson Education acquired Connections Education. New providers such as Education Elements, a start-up focused on blended learning, continue to enter the field. Providers are increasingly offering services that combine elements of content, technology, instruction, and other services.

Special student needs gain new focus.

The release of a Request for Proposal in mid-2011 by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), for the establishment of a Center for Online Learning and Students with Disabilities, suggests that the federal government believes that online learning can serve all students. In general, there is a newly sophisticated emphasis on meeting special student needs in online and blended learning.

Introduction

Introduction: Four themes that overlay this report

When we look back on 2011 from some future year, it may be clear in retrospect that 2011 was the year that online and blended learning went digital, transcending their distance-learning or computer-based instruction origins and taking root in classrooms and schools across the country.

This transformation is well underway and accelerating. Educators who three years ago thought that online learning didn't have a role in their schools are now realizing that, in fact, online and blended learning should be available to their students. The change of heart may be due to having seen successful online learning in action, to competition, or simply because of the spread of technology through every other professional field. These developments are welcome in many circles, because they mean that more students have access to more opportunities. But they also carry challenges and risks.

As we have researched and written this year's *Keeping Pace*, we have found that four themes appear repeatedly, across states and across policies. These themes provide a lens to interpret the landscape.

Innovators sometimes overlook the benefits, and challenges, of “traditional” online learning.

It may seem strange to think of a “traditional” version of something that's only been around for 15 or so years, but at times the most proven online schools are overlooked. Full-time online schools and supplemental course providers are supplying millions of courses to students across the country. There is a sense among people and organizations that wish to be innovative, however, that online learning, in the form of full-time, fully online schools, and supplemental providers that serve students at a distance, are passé. These types of programs, the thinking goes, are easily implemented, not transformative, and shouldn't be the focus of today's innovative educators.

This line of thinking creates and perpetuates misleading depictions of online learning in several ways. First, it overlooks the real and proven benefits of existing online learning programs and program models, despite the fact that the benefits and reach of these schools and models have been only partially realized. A tangible sense exists in many states that there is no need for a state virtual school; that pioneering states and educators should instead look for the next thing. Certainly further innovation is a worthy goal, but this view leaves behind the students in nearly all states who do not have widespread access to online options. The fact that students are taking 259,928 course enrollments from Florida Virtual School—by their choice and with the benefit of living in one of the few states that provides student choice from a statewide provider—suggests that there is an unmet need in most, if not all, of the remaining 49 states. Similarly, the fact that

tens of thousands of students are choosing a fully online school in the states that allow unfettered access to such schools suggests that states without such schools are not fully meeting the needs of their students.

Seeking the next big thing is a laudable goal, but policymakers should recognize that for many students, existing online courses and schools have demonstrated the proven path to the next big thing.

Many states have created or allowed some online and blended learning opportunities, but no state has yet created or allowed a full range of online learning options for students. In many states, students still have few options.

Is the online and blended learning cup half full or half empty? The answer, from a student's perspective, still depends on where the student lives. Students' educational opportunities are still determined to a great extent by their ZIP codes. Students in some states, including Florida, Arizona, and Idaho, and some districts, including Houston, Chicago, and Riverside (CA), have a variety of online and blended courses and schools available to them. Students in most other states, however, do not have many online and blended learning opportunities. When one registers the overall numbers of online students and course enrollments, it can be easy to forget that these opportunities do not yet exist for many students.

Developing an online or blended program requires a high level of investment to be successful or a willingness to work with an experienced partner.

We see many districts interested in creating online and blended learning programs—which is good—but far too many that don't seem to recognize the level of investment that is necessary. In August 2011, we heard of a school district that is beginning its planning for an online and blended program to be operational in August 2013. This timing is highly unusual, and remarkable, because it allows the necessary time to plan and create a high quality program. The far more common approach allows just a few months from time of conception to scheduled opening of the virtual online or blended doors. In addition to not allowing for enough time, many of these programs don't allow for the necessary investment of personnel to fully explore all of the critical dimensions of an online school, including teaching, technology, content, student support, and other elements.

State must invest in planning for data tracking, transparency, and accountability measures to ensure that online and blended learning provide opportunities and positive outcomes.

Creating new online and blended learning opportunities is a necessary step, and allowing such opportunities has been the focus of many advocates and policymakers. Although opportunities are not yet sufficiently widespread, advocates must now devote equal effort to pushing for the creation of accountability measures that will ensure positive outcomes. Student opportunity, as well as parental choice, is a powerful tool toward ensuring equality among students. It is not, however, sufficient to generate positive student outcomes on its own. It is critical that states create the systems by which online and blended learning providers can demonstrate results and be held accountable.

The above list introduces the key themes that we see across the country in online and blended learning in late 2011. These themes—benefits of online and blended learning, creating more options and access, planning for quality, building for accountability—are not new, but as online and blended learning grow, these issues are becoming ever more critical. We think of these themes as an overlay across much of the landscape and across this report.

K-12 online learning background, categories, and definitions

This section is primarily for readers 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, while explaining the main categories of online programs that *Keeping Pace* highlights.

K-12 online learning is growing rapidly and evolving in many different directions. As it evolves it is merging with face-to-face instruction. The result, blended learning, is 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 2011* 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. Some terms are introduced here, and the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) released the *Online Learning Definitions Project* in October 2011, which offers a comprehensive set of definitions of words, terms, phrases, and concepts found in the universe of K-12 online learning.¹

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 online video) 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.

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 1,² 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).

¹ iNACOL Online Learning Definitions Project, released October 2011. Available <http://www.inacol.org/research/bookstore/detail.php?id=27>.

² 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.

Of the 10 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. Schools that use a full-time blended learning model such as Rocketship Education and Carpe Diem are considered “full-time.”
- **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, if only 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.

The Defining Dimensions of Online Programs

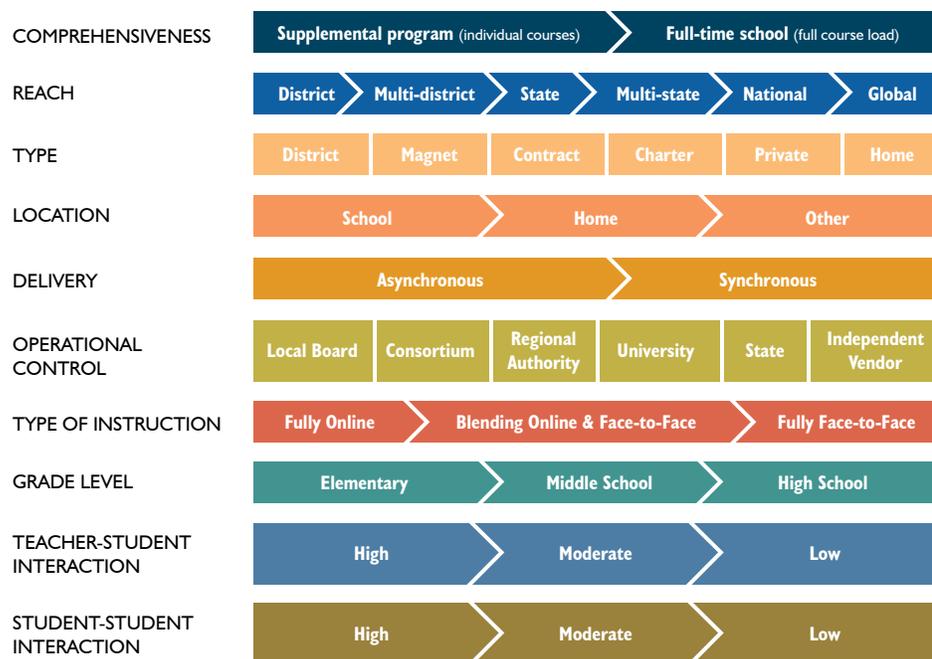


Figure adapted from Gregg Vanourek, A Primer on Virtual Charter Schools: Mapping the Electronic Frontier, Issue Brief for National Association of Charter School Authorizers, August 2006.

Figure 1: Defining dimensions of online programs

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:

- Single-district programs
- Multi-district full-time schools
- Consortium programs
- State virtual schools
- 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, consortium programs, and programs run by postsecondary institutions 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. 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.

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, Georgia Cyber 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	Either or both	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

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

Definitions

Online, elearning, virtual schools, digital courses—there are countless terms that relate to online learning but that 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:

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 but do not fit the definition presently, though they may have done so at 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. However, they 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 serve a small number of students from outside the home district while retaining single-district status.

For **blended learning**, we are adapting the Innosight Institute definition:³ A combination of online and face-to-face instruction in which the student learns at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home and at least in part through online delivery with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace.

³ *The Rise of K-12 Blended Learning*, Heather Staker and Michael B. Horn, Innosight Institute and Charter School Growth Fund, May 2011, <http://www.innosightinstitute.org/media-room/publications/education-publications/the-rise-of-k-12-blended-learning/>

Notable reports from 2011

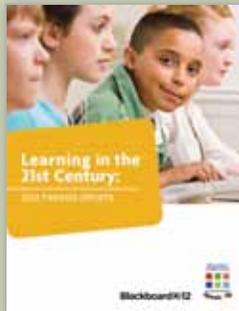
The following list highlights some of the reports that are among the most valuable for online learning policymakers and practitioners. The list is not meant to be comprehensive.



The Rise of K-12 Blended Learning

Innosight Institute *May 2011*

Authors Heather Staker and Michael Horn provide the most in-depth analysis of K-12 blended learning to date, including definitions, a comprehensive review of blended schools, and a taxonomy for categorizing such schools. <http://www.innosightinstitute.org/media-room/publications/blended-learning/>



Learning in the 21st Century: 2011 Trends Update

Project Tomorrow *June 2011*

This report highlights the Speak Up 2010 survey data collected from 379,285 K-12 students, parents and educators. It illustrates how online learning is changing the classroom paradigm within our nation's schools. The report focuses on five key questions and provides new national data findings to help inform local, state, and national discussions around online learning. http://www.tomorrow.org/speakup/learning21Report_2011_Update.html



Horizon Report: 2011 K-12 Edition

New Media Consortium, Consortium for School Networking, and the International Society for Technology in Education *May 2011*

The annual Horizon Report describes the continuing work of the NMC's Horizon Project, a research-oriented effort that seeks to identify and describe emerging technologies likely to have considerable impact on teaching, learning, and creative expression within higher education. <http://www.nmc.org/pdf/2011-Horizon-Report-K12.pdf>



Creating Sound Policy for Digital Learning (a six-paper series)

Thomas B. Fordham Institute *Summer / Fall 2011*

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, with the support of the Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation, has commissioned six deep-thought papers that, together, address the thorniest policy issues surrounding digital learning—issues around quality control, accountability, funding, cost, school governance, and the role of the teacher. The goal is to raise the likelihood that online learning will succeed (both substantively and politically) over the long run. <http://www.edexcellence.net/publications-issues/publications/creating-sound-policy-for-digital-learning.html>



International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL)

It's Not a Matter of Time: Highlights from the 2011 Competency-Based Summit (July 2011)

When Success is the Only Option: Designing Competency-Based Pathways for Next Generation Learning (November 2010)

Clearing the Path: Creating Innovation Space for Serving Over-Age, Under-Credited Students in Competency-Based Pathways (December 2010)

Cracking the Code: Synchronizing Policy and Practice for Performance-Based Learning (July 2011)

In a series of four white papers, iNACOL shows the emergence of competency-based pathways as an important approach to a high-quality educational experience. <http://www.inacol.org/research/competency/index.php>

National Standards for Quality Online Courses, version 2 (October 2011)

National Standards for Quality Online Teaching, version 2 (October 2011)



SETDA: National Educational Technology Trends: 2011 Transforming Education to Ensure All Students Are Successful in the 21st Century

State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) May 2011

This annual report offers a unique perspective on innovative educational technology activities that inform teaching and learning, and includes state and district examples. The report describes how state level technology leadership is essential for advancing education goals and priorities; provides numerous examples of innovative, educational technology programs underway in states and districts funded via a variety of federal, state, local, and private sources; and provides detailed analysis of the federal technology grants awarded by the U.S. Department of Education to state educational agencies (SEAs) through the Enhancing Education Through Technology grant program. http://setda.liveelements.net/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=6&name=DLFE-1302.pdf

The state of K-12 online learning in 2011

As online learning grows and evolves, 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 five subsequent sections on state virtual schools, multi-district online schools, district online programs, consortia, and post-secondary programs.

This section reviews five categories of online learning: state virtual schools and initiatives; full-time multi-district online schools; single-district online programs; consortium programs, and post-secondary 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 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 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 who are accessing most of their courses in a physical school. Single-district programs are leading the trend toward blending online and face-to-face courses.

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

Post-secondary programs include many private pay options, but this report focuses on programs working with school districts to provide publicly funded options to students.

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 2011-12 school year, the ratings are based on the expected availability for the coming year, otherwise they are based on the availability for the 2010-11 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 Alabama) 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 with keeping the number of categories and ratings low enough 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. It does suggest that, 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

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 2011-12 school year. Availability is in turn based on the existence and attributes of programs, state policy and funding (including changes created in 2011 that will impact the 2011-12 school year), and the proportion of the student population taking part in online courses and schools for 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)	
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	○	○	○	●	○	○	A new state-led initiative, Alaska's Learning Network, includes all 54 districts in the state.
Arizona	●	○	○	●	●	●	Arizona Online Instruction (AOI) program approved 19 online charter schools and 46 online district programs for SY 2011-12.
Arkansas	○	○	○	○	○	○	Arkansas Virtual High School is state virtual school; one full-time virtual charter school serves students grades 1-8, but is limited to 500 students.
California	○	○	○	●	○	○	Many district and online charter schools; although restricted by contiguous counties requirement. Regional coordination by county offices and consortium.
Colorado	○	○	○	●	●	●	Colorado Online Learning is state virtual school; there were 22 multi-district and 8 single district online programs in the state in SY 2010-11, with 11 additional opened in fall 2011.
Connecticut	○	○	○	○	○	○	Connecticut Virtual Learning Center is a small state virtual school; 33% of high schools and middle schools participate with the Virtual High School Global Consortium.
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 supplemental and full-time online learning options to their students.
Georgia	○	○	○	○	○	○	Georgia Virtual School is state virtual school; several suburban Atlanta schools offer online programs. Two full-time virtual charter schools serve through grade 9; Gwinnett Online Campus granted charter authorization for 2011-12.
Hawaii	○	○	○	○	○	○	Hawaii Virtual Learning Network is responsible for expanding online offerings throughout the state and includes the state virtual school. One full-time charter school for high school students, and two for middle and elementary schools.
Idaho	○	○	○	●	●	●	Idaho Digital Learning Academy is a relatively large state virtual school. SB 1184 (2011) explores the creation of an online learning requirement and impacts supplemental providers.
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 charter schools; HB 1002 (2011) ends pilot and allows virtual charter schools in 2011-12.

● 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 and Iowa Online AP Academy are the state virtual schools, regional academies that can offer online created in 2011 law.
Kansas	●	●	○	●	●	●	47 district programs and charter schools provide online courses, some of these schools serve students statewide.
Kentucky	○	○	○	○	○	○	Kentucky Virtual Schools is a small state virtual school; also supports blended learning options statewide; JCPSeSchool is one of the largest district programs in the country.
Louisiana	●	○	○	○	○	○	Louisiana Virtual School, the state virtual school, began charging course fees for the first time in SY 2010-11. Two virtual charters opened in SY 2011-12.
Maine	○	○	○	○	○	○	36% of middle and high schools participate in Virtual High School Global Consortium; Maine Online Learning Program approved its first three providers for SY 2011-12.
Maryland	○	○	○	○	○	○	Maryland State Virtual School was defunded, a 2010 law allowing districts to create virtual school programs is being interpreted and has not yet taken effect.
Massachusetts	○	○	○	○	○	○	MassONE is a state-led initiative supporting blended learning; 60% of middle and high schools participate in Virtual High School Global Consortium. Districts allowed to open statewide virtual schools for the first time in 2010, with significant enrollment limits.
Michigan	●	○	○	○	○	○	The state virtual school, Michigan Virtual School, is one of the largest in the country. Michigan was the first state to create an "online learning experience" graduation requirement; first two full-time online schools opened in SY 2010-11 but with caps.
Minnesota	●	●	○	●	●	●	Many online charter school and district programs offering part- and full-time options; 24 providers authorized by the Department of Education.
Mississippi	○	○	○	○	○	○	Mississippi Virtual School is state virtual school; no other major programs.
Missouri	○	○	○	○	○	○	State virtual school, Missouri Virtual Instruction Program (MoVIP), enrolls both part- and full-time students, but lost most funding in middle of SY 2009-10 and is primarily on a tuition model; there has been a 92% enrollment drop.
Montana	●	○	○	○	○	○	Montana Digital Academy, the state virtual school, served 4,551 course enrollments in SY 2010-11, its first year of operation. A few small district supplemental programs exist as well.
Nebraska	○	○	○	○	○	○	New state virtual school pilot, Nebraska Virtual School, started fall 2011. Omaha Public Schools and other district programs; Partnership for Innovations supports blended learning through a statewide license for open educational resources from the National Repository of Online Courses.
Nevada	●	○	○	●	●	●	20 approved online charter schools and district programs including Clark County. State Board is redefining seat-time alternatives.
New Hampshire	●	○	○	○	○	○	The Virtual Learning Academy Charter School provides primarily supplemental courses for grades 7-12; acts as de facto state virtual school. New Hampshire has 22 middle and high schools (20%) that are part of VHS in 2011.
New Jersey	○	○	○	○	○	○	Few online programs in the state, but 11% of high schools participate in Virtual High School Global Consortium.
New Mexico	●	○	○	○	○	○	IDEAL-New Mexico is the state virtual school; some district programs exist, including Albuquerque's eCademy.
New York	○	○	○	○	○	○	A few online programs through BOCES. iLearnNYC provides online and blended options in New York City; Board of Regents eased seat-time and face-to-face requirements in 2011.

● 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 20 online courses approved for SY 2011-12.
Ohio	○	○	○	●	●	●	27 eschools; HB153 (2011) lifts the moratorium on new eschools. iLearnOhio is a state-led initiative.
Oklahoma	○	○	○	●	●	●	Two statewide full-time online schools in SY 2010-11 (one new in 2011); 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; HB2301 (2011) eliminates some restrictions on virtual charter growth.
Pennsylvania	○	○	○	●	●	●	13 cyber charters (one new in 2011) and many district programs opening in response to cyber charter funding rules. Many districts partner with blendedschools.net.
Rhode Island	○	○	○	○	○	○	24% of middle and 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; five full-time charter schools and some district programs.
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 statewide programs that focus on career and technical education and advanced courses.
Tennessee	○	○	○	○	○	○	e4TN, the state virtual school, was defunded for SY 2011-12. The first statewide online school opened in SY 2011-12; some district programs including Hamilton County.
Texas	○	○	○	○	○	○	Texas Virtual School Network is one of the largest state virtual schools, but lost its appropriation for SY 2011-12; TxVSN Online Schools (formerly eCP) allows for full-time schools operated both by charters and independent school districts for grades 3-11.
Utah	○	○	○	○	○	○	Utah Electronic High School was among the first state virtual schools in the country. There are two full-time schools and two opened in 2011. SB65 (2011) expands part- and full-time options.
Vermont	○	○	○	○	○	○	State virtual school opened in 2010; 44% of high schools participate in Virtual High School Global Consortium.
Virginia	○	○	○	○	○	○	Virtual Virginia is state virtual school; some district programs. The first 13 multi-district providers are approved for SY 2011-12.
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 the state virtual school. The Wisconsin eSchool Network, a supplemental program, is a consortium of 11 districts including some of the largest in the state. In addition there were 14 full-time online charters in SY 2010-11, and 11 more are approved for SY 2011-12.
Wyoming	○	○	○	●	●	●	Wyoming Switchboard Network coordinates distance learning for K-12 full-time and supplemental options statewide; several district programs.

Table 2: State level snapshot of online learning activities

District-level online and blended learning

Online and blended learning programs created by a single district, primarily for students in that district, appear to be the fastest-growing, and perhaps largest, category of online and blended learning in 2011. Data for most of these programs are unavailable at the state level, however, and aggregate numbers of students in these programs at the state or national level are unknown. Even when states gather and report information about their state virtual schools or full-time online schools, the data gathered do not typically extend to district-level online programs. There is a wide spectrum of programs at the district level, including fully online programs, blended learning programs, summer school programs, credit recovery programs, alternative high schools, programs providing AP courses and/or other electives, and individual courses. These types of programs are not mutually exclusive and often overlap.

Published reports⁴ 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 districts, 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 online students. However, the distinction is blurred in a single-district program because while the students are full-time, they are likely to be mixing online and face-to-face classes.
- Often are focused on credit recovery or at-risk students.
- Are 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 very small number of districts are beginning to create online and blended options for elementary students.

An important and emerging area of blended learning is among programs that are adding a blended component to an existing school, instead of as a separate school or stand-alone program. Because many of the best-known online and blended schools are new schools—and often charter schools—there are relatively few examples of adding and scaling a blended component within an existing school. Challenges that exist in this situation—which have some components different than a start-up—include training teachers, working within existing physical facilities, and operating under district budget constraints.

Among the key questions that districts must address are 1) what educational goals are they addressing and prioritizing through blended learning, and 2) how will they implement blended learning so it improves outcomes, instead of merely layering on technology?

The goals question and implementation issues are discussed in the Planning for Quality section of this report. Table 3 (following page) defines dimensions of blended learning, and can help districts determine how to successfully implement a blended component to their schools.

⁴ For example, see Picciano, A.G. and Seaman, J. (2010) *Class Connections: High School Reform and the Role of Online Learning*; and Simba Information, (2010) *Moving Online: K-12 Distance Learning Market Forecast 2010*.

THE DEFINING DIMENSIONS OF BLENDED LEARNING MODELS

		LEVEL OF BLENDED LEARNING				
		Learning Object	Unit/Lesson	Single Course	Entire Curriculum	
Characteristics of Instructional Models		INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL LEVEL				
		INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES	Course minimally uses digital content , resources, and tools to supplement instruction	Digital content, resources, and tools expand and enhance the curriculum and content	Use of digital resources and tools are integral to content, curriculum and instruction	
		ASSESSMENT	Whole-class assessments, used primarily in the classroom, during the school day as the primary means of feedback	A combination of traditional and online assessments are used inside and outside the classroom	Greater amount of digital, real-time data and feedback allow for individualized instruction	
		COMMUNICATION (Student / Teacher & Student / Student)	Occurs primarily synchronously and in the physical classroom	Is a mixture of synchronous & asynchronous and may be in the physical classroom or online	Occurs primarily asynchronously and online or from a distance	
Student-Centered Instruction		ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS	Students are required to attend a physical classroom 5 days a week	Students attend a physical classroom less than 5 days a week and work online at other times	Students have flexible physical classroom and/or location attendance requirements.	
		STUDENT LEARNER'S ROLE	Student is primarily the recipient of teacher provided instruction. Teacher sets day-to-day pace.		Student takes active role in learning with reliance on digital content, resources and tools. Student has more control of own pace.	
		INDIVIDUALIZATION OF INSTRUCTION	All students expected to complete same instructional pathway	Students engage with digital content to customize their instructional pathway	Students engage with digital content and have multiple pathways that are competency-based and not tied to a fixed school calendar.	
School Considerations		INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT MODELS	"Direct student learning" through traditional teacher roles and staffing models	"Facilitate student learning" through a team approach with a significant reliance on technology-based tools and content	"Coordinate student learning" through the expanded use of technology-based tools and content, as well as the effective use of outside experts and/or community resources	
		INSTRUCTION SCHEDULE AND LOCATION	Fixed daily schedule, instruction primarily in physical classroom	Mixed schedule of online and physical instruction	Highly flexible schedule, with instruction is possible 24x7. Learning centers support instruction.	
		ACCESS TO ACADEMIC STUDENT SUPPORT	Support is school-based, and provided primarily by the teacher during the class period.		Support structures (e.g. online tutoring, home mentors, and technical support services) in place 24x7, in addition to teacher support.	
		TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE	School or classroom based with students using shared classroom computer resources. Access to infrastructure ends with class period.	Available across school campus with students checking out computers from a lab or bringing their own. Access to infrastructure is during school hours.	Available on and off campus with students using their own device. Access to infrastructure is 24x7.	

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Table 3: Elements of blended learning, iNACOL National Standards for Quality Online Courses, Version 2

Full-time multi-district schools

Online schools typically have served students full-time from across multiple districts and often an entire state. 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.

However, in recent years there has been a rise in the number of districts offering full-time online programs only to students within their district. These programs can issue a diploma from that district. Not all states require separate authorization or reporting for these programs, so they are more difficult to track. Colorado has 23 districts that offer full-time online programs to only their students.⁵ Single district programs are discussed further beginning on page 19.

The number of states that have multi-district 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 steadier than the uneven growth experienced by state virtual schools. A full-time online education is now being offered to at least some students in 30 states and Washington, D.C. (see Figure 2); this is up from 27 states reported in *Keeping Pace 2010*. Tennessee, Virginia and Louisiana opened full-time schools in fall 2011. Enrollments have continued to grow, from an estimated 200,000 nationwide in 2009-10 to 250,000 in 2010-11 (see Table 4).

In spring 2011, the Maine legislature approved a charter school law that was the culmination of more than a decade of work by local advocates. The new law specifically allows virtual charter schools. Implementation of the new charter law is expected to be intentionally slow, with just a handful of schools expected to be approved over the foreseeable future.

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., or Advanced Academics 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.

All grade levels are offered in online schools collectively, although individual schools may be limited to older or younger students.

Funding Often is 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).

⁵ Colorado Department of Education Unit of Online Learning; retrieved September 20, 2011, <http://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/schools.htm>

Statewide Full-Time Online School Enrollment							
State	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	Percent Change 2008-09 to 2009-10	Percent Change 2009-10 to 2010-11	2-year % change 2008-09 to 2010-11	% of state students in FT online schools**
Arizona*	30,076	30,338	36,814	+1%	+21%	+22%	3.89%
Arkansas	500	500	500	0%	0%	0%	.10%
California	10,502	15,000	n/a	+43%	n/a	n/a	.25%
Colorado	11,641	13,093	15,314	+12%	+17%	+32%	1.88%
Florida (VIP, not FLVS)	1,079	2,392	4,000	+122%	+67%	+271%	.16%
Georgia	4,300	5,010	5,000	+17%	-.2%	+16%	.30%
Hawaii	500	500	1,500	0%	-	-	.83%
Idaho	3,611	4,709	5,223	+30%	+11%	+45%	1.92%
Indiana	-	200	470	-	+135%	-	.05%
Kansas*	5,399	4,000	4,891	-26%	+22%	-9%	1.05%
Massachusetts	-	220	318	-	+45%	-	.05%
Michigan	-	-	800	-	-	-	.06%
Minnesota	5,042	8,248	9,559	+64%	+16%	+90%	1.19%
Missouri	-	700	700	-	0%	-	.08%
Nevada	4,603	6,256	7,122	36%	14%	55%	1.70%
Ohio	27,037	31,852	31,142	+18%	-2%	+15%	1.78%
Oklahoma*	1,100	2,500	4,456	+127%	+78%	+305%	.68%
Oregon	-	3,861	4,798	-	+24%	+20%	.88%
Pennsylvania	22,205	24,603	28,578	+11%	+16%	+29%	1.64%
South Carolina	1,981	5,781	7,690	+192%	+33%	+288%	1.07%
Texas	1,650	4,500	4,500	+173%	0%	+173%	.09%
Utah	500	1,475	1,572	+195%	+7%	+214%	.28%
Washington*	13,000	16,003	17,786	+23%	+11%	+37	1.82%
Wisconsin*	3,100	3,927	4,328	+27%	+10%	+40%	.5%
Wyoming	100	807	964	+707%	+19%	+864%	1.11%

*AZ, KS, OK, WA, and WI enrollment numbers are a statewide count of unique students in both full-time programs and supplemental courses **Total student population 2009-10, National Center for Education Statistics, <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/pdf/INsc09101a.pdf>

Table 4: Statewide full-time online school enrollment

National education management organizations (EMOs) are a key part of the full-time online school landscape, in part because they operate the schools that collectively make up 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., Advanced Academics, K12 Inc., Connections Academy) and companies that were involved in education and have recently begun offering online schools (e.g., Edison, Kaplan). Table 5 lists many of the major companies that are operating online schools.

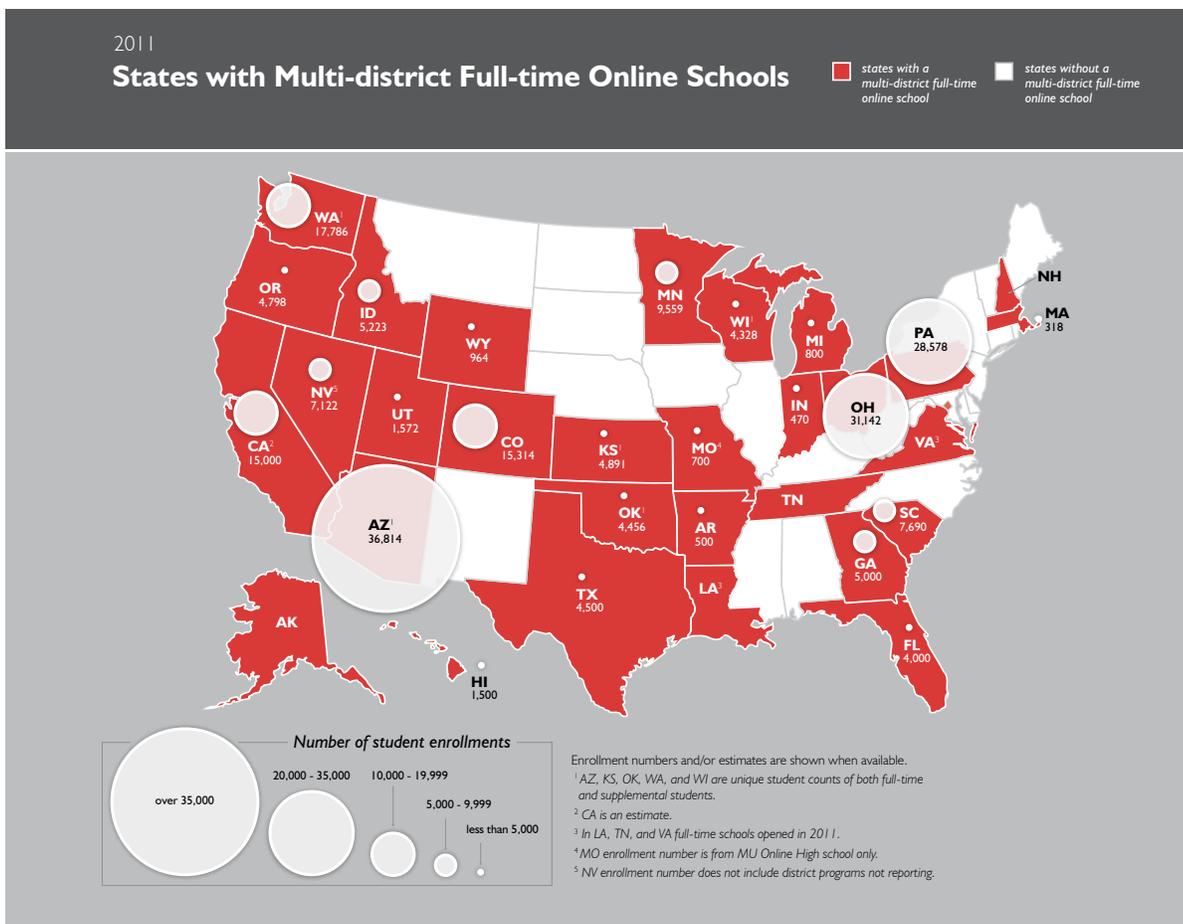


Figure 2: States with multi-district full-time online schools, and the number of students in those schools in states that track and report these data

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.

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. New to this list in 2011 is Indiana, which lifted its pilot program and now allows virtual charters to seek sponsors and districts to start their own public programs. 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.

National Education Management Organizations Operating Full-Time Online Schools						
Name	Start date	States in which company operates schools	Grade levels	# FTEs 2010-11	% Annual change	Part-time students
Advanced Academics	2000	Full-time schools in Alaska, Arizona, California, Washington, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and New York; additional programs with districts in over 30 states	6-12	Not available	Not available	Yes
Connections Academy	2002	- 21 schools in 20 states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. - National private full-time virtual school - State-level programs in Missouri and Mississippi; Connections Learning course-sale and turnkey programs in all 50 states	K-12	35,000	+40%	Yes
K12 Inc. (which now includes schools previously managed by Insight, Kaplan, iQ Academy, and KC Distance Learning)	1999	In 29 states and the District of Columbia: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware*, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming	K-12	82,670	+23%	Yes
Pinnacle Education	1995	Arizona	9-12	5,075	+7%	Yes

*Delaware is the only state where K12 Inc. does not operate a full-time online public school, but does operate a turnaround school

Table 5: Education management organizations operating full-time online schools

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

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 allowed two full-time online schools for the first time in fall 2010, but it had an enrollment cap of 400 students for the first year, and 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.”
- Georgia has struggled with identifying an appropriate funding level for its virtual charters; in addition, its state-level charter authorizer, the Georgia Charter Schools Commission, was declared unconstitutional in spring 2011 after having approved several virtual charters. As of September 2011, there are two virtual charters operating at \$3,500 per pupil.

- Oregon lifted its caps, although if more than 3% of a district's students enroll in virtual charters, additional students must receive permission from the district to enroll.
- Arkansas has only one full-time online school, which is limited to 500 students and has been for more than five years.
- 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 whose implementation is cumbersome, inefficient, and poorly understood within the state.

Most **Category 3** states—the ones that 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. There are 20 states with no full-time multi-district online schools, although they may have full-time schools serving students within a single district.

Consortium and educational service agency programs

Small and mid-size districts are increasingly recognizing that they do not have the resources to invest in an online school or courses, but they still want to offer online options for their students. Some of these districts are creating consortia to do so. These consortium online programs may be run by a group of school districts, by a nonprofit organization that works with schools, or by another intermediate education agency. They are usually funded by member schools or by course fees, and they 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 6).

Some of the recent consortium offerings combine state-level organizations, districts, and, in some cases, education service agencies. For example, a group that includes school districts and post-secondary institutions manages 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. Similarly, the Minnesota Learning Commons is a joint project of the University of Minnesota, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, and the Minnesota Department of Education. Alaska's Learning Network shares courses developed by existing online programs with districts across the state and 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 and Colorado. Representative examples of consortium programs include:

- Virtual High School Global Consortium (VHS) is a nonprofit collaborative of schools founded in 1995. It brings together 770 member schools from 34 states, as well as 51 international schools. VHS' global online classrooms bring together students and teachers from diverse backgrounds in a co-synchronous environment that promotes global citizenship and 21st century literacies. VHS offers private and custom courses, blended learning support, and online professional development to help educators develop the skills they need to teach online and integrate technology into their classrooms.
- The Wisconsin eSchool Network is a consortium of 11 school districts across Wisconsin operating as a nonprofit organization. As a consortium, it shares the costs of licensing online content, operating the learning management system (LMS), registering students, and offering technical support for mostly high school courses, with a limited number of middle school enrollments. Each participating district maintains the autonomy to utilize the eSchool Network

courses in whatever way best serves their students, including supporting a local full-time online school or offering supplemental courses.

- Franklin Virtual Academy (FVA) is one of many consortia recently created in Pennsylvania as districts compete with cyberschools for students. FVA brings together the Chambersburg Area, Greencastle-Antrim, Waynesboro Area, and Fannett-Metal school districts.
- While some consortium programs offer courses directly, others share resources so schools or districts can offer their own courses. The California Online Learning Consortium is a new initiative funded and initiated by California County Offices of Education. The purpose of the consortium is to facilitate collaboration among California county offices of education, school districts, and state-level organizations in their use and support of online learning, including curriculum resources, advocacy, and professional development.
- In an effort to simplify the acquisition of distance learning services, maximize current investment of state funds, and improve distance learning services, Arkansas Department of Education and Arkansas Distance Learning (ARDL) have combined resources to form the ARDL Consortium beginning with the 2011-12 school year. Arkansas school districts that wish to schedule courses with the consortium will pay an annual membership fee of \$2,500.
- The Southwest Colorado eSchool (SWCeS) is a newly formed online school founded by the San Juan BOCES to serve nine rural school districts in southwest Colorado. The SWCeS is primarily a full-time online school with a limited number of supplemental course enrollments available to participating school districts. The goal of the school is to bring a quality, localized, online program to students in districts that lack the resources to develop and manage their own online school.

Consortium Programs					
Name	Organization type	Start date	Grade levels	Funding	2010-11 course enrollments or students
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 for professional development	Supplemental; 15,247 course enrollments
Wisconsin eSchool Network	Independent non-governmental	Spring 2002	6-12	Education formula funding and grants	Supplemental and full-time; 4,943 course enrollments, including 211 full-time students
GenNET Online Learning (Michigan)	Intermediate school district	2001	6-12	Grant awards and course fees	11,757 course enrollments
Indiana Virtual Academy	Multiple districts in one county serving students statewide	2006	6-12	Course fees	2,123 course enrollments
Southwest Colorado eSchool	San Juan BOCES (CO)	2011	9-12	Fees are paid by student's local host district	New in 2011
Arkansas Distance Learning Consortium	Organized by Arkansas Department of Education	2011	K-12	A consortium fee is paid by participating districts; additional course fees	New in 2011
Franklin Virtual Academy	Multiple districts	2011	K-12	Fees are paid by student's local host district	New in 2011

Table 6: Consortium programs

Post-secondary

A significant portion of the online learning activity in post-secondary institutions has roots in correspondence courses and independent studies programs that, in some cases, are decades old. Many post-secondary institutions are in segments not studied by *Keeping Pace*, including private schools, private pay (courses that are paid for by students or parents, without involvement by the school district except to accept credits), and college-level classes that don't carry K-12 credits. Other programs, which work at least in part with school districts, include the following:

- 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; it reported 700 full-time students and 8,458 supplemental course enrollments in 2010-11.⁶
- Indiana University High School (IUHS) is a diploma-granting program providing online courses to students around the world; about 60% of enrollments are from Indiana students. IUHS had 3,116 student enrollments in 2010-11, representing a mix of supplemental and diploma-seeking courses. Students are charged \$200-\$225 per course for tuition, fees, and a Learning Guide.⁷
- USC Hybrid High School is a partnership of the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California and Ednovate. It is designed specifically for high school students most at risk of dropping out. The charter school is set to open in fall 2012 with about 150 ninth graders; it will add a new group of 9th graders each year until it reaches capacity at 600 students in grades 9-12. Operating in a physical setting, it is a hybrid school that will offer online curriculum delivery and student support in a brick-and-mortar setting.

Some online consortia run by K-12 organizations include post-secondary partners (discussed above). Examples include the Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative, the Minnesota Learning Commons, and P-20 state efforts in New Mexico and Ohio. These partnerships tend to be driven by one or more of three elements:

- dual credit
- expertise in online courses and programs, because they have run their own online programs
- professional development for teachers, which may be in conjunction with a teacher pre-service program at the college

Although private schools are not a focus of this analysis, there are some notable private K-12 post-secondary high schools often geared toward meeting the needs of college-bound students. K12 Inc. has partnered with George Washington University to open a private college-preparatory high school that will operate entirely online, one of the nation's first online secondary schools to be affiliated with a major research university. The school offers priority access to George Washington programs, including a customized pre-college summer program. The Education Program for Gifted Youth at Stanford University operates the tuition-based EPGY Online High School, which started in 2006 and enrolls students in grades 7-12. The Gifted LearningLinks (GLL) program, run by Northwestern University's Center for Talent Development, offers supplemental courses to gifted and talented students in grades K-12, while Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth runs a tuition-based online preparatory school called CTYOnline for pre-K-12 students. It is accredited for grades 5-12 and serves about 10,000 enrollments each year. CTYOnline will also partner with schools to offer its courses directly, allowing the school to pay the tuition for the student.

⁶ MU High School enrollments, *Keeping Pace 2011* survey

⁷ Personal communication, Dr. Bruce Colston, Indiana University High School, June 22, 2011

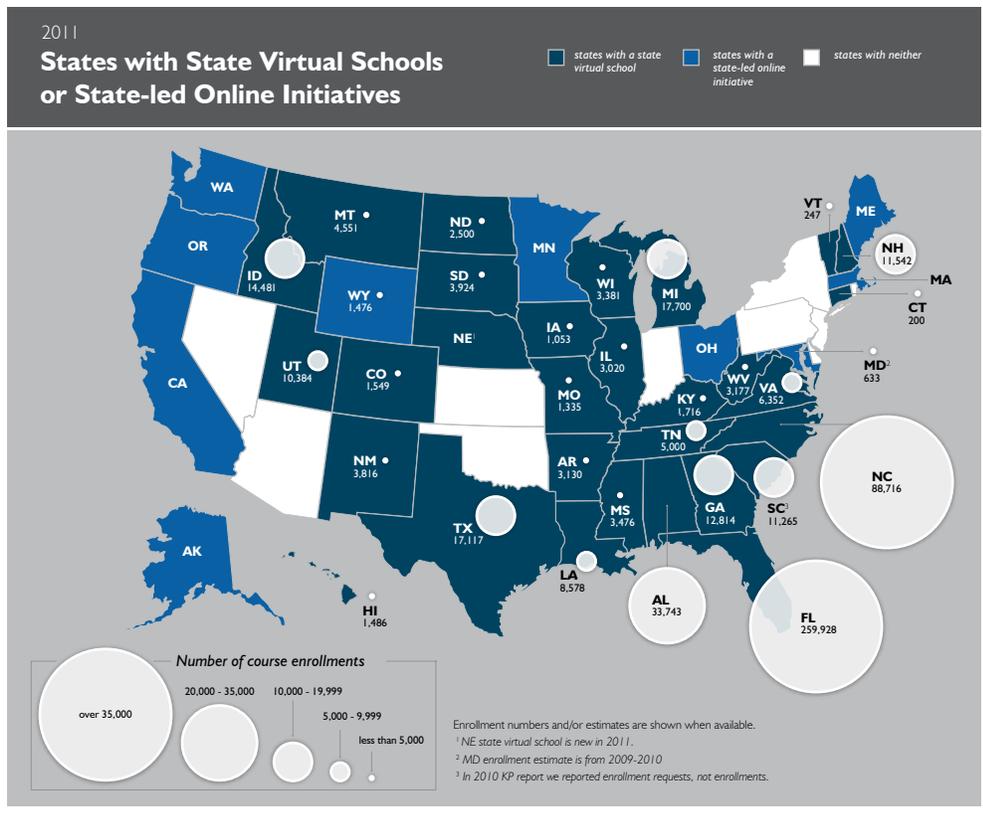


Figure 3: States with state virtual schools or state-led initiatives

State virtual schools

State virtual schools and state-led initiatives remain an important part of the online learning landscape in states such as Florida, Alabama, Idaho, and Michigan. As a whole, however, they are relatively less important than they were in past years, for two main reasons. First, in most states individual districts, consortia, and private providers are playing a larger role in providing supplemental online courses to students. Second, in many states the state virtual school has been underfunded or defunded. As of 2011 there are many state virtual schools that are not funded at a level to meet demand, which is having a significant impact on students in those states.

Figure 3 shows all states with a state virtual school or a state-led online learning initiative. As of fall 2011, 40 states have one or the other of these, accounting for 536,272 course enrollments, a 19% annual increase. However, we see state virtual schools and initiatives falling into two broad categories. Table 7 shows the 18 prominent state virtual schools, based on their size relative to the state student population. These schools are either funded based on a formula that taps into the public education funding formula (e.g., FLVS and NCVPS), or are well-funded via state appropriations relative to the size of the state (e.g., Alabama, Idaho) so that districts pay little or nothing for their students to take an online course.

Table 8 shows the 12 state virtual schools that are small, either because they have been recently created (e.g., Vermont and Nebraska), or have not grown over time (e.g., Colorado, Connecticut, Kentucky), or have dropped in size in recent years due to funding cuts (e.g., Missouri). Most of the small state virtual schools have not received annual appropriations of more than a few hundred thousand dollars, and sell courses to districts at rates similar to the fees charged by private

providers. This list includes Texas and Tennessee, both of which were fairly large in 2010-11 but lost funding in 2011-12. We expect to see a precipitous drop-off in course enrollments in 2011-12.

In Tennessee, e4TN was a small but growing state virtual school, working in partnership with several districts to develop and distribute supplemental online courses. The state had funded e4TN with federal Enhancing Education Through Technology (E2T2) funds, and with the demise of E2T2, e4TN has been left unfunded and in limbo as of September 2011. In Texas, TxVSN first offered courses in 2009, and grew to 17,117 course enrollments in SY 2010-11 (Figure 4) as the state provided funding on top of the standard education funding formula. As of fall 2011, new legislation changed the funding for students in TxVSN such that “districts and open enrollment charter schools will be responsible for the course cost beginning with fall 2011.”⁸ Figure 5 contrasts growth over time with Florida Virtual School—with funding following the student—and TxVSN—where funding was eliminated.

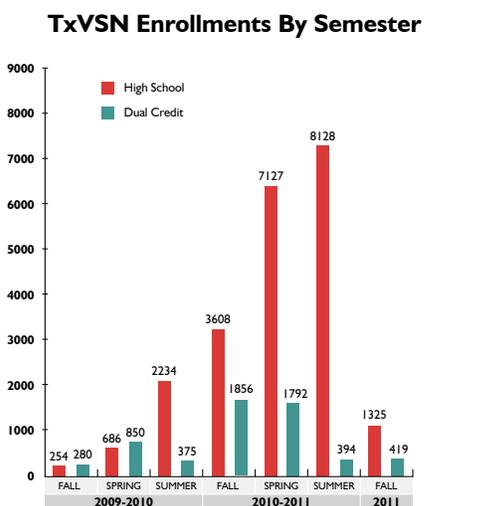


Figure 4: TxVSN enrollments as of September 20, 2011 http://www.txvsn.org/custom/rpt_enrollments.aspx

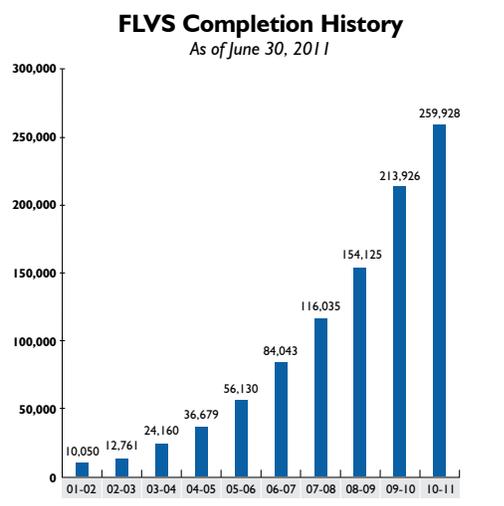


Figure 5: FLVS Completions are measured as half-credit enrollments, based on FLVS Classic student completions during a 12-month period.

North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS) may be an exception to the apparent rule that state virtual schools dependent on districts choosing to pay for their service will not grow. Prior to 2010, funds were supplied to NCVPS via state appropriation, without district funds being deducted. In 2010, the state legislature eliminated the \$5 million appropriation and shifted the cost of the program to each LEA. The new formula projects each LEA’s enrollment, divides by six to calculate the fractional ADM, and reduces the total by 25%, as NCVPS courses are estimated to cost 25% less than brick-and-mortar courses. The estimated funds are transferred directly to NCVPS. Despite the funding change, NCVPS grew by 20% in SY 2010-11.

⁸ TxVSN enrollment numbers; retrieved September 20, 2011, <http://www.txvsn.org/>. The site also states “Schools may use a variety of sources of funds, such as Foundation School Program (FSP) funds, the Instructional Materials Allotment (IMA), applicable state and federal program and grant funds, local funds, etc.”

States with a Prominent State Virtual School								
Program name	Start date	Governance	Course Enrollments		% Annual Change		Grade levels	Ratio* to state pop.
			2009-10	2010-11	2009-10	2010-11		
Alabama ACCESS	Fall 2005	SEA	31,187	33,743	+11%	+8%	8-12	17.3
Arkansas Virtual High School	Spring 2000	SEA	5,000	3,130	-6%	-37%	9-12	2.3
Florida Virtual School (FLVS)	1997	Special school district	213,926	259,928	+39%	+22%	PK-12	33.2
Georgia Virtual School (GAVS)	Fall 2005	SEA	12,143	12,814	+22%	+6%	9-12	2.7
Hawaii Virtual Learning Network (HVLN)	2008	SEA	2,500	1,486	0%	-41%	K-12	2.9
Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA)	Fall 2002	Gov't entity outside SEA	14,345	14,481	+49%	+1%	7-12	17.8
Louisiana Virtual School (LVS)	Fall 2000	SEA	14,001	8,578	+27.3%	-39%	6-12	4.7
Michigan Virtual School (MVS)	2000	NGO; state-funded 501c3	15,060	17,700	-6%	+18%	6-12	3.3
Mississippi Virtual Public School (MVPS)	Fall 2006	SEA, outsourcing to EMO	6,357	3,476	-9%	-45%	9-12	2.5
Montana Digital Academy (MTDA)	Fall 2010	Unit of the higher education system	New program 2010-11	4,551	n/a	n/a	8-12	10.3
New Hampshire Virtual Learning Academy (VLACS)	May 2007	LEA	8,000	11,542	+38%	+44%	7-12	18.3
New Mexico IDEAL	2008	SEA	2,063	3,816	+37%	+85%	P-12	3.9
North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS)	Summer 2007	SEA	73,658	88,716	+368.5%	20%	9-12	20.7
North Dakota Center for Distance Education	Fall 1996	SEA	2,350	2,500	-3%	6%	6-12	8.1
South Carolina Virtual School Program (SCVSP)	Fall 2007	SEA	14,022	11,265	+32%	-20%	7-12	5.5
South Dakota Virtual School (SDVS)	March 2007	SEA	2,900	3,924	+25%	+35%	6-12	10.3
Utah Electronic High School (EHS)	1994	SEA	7,846	10,384	+2%	+32%	9-12	8.4
West Virginia Virtual School (WVVS)	Fall 2001	SEA	2,967**	3,177	+24%	+7%	6-12	3.9

Table 7: States with a prominent state virtual school⁹

⁹ One course enrollment is one student taking one semester-long course; enrollments are for the 2010-11 school year.

States with a Small, Unfunded, or Newly Created State Virtual School								
Program name	Start date	Governance	Course Enrollments		% Annual Change		Grade levels	Ratio* to state pop.
			2009-10	2010-11	2009-10	2010-11		
Colorado Online Learning (COL)	Fall 1999	Independent NGO with partial state funding	1,379	1,549	-22%	+12%	9-12	.6
Connecticut Virtual Learning Center (CVLC)	Spring 2007	SEA	250	200	0%	-20%	9-12	.1
Illinois Virtual School (IVS)	Spring 2001	SEA	2,445	3,020	-16%	+24%	5-12	.5
Iowa Learning Online (ILO)	Summer 2004	SEA	1,141	1,053	+49%	-8%	9-12	.2
Kentucky Virtual Schools (KVS)	January 2000	SEA	1,615	1,716	-30%	+6%	K-12	.9
Missouri Virtual Instruction Program (MoVIP)	Fall 2007	SEA	2,900	1,335	-82%	-54%	K-12	.5
Nebraska Virtual School	Fall 2011	Unit of the higher education system		-	-	-	9-12	-
Tennessee – e4TN	Spring 2006	LEA	1,754	5,000	+5%	+185%	6-12	1.9
Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN)	Spring 2009	SEA	1,806	17,117	+1,713%	+817%	3-12	1.4
Vermont Learning Cooperative (VTVLC)	Fall 2010	SEA / LEA	New in 2010-11	247	n/a	-	K-12	.3
Virtual Virginia (VVA)	Fall 2004	SEA	6,276	6,352	+20%	+1%	6-12	1.7
Wisconsin Virtual School (WVS)	2000	LEA	2,212	3,381	+25.5%	+53%	6-12	1.2

Table 8: States with a small, unfunded, or newly created state virtual school

Acronyms used: LEA – local education agency; NGO – non-governmental organization; SEA – state education association

* 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. Enrollment data pulled from NCES: <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/expressables.aspx?bridge=quickFacts&tableid=13&level=State>.

**The West Virginia increase is based on a revised number of enrollments from school year 2009-10 that is slightly different than the number reported in *Keeping Pace 2010*

Key policy and practice issues

This section reviews several key policy and practice issues in online and blended learning: cost and funding, student demographics, teacher training, NCAA accreditation, military acceptance of online students, and state online course graduation requirements. Accountability of online schools is covered in a subsequent section. These issues can change quickly; for the latest information see the *Keeping Pace* blog at www.kpk12.com/blog/.

Cost and funding of online learning

How to fund online and blended schools, and how much they should cost, remain vexing questions for educators and policymakers. These questions are made particularly knotty by the many types of programs, variations in quality, and differences in cost structures (i.e., one school might spend much more on teaching and content and less on technology than another; although both instructional methods may be equally valid).

Although funding and cost questions apply to district programs, state virtual schools¹⁰ and other providers, they are most commonly asked about full-time online schools. This is due to several reasons, including 1) an online school is typically a self-contained educational entity, unlike a district or state program, so funding is easier to track; and 2) public education funding that follows the student flows directly to these schools, from the state and in some cases from districts.

The Georgia example

Events in Georgia in 2011 put a spotlight on online school funding. Prior to 2008, Georgia Charter Law allowed only local school district boards or the State Board of Education to act as charter school authorizers. Locally authorized schools could receive funding, including local or federal funding, equivalent to other district schools. However, State Board-authorized schools, which were known as state-chartered special schools (SCSS), received only the state portion of student funding, based on the Quality Basic Education (QBE) formula—typically around \$3,200 per student, less than half of what a district-authorized school might receive. Although the charter law was amended in 2006 to allow for online charter schools, local school districts almost universally declined to authorize any. In 2007, the State Board authorized a single online charter, Georgia Virtual Academy affiliated with K12 Inc., with the limited QBE-based funding.

In 2008, the Georgia General Assembly passed HB881 to create the “Georgia Charter Schools Commission as an independent, state-level charter school-authorizing entity... empowered to approve commission charter schools.” HB881 also gave the Charter Schools Commission authority to set the funding amount for charter schools, opening up for the first time the opportunity for a statewide online school to be funded above the QBE level. In its first round of online charter approvals in 2009, however, the Commission set the funding level at roughly \$3,700 per student. This funding level limited the number of providers willing and able to operate in Georgia, and several national education management organizations dropped their efforts to establish online schools.

In 2010-11, the commission addressed the issue by establishing a three-step process to evaluate funding for charters, including virtual charters. First, the commission brought together stakeholders from the State Board of Education, the Georgia legislature, and charter school providers.

¹⁰ A discussion of funding of state virtual schools is provided in the state virtual school section of this report.

Operating budgets from online providers and existing funding from the State Board were reviewed. This increased the understanding of the differences in budget and operations between brick-and-mortar schools and virtual charters. Second, representatives from iNACOL participated in a half-day session with stakeholders, providing a national perspective on best practices and funding strategies in other states. iNACOL presented a national average of \$10,000 per student for brick-and-mortar charters and \$6,500 for virtual charters. Third, the commission took the proposed budgets of operators applying for charters in Georgia and national averages obtained for previous sessions, and asked providers to commit to working in Georgia under a compromise budget—something between the funding provided in the past by the State Board and what was being requested by the providers. The commission members then negotiated a proposed funding level based on the ratio of national averages provided by iNACOL, resulting in a new funding level of \$5,800 per student.

Despite these efforts, the funding strategy developed by the Charter Schools Commission was never put into effect. The legislation that created the commission spawned a two-year legal battle after seven school systems sued to overturn the law. In May 2011, the Supreme Court of Georgia found HB881 to be unconstitutional, ruling that the bill unlawfully granted the state authority to approve and fund charter schools over the objection of local school districts. After further maneuvering to allow online schools to open, the end result is that two virtual charter schools are operating in Georgia in SY 2011-12, under SCSS status at the much lower level of funding based on the QBE formula.

The Georgia example is illustrative in several ways. The depth of exploration that stakeholders undertook demonstrates that understanding the costs of full-time online learning can be a subtle and complex process. It is also clear that despite such processes, funding is the combined product of law, policy, and politics. Even if the “right” level of funding is determined, the result may not be funding at that level.

Online school cost categories

Online schools may allocate funds into different areas, but most have similar cost categories, which include:

- **Teachers and instruction:** Online schools typically employ state-licensed, highly-qualified, full-time teachers working under the direction of a state-certified principal.
- **Curriculum and instructional materials:** Online schools often provide a rich variety of curriculum materials in multiple media, both digital and print; some include textbooks, hands-on science kits, and other physical materials. The school is responsible for providing and delivering all these materials to students.
- **Technology and infrastructure:** Online school technology typically includes a learning management system, student information system, enrollment system, and a self-contained communications system, among others. These systems replicate and capture data from actions that typically happen face-to-face in a traditional school. Hardware includes computers for teachers, and in many cases for students, along with software, technical support, and Internet access.
- **School outreach:** Online schools often attract students from across a region or an entire state, making outreach necessary—especially because they must inform families that they exist and share the benefits of an online school.
- **School office:** Most online schools have headquarters in each state they serve; some also include a teaching center where teachers work together daily, or a place for students and teachers to meet face-to-face as needed. Facility costs are lower than for traditional schools, but they are not negligible.

Expenditures in each of these categories vary, but a typical allocation by category is provided in Figure 6.

Funding levels and effects on schools

The levels at which states fund online schools vary. Most states fund at a per-student level of between \$6,000 and \$7,000 per year. States in this category include Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, and Wisconsin. States slightly above this level include Michigan and Pennsylvania, while states below this level include Oregon and Idaho. South Carolina and Georgia are well below the average.

The different levels of funding may reflect, in part, varied cost of living in different regions of the country. Differences also may result in some changes in how the online school delivers instruction. One national provider, for example, reports an average student:teacher ratio of 50:1 at the average national funding level of \$6,500 per student. At \$7,500, the average student:teacher ratio drops to 35:1. Higher funding levels also result in broader curriculum options for students, as well as additional outreach to students and families.

Costs of Typical Online School: Total per-pupil expenditure=\$6,500

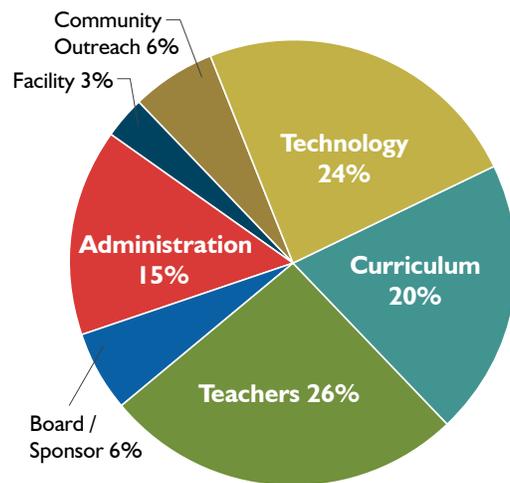


Figure 6: Typical cost categories for online schools. iNACOL reports that the national average for online charter schools is \$6500.¹¹

Funding methods

Many states with full-time online schools use the same funding methodologies employed for their brick-and-mortar counterparts, though often with a reduction applied to online schools, charter schools, or both. While this approach has the benefit of recognizing online students as part of the larger public school pool, each methodology has its challenges. For example:

- **ADA/ADM:** Many states fund schools based on average daily attendance (ADA) or average daily membership (ADM). Both of these accounting methods assume a physical head count each day, and thus present challenges to online schools. ADM and ADA require that online schools demonstrate attendance, often based on methods that were created for a physical school and don't take into account that students may be learning evenings and weekends.
- **Count day:** Some states (e.g., Nevada and Colorado), have count days in which per-student funding is generated based on enrollment on one or a minimal number of days. Count days are especially problematic for online schools because of high mobility of students between schools. The school that counts the student on the count day gets the funding—which may be for the entire year—even if the student leaves for another school after the count day.
- **Size-based:** A few states, typically those with many small traditional school districts, fund on something akin to a sliding scale, with funding decreasing on a per-student basis as the total number of students increases. Economies of scale exist in the digital world, but not in the same way as physical schools. Reducing per-student funding as student numbers grow creates a disincentive for growth in online schools.

A few states have implemented online school funding based on successful completion instead of on time or a proxy for time. These examples are mostly applied to individual courses as opposed to entire schools. Florida (Florida Virtual School), Texas (Texas Virtual School Network), and Maine (Maine Online Learning Program) are examples.

¹¹ Slide presentation by Dr. Allison Powell of iNACOL, Costs and Funding for Online Schools

The demographics of online students in the U.S., 2010-11

This demographics section contributed by David Glick, of David B. Glick & Associates, LLC

For the third consecutive year, David B. Glick & Associates, LLC, in cooperation with iNACOL, surveyed the iNACOL membership to gather information regarding the demographics of students participating in online programs. With this third annual survey, we now have sufficient numbers of programs and students represented to draw valid, if preliminary, conclusions regarding the current demographic make-up of online students.

As our survey results show, the composition of the online student body differs significantly in important ways from the nationwide K-12 population. For those concerned about equitable access to online programs for all students, there is much here that says those concerns are well-founded and need to be deliberately addressed by programs, policies, and researchers.

All together, the results include a total of 175 responses representing 139 different U.S. programs. Of the 139 programs responding, 76 (54.7%) reported all or most of the demographic data requested. Some programs were able to provide gender data but not ethnicity data, or vice versa. The programs serve about 485,000 full- and part-time students, and 189,000 students, or 39% of the total, are represented in the demographic data.

Student gender

As has been reported in past surveys and other research, there continues to be an overrepresentation of females in online programs as compared to the national K-12 student population. While males hold a slight majority in the total student population, females comprise over 55% of online students. There is no consensus on the reasons for this divergence, nor on its possible benefits or demerits.

Student ethnicity

The ethnic differences between the national K-12 population and the online student population are significant but not dramatic. Black, Hispanic, and Asian students are underrepresented, while White and Native American students are overrepresented. (Figure 7) The underrepresentation of Hispanic/Latino and Asian students is likely related to the severe lack of participation of English Language Learners (ELL) in online programs. Nationally, Hispanic/Latino and Asian students comprise the vast majority of ethnic minorities of ELL students in the U.S.¹² The overrepresentation of Native American students (4.23% in online programs compared to 1.2% nationally) likely comes from a new federal reporting process that leads Hispanic students with South and Central American heritages to self-identify as Native American.

Special populations

Online learning for special needs learners is quickly gaining nationwide attention, and for good reason. Several studies have shown excellent results for these students in online programs, but they are severely underrepresented.

Our data shows that just 2.3% of online students are ELL, compared to 11% nationwide. Special education students are also underrepresented in online programs, with just 6.2% of online students identified as special education, compared to 13.2% nationwide. (Figure 8)

Students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch are also severely underrepresented in online programs. Nationwide, nearly 45% of students qualify for free/reduced lunch. However,

¹² National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2010). Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Minorities, Table 8.2a; retrieved August 25, 2011, http://nces.ed.gov/pubst2010/2010015/tables/table_8_2a.asp

this population makes up only 21.7% of online students. It is quite clear that students from families of low socioeconomic status are not accessing online programs at rates representative of the national population.

These numbers suggest that significant measures are called for to address large disparities in access to and participation in online programs for special populations. Of course, solving access and participation disparities is only the first step. We then need to look at any differences in achievement and what any such differences mean for ensuring success for all students in the online environment.

For several years, educators have argued that online programs are in danger of replicating the problems and disparities that have plagued our brick-and-mortar education system. At least in terms of special student populations, the data contained in this report clearly validates that fear. Online learning makes it possible to provide a high-quality education to every student. As virtual schooling matures, we all have a responsibility to make sure that nobody gets left out.

Pre-service online teacher training

Successful student outcomes derive from a successful classroom experience — regardless of whether that classroom is in a brick-and-mortar or online environment. However, online and blended teaching also requires additional skills that should be identified and developed. During the first decade of growth of online learning, many online schools had to train their own teachers, because few other pre-service training and professional development opportunities existed. That has started to change in recent years, with the development of pre-service and professional development options to meet the needs of beginner, intermediate, and advanced online teachers.

In a Boise State University survey of 830 teachers nationwide, only 5% reported having an endorsement in online education.¹³ In *Going Virtual! 2010*, Boise State provides insight into where teachers are receiving their online learning professional development (Table 9).

¹³ *Going Virtual! 2010: The Status of Professional Development and Unique Needs of K-12 Online Teaching*, Boise State University; <http://edtech.boisestate.edu/goingvirtual/goingvirtual3.pdf>

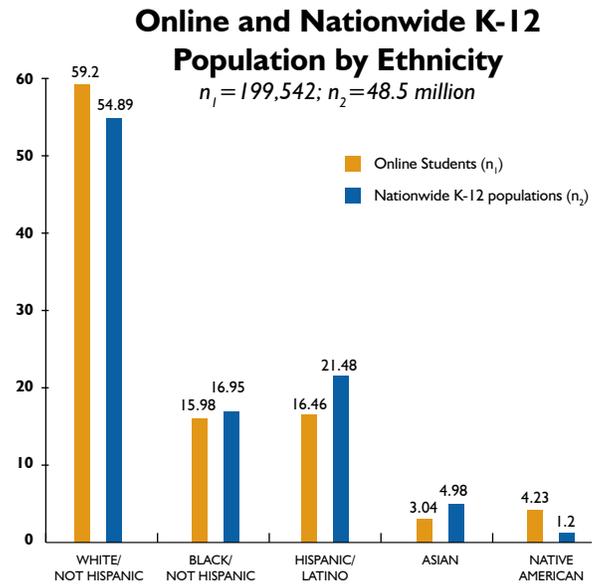


Figure 7: Ethnicity of online students

Online and Nationwide Populations of Special Education, ELL and Free/Reduced Lunch Qualifiers

$n_1 = 97,700$; $n_2 = 48.5$ million

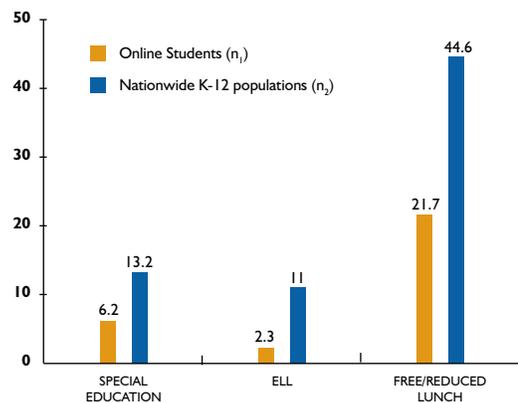


Figure 8: Online population of special education, ELL, and free/reduced lunch qualifiers

Who provided the training?	0 years (just hired) n=101	1-5 Years n=522	6-10 Years n=112	10+ Years n=14
My program, school, or organization	95.0%	93.9%	95.5%	71.4%
My district	13.9%	16.7%	23.2%	21.4%
College or university	11.9%	30.7%	42.9%	21.4%
Self-led (i.e. PLN)	12.9%	22.6%	33.0%	50.0%

Table 9: Where teachers received online learning professional development, Boise State, *Going Virtual! 2010*

However, a small number of university teacher preparation programs are beginning to develop certificate programs in online teaching and other continuing education options. The University of California-San Diego¹⁴ offers a six-course certification program; Boise State offers a graduate certificate in K-12 online teaching; the University of Illinois¹⁵ offers a certification geared toward online teaching in grades 9-20; and the University of Wisconsin¹⁶ offers an online certification in online teaching. In addition, Wayne State University, Arizona State University, Georgia Southern University, Georgia State University, University of California-Irvine, University of Florida, and Valdosta State University also offer training specific to online and/or blended learning, among other programs around the country.¹⁷ These programs typically address online instructional design, an introduction to technology used in online learning, building community, and promoting interactivity. Most also offer a practicum; the program at Wayne State has partnered with Illinois Virtual School and Florida Virtual School to allow its students to do their practicum through one of those online programs. However, these programs are clearly the exception, and most teacher prep programs are not focused on online or blended learning.

The Virtual High School Global Consortium was one of the first online providers to develop extensive training specific to online teaching. It has partnered with six higher education institutions around the country to develop five best practices courses that are offered for graduate credit.

NCAA accreditation of online courses

In June 2010, the NCAA announced it would no longer accept the independent study courses offered by Brigham Young University's (BYU) or American School's online programs.¹⁸ This was followed by the announcement that it would no longer accept credit recovery courses taught without a teacher, including those from NovaNET. In response, Pearson launched an initiative to ensure that schools deliver NovaNET to future college athletes through a program that meets these new rules. The initiative guides a school not to allow students to test out of subjects, to have each course led by a teacher, and to encourage student-teacher interaction.¹⁹ Other providers have had courses approved by the NCAA, and the NovaNET example is simply one among many.

¹⁴ <http://extension.ucsd.edu/programs/index.cfm?vaction=certdetail&vcertificateid=132&vstudyareaid=8> <http://extension.ucsd.edu/programs/index.cfm?vAction=certDetail&vCertificateID=132&vStudyAreaID=8>

¹⁵ <http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/courses/students/mot.asp>

¹⁶ <http://www.uwstout.edu/soe/profdev/elearningcertificate.cfm>

¹⁷ Some of these programs were identified through Michael Barbour's blog, Virtual School Meanderings, which profiled pre-service teacher training options in a series in summer 2011. <http://virtualschooling.wordpress.com/2011/08/02/certificate-series/>

¹⁸ BYU and NCAA eligibility standards; retrieved September 27, 2011, <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/06/09/byu>

¹⁹ Pearson and NCAA eligibility information; retrieved September 27, 2011, <http://www.pearsoned.com/blog/2010/09/21/pearson-collaborates-with-high-schools-to-ensure-nontraditional-courses-meet-new-ncaa-policy-for-division-i-athletes/>

The NCAA guidelines are fairly clear, but not well understood. Students enrolling for the first time at an NCAA Division I or Division II college or university must have their academic credentials certified by the NCAA Eligibility Center²⁰ in order to practice, compete, or receive athletically related financial aid. To be eligible, students must earn a qualifying “core course” grade point average (based on a predetermined number of core courses) and a qualifying test score.

In order for a course to be considered core:

- The course must be a recognized academic course and qualify for high school graduation credit in one or more of the following areas: English, mathematics, natural/physical science, social science, foreign language, or nondoctrinal religion/philosophy;
- The course must be four-year college preparatory;
- Mathematics must be at the level of Algebra I or higher;
- The course must be taught by a qualified instructor; and
- The course must be taught at or above the high school’s regular academic level.

Courses taught through nontraditional means (including online, software-based, independent study, individualized instruction, correspondence, and other similar courses) must also satisfy the following requirements:

- The instructor and the student have ongoing access to and regular action with one another for purposes of teaching, evaluating, and providing assistance to the student throughout the duration of the course;
- The student’s work (e.g., exams, papers, assignments) is available for evaluation and validation;
- Evaluation of the student’s work is conducted by the appropriate academic authorities in accordance with the high school’s established academic policies;
- The course includes a defined time period for completion; and
- The course is acceptable for any student and is placed on the high school transcript.

Requirements for nontraditional courses for Division I became effective for coursework completed August 1, 2010, or after. For Division II, the requirements for nontraditional courses for any student first enrolling August 1, 2011, and after are effective regardless of course completion date.

Status of military acceptance of online school graduates

At a time when “distance learning” meant correspondence courses handled largely through snail mail, the Department of Defense (DOD) determined that distance learning graduates were less likely to complete their first term of service successfully. As a result, DOD relegated distance learning graduates to Tier 2 status, typically given to alternative high school and GED credentials. This status was then limited to 2%-10% of new recruits, depending on the branch of the military.²¹

As an increasing number of high school graduates are coming from online schools, and as many post-secondary institutions have online courses and degrees, the military’s policy has come under scrutiny. In June 2011, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools and iNACOL released a statement describing the problem and advocating for a policy change.²²

²⁰ www.eligibilitycenter.org provides information on which courses have been reviewed by the NCAA Eligibility Center. Specific updates regarding nontraditional coursework review can be found in the “Additional Information” box for each school and program.

²¹ The Department of Defense policy is available at http://prhome.defense.gov/mpp/ACCESSION%20POLICY/poprep2004/enlisted_accessions/recruiting.html

²² Support Defense Authorization Provision on Ensuring Parity for ALL Public School Graduates; National Alliance for Public Charter Schools and iNACOL; <http://www.inacol.org/advocacy/docs/SupportDefenseAuthorizationProvisiononEnsuringParityforAllPublicSchoolGraduates.pdf>

In summer 2011, both the House and the Senate filed markups for the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2012 that included a recommendation to change this policy. The Senate markup included the following recommendation: “Requires that graduates of secondary school programs that comply with State education laws be considered the same as graduates of traditional secondary schools for the purposes of qualifying for recruitment and enlistment in the armed forces.”²³

As of September 2011, the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2012 has not yet passed.²⁴

Online course graduation requirements

As of September 2011 three states have graduation requirements that include a requirement that students complete an online course: Alabama, Florida, and Michigan. West Virginia has a State Board of Education rule that recommends an online learning requirement for school districts (see Table 10). Idaho appears to be close to adding an online learning requirement; a task force created by the legislature has recommended that a requirement be adopted. New Mexico’s SB0561 (2007) includes a requirement that “at least one of the 24 units required for graduation must be an Advanced Placement, honors, dual enrollment or distance learning course.”

State	Online learning requirement	Year effective	Notes
Alabama	“...beginning with the ninth grade class of 2009-10, students shall be required to complete one online/technology enhanced course or experience in either a core course ... or an elective with waivers being possible for students with a justifiable reason(s).”	Graduating class of 2013	Alabama State Code, 290-3-1-.02-(8)(d)4; http://www.alabamaadministrativecode.state.al.us/docs/ed/McWord290-3-1.pdf
Florida	At least one course ... must be completed through online learning. However, an online course taken during grades 6 through 8 fulfills this requirement. A student who is enrolled in a full-time or part-time virtual instruction program meets this requirement.	Beginning with students entering grade 9 in 2011	CS/CS/HB7197 (2011) added Section 6. Paragraph (c) to subsection (2) of 893 section 1003.428: http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?FileName=_h7197er.docx&DocumentType=Bill&BillNumber=7197&Session=2011
Michigan	In order to graduate from high school, students must meet the online course or learning experience requirements as follows: “(i.) Has successfully completed at least 1 online course or learning experience that is presented online, as defined by the department, (ii) The pupil’s school district or public school academy has integrated an online experience through the high school curriculum...”	Students entering grade 8 in 2006	ESB 1124 Sec. 1278a (1) (b) (i and ii) http://www.michigan.gov/documents/PA_123_and_124_159920_7.pdf
West Virginia	The State Board of Education recommends that all students complete an online learning experience during grade 9-12. The Office of Instructional Technology in the Department of Education has developed guidance.	Students entering 9 th grade in 2008	Title 126, Legislative Rule, State Board of Education, Series 42, Assuring the Quality of Education: Regulations for Education Programs (2510), page 19; http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/p2510.pdf

Table 10: Online learning requirements

In addition, some school districts are considering adding—or have implemented—online learning graduation requirements. These include Memphis City Schools, Putnam County Schools (TN), and Sugar-Salem High School in Idaho.

²³ Senate markup of 2012 National Defense Authorization Act; retrieved September 27, 2011, <http://armed-services.senate.gov/press/NDAA%20FY12%20Markup%20Press%20Release.pdf>

²⁴ National Defense Authorization Act information; retrieved September 27, 2011, <http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/ndaa-home?p=ndaa>

Quality, accountability, and research

With the growth of online and blended learning, quality and accountability are becoming as important as equity and access. This section explores several emerging quality and accountability issues.

Does online learning work?²⁵

Educators and policymakers often ask the same question about any technology integrated in teaching and learning: does this technology work? This question is important because it validates the effort and costs of implementing the technology. K-12 online and blended learning follows this historical trend. Researchers have been interested in determining whether students can learn online or how instructors teach in such an environment.

Research from K-12 online and blended courses and schools have provided over a decade's worth of evidence to suggest that *teaching and learning online can work*. Studies that have shown positive outcomes include the 2009 U.S. Department of Education meta-analysis²⁶ (which included a large proportion of studies looking at post-secondary students) and the meta-analysis done by NCREL in 2004.²⁷ In addition, data from and studies of specific schools have shown positive outcomes. For example, Florida Virtual School received a positive review of its performance by the Florida TaxWatch Center in 2008.²⁸ The rating was based on extensive research into student achievement, demographics, AP scores, and enrollment information. Virtual High School Global Consortium reports that 63% of students who take VHS Advanced Placement® course exams get a score of 3 or better, compared to a national average of 58%.²⁹

However, just because online learning *can* work does not mean online learning *will* work. As with traditional brick-and-mortar education, there are many high-quality schools, and many that fall short. Many online teachers are well-trained, while others are not. Many online courses are steeped in current pedagogy, while others are not. Determining which courses, schools, and instructional models are creating positive outcomes remains a challenge for all educators and policymakers, but particularly for online providers because they can attract students from across entire states and therefore have the potential to work at a larger scale than most physical schools.

This finding is not unique to K-12 online and blended learning. Researchers studying educational technologies, ranging from educational radio and television³⁰ to asynchronous online environments,³¹ have all found evidence of relevant studies that have shown both positive and negative outcomes. Researchers often refer to this as *no significant difference*. In some cases,

²⁵ Dr. Rick Ferdig of Kent State University has explored the research into effectiveness of online learning. This section is based on his work, see <http://www.ferdig.com>.

²⁶ Means, B., Toyama, Y., Murphy, R., Bakia, M., & Jones, K. (2009). *Evaluation of evidence-based practices in online learning: A meta-analysis and review of online learning studies*; <http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/tech/evidence-based-practices/finalreport.pdf>

²⁷ Cavanaugh, C. S., Gillan, K. J., Kromrey, J., Hess, M., & Blomeyer, R. (2004). *The Effects of Distance Education on K-12 Student Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis*; <http://faculty.education.ufl.edu/cathycavanaugh/docs/EffectsDLonK-12Students1.pdf>

²⁸ Florida TaxWatch. *Final Report: A Comprehensive Report of Florida Virtual School*; www.scribd.com/doc/47743217/Florida-Virtual-School-Report

²⁹ <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/AP-Score-Distribution-All-Subjects-2011.xls>

³⁰ Salomon G. & Gardner, H. (1986). The computer as educator: Lessons from television research. *Educational Researcher*, 15 (1), 13-19.

³¹ Swan, K. (2003). Learning effectiveness: what the research tells us. In J. Bourne & J. C. Moore (Eds) *Elements of Quality Online Education, Practice and Direction*. Needham, MA: Sloan Center for Online Education, 13-45.

the studies might essentially be comparing apples and oranges; in other cases, there are both good and bad examples of the actual implementation. Therefore, the challenge accepted by many researchers is to change the question from “does online work?” to “**under what conditions does online learning work?**”³² Some of the studies and findings in this category are noted in Table 11.

Finding	Citation
K-12 online learning can act as a successful path for graduation of students who were expelled or who had dropped out.	Ferdig, R.E. (2010). Understanding the role and applicability of K-12 online learning to support student dropout recovery efforts. Lansing, MI: Michigan Virtual University.
K-12 online instructors practice skills that are: a) similar to those practiced by K-12 face-to-face instructors; and b) similar to those practiced by post-secondary online instructors; but c) also practice skillsets that are unique to teaching and learning online at the K-12 level.	DiPietro, M., Ferdig, R. E., Black, E.W. & Preston, M. (2008). Best practices in teaching K-12 online: Lessons learned from Michigan Virtual School teachers. <i>Journal of Interactive Online Learning</i> , 7(1), 10-35.
Many K-12 online and blended schools/programs are woefully unprepared for the collection and analyses of data that is required to truly inform and transform practice.	Ferdig, R.E. & Cavanaugh, C. (Eds.) (2011). <i>Lessons learned from virtual schools: Experiences and recommendations from the field</i> . Vienna, VA: International Association for K-12 Online Learning.
Professional development (PD) for K-12 online instructors has shown promise when instruction is not just focused on pedagogical content knowledge, but also on building a community of learners who can examine their practice in process.	Ferdig, R.E. (2010). Continuous quality improvement through professional development for online K-12 instructors. Lansing, MI: Michigan Virtual University.

Table 11: Online learning research

Data mining versus research

The preceding section might suggest that we believe that more research is needed into online and blended learning to determine what works. Undoubtedly, we need to better understand under the conditions in which online learning works. When we hear the term “research,” however, we think of multi-year studies, with large numbers of randomly selected students using specific content or technology that is being tested. The students are then assessed and results compared to a control group of students who did not use the content, technology, or teaching method. This is the type of research that is referred to in, for example, the meta-analysis done by the U.S. Department of Education referenced above.

Such research takes many years and a high level of funding, and when complete, it is often limited in the results that can be reported. Even when results are statistically significant, they are—or should be—confined to the specific set of content, technologies, or teaching strategies being tested.

With online schools in existence for more than a decade in some states, and with students having taken millions of online courses and full-time online students having taken hundreds of thousands of state assessments, mining existing data represents a more powerful and less expensive approach to determining what works. Indeed, the data are beginning to emerge—with mixed findings for online schools.

Emerging data

Taken as a whole, the data suggest that online learning can be beneficial, but there are quite a few poorly performing schools. Each data set must be examined independently of others, because few of the data sets look at outcomes based on student growth. Instead, many results compare online schools to state averages. Because many online schools work with students at risk of dropping out, or who have dropped out and are now trying a final option, it is not a surprise that these students’ test scores would be below state averages. A better approach measures student growth—the learning that a student achieves in a given time period (usually a school year).

³² Ferdig, R.E. (August, 2010). Continuous quality improvement through professional development for online K-12 instructors. Keynote presentation at Michigan Virtual University’s fifth annual Collaboration of the Minds conference. East Lansing, MI.

Minnesota released an audit of online schools in September 2011. The report’s findings include:

- “While the number of course registrations has quadrupled over the last few years, full-time online students have become less likely to finish the courses they start.
- Full-time online students dropped out much more frequently than students in general.
- Compared with all students statewide, full-time online students had significantly lower proficiency rates on the math MCA-II but similar proficiency rates in reading.
- Students enrolled full time in online schools made less progress on the math MCA-II than public school students overall; for the reading MCA-II assessment, these online students generally kept pace with traditional students in one of the two years analyzed and not the other.”³³

Percentage of Students Proficient in Math and Reading on the MCA-II Tests, Spring 2010				
	Math		Reading	
	# Students	% Proficient	# Students	% Proficient
Grades 3-8				
All 3-8 grade students	365,619	68%**	365,086	72%
Full-time online students	1,237	52%	1,233	74%
Grades 10-11*				
All 10-11 grade students	66,725	41%**	65,764	75%
Full-time online students	385	16%	407	72%

*Students are tested in math in grade 11 and reading in grade 10. The entries in the number of students columns reflect only the students tested in the given subject.
 **The difference between the percentage of online students and all students (of the same test and school year) is statistically significant at the 5% level.

Table 12: Minnesota full-time online student proficiency levels

The audit is especially notable because it looks not only at student proficiency (Table 12), but also at student growth (Table 13).

While the Minnesota audit is the most recent, extensive, and comprehensive study (although it looks at data from the 2009-10 school year), other examples are illustrative as well. A report examining Pennsylvania’s cyber charter schools found that “Cyber charter students have significantly smaller gains in reading and math than those of their traditional public school peers,” and that, “In every subgroup with significant effects, cyber charter performance is lower than the brick and mortar performance.”³⁴ The Colorado Department of Education’s annual report noted “achievement among online students consistently lags behind those of non-online students, even after controlling for grade levels and various student characteristics. This is true when using either scale scores or proficiency levels as the outcome measure.”³⁵ In California, the director of California Learning Resource Network has studied online schools there and found similar results.³⁶

These findings are particularly concerning because it is not clear that students and parents are choosing schools that demonstrate better results. Analysis by Education Sector of Ohio’s eCommunity schools, for example, found no correlation between schools’ performance index ratings and enrollment levels (Figure 9).³⁷

³³ Office of the Legislative Auditor, State of Minnesota. *Evaluation Report: K-12 Online Learning*; retrieved September 26, 2011, <http://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/2011/k12oll.htm> The tables and notes are from this source.

³⁴ *Charter School Performance in Pennsylvania*, Center for Research on Education Outcomes, http://credo.stanford.edu/reports/PASStateReport_20110404_FINAL.pdf Additional information about the tables is provided in the audit.

³⁵ Colorado Department of Education, Unit of Online Learning, *Summary Report of the Operations and Activities of Online Programs in Colorado*, June 1, 2011; retrieved June 13, 2011, <http://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/index.htm>.

³⁶ See Brian Bridges’ blog at <http://bbridges51.edublogs.org/>

³⁷ Education Sector blog series on Ohio eSchools; retrieved September 12, 2011, <http://www.quickanded.com/tag/ohio-e-schools-blog-series>

Improving performance

Online and blended learning providers recognize the shortcomings demonstrated by these data. They point out that existing state policies and data systems are not yet good at differentiating results between providers in a way that can reward positive outcomes. The result may be a situation where online and blended learning are common, but have not transformed education or improved outcomes to the extent they are capable.

Operators of full-time online schools also argue that the realities of their student populations make delivering consistently strong test scores particularly difficult. Even leaving aside the learning challenges that many students bring with them—challenges that may not be apparent in demographic data, but that are as real as the stories of prior failure and frustration that online school staff hear daily—the sheer numbers of new students enrolling in online schools each year make the task that much trickier. New students typically take more than a year to adjust to a different and more personalized school structure. They may also not be counted in the state’s growth measures until they have been in the school for at least two testing cycles.

	# of Full-Time Online Students	Test Score Growth		
		Low	Med	High
Math				
2008-09				
Full-time online students	695	38%*	45%	17%
All students	282,373	26%	47%	26%
2009-10				
Full-time online students	814	39%*	42%	19%
All students	286,581	26%	47%	27%
Reading				
2008-09				
Full-time online students	701	35%*	42%	23%
All students	281,760	29%	43%	28%
2009-10				
Full-time online students	812	27%	41%	32%
All students	286,011	29%	43%	28%

NOTES: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding. Low growth means the student’s position relative to all other students in the same grade was worse than in the previous year; medium growth means the student made about the same amount of progress as other students; and high growth means the student’s position relative to other students in the same grade was better than in the previous year.

*The difference between the percentage of online students and all students (of the same test and school year) is statistically significant at the 5% level.

Table 13: Minnesota full-time online student growth results

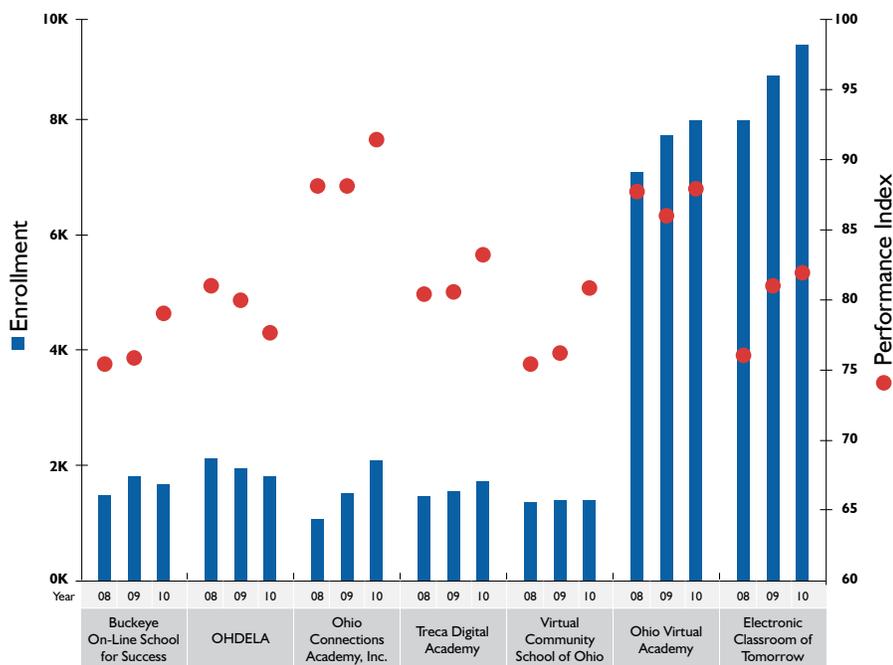


Figure 9: Ohio eCommunity school enrollment and performance

For example, one Minnesota online school has documented that well over 50% of the students tested each year from 2007-2010 were in their first year at the school. A truer picture of the academic impact of online schools might focus on students who have been enrolled for a year or more.

At the same time, high-quality providers recognize that online schools possess unique tools to address student achievement and are working to counterbalance the challenges they face. Chief among these tools is data. While states and school districts race to invest in large-scale data systems and new regimens of formative and iterative assessments, leading online programs already have these in place. A well-designed online curriculum delivered on a robust platform delivers a steady stream of student performance data, which achievement-focused online schools can use strategically to improve student performance.

For example, Connections Education has recently developed a teacher data-analysis tool that correlates each assessment in a lesson with a key overall learning objective—not just the specific bit of content knowledge in that lesson or course, but the overarching learning objective against which the student ultimately will be measured on the state test. On any given day, a teacher can see where each student stands in mastering the necessary objectives and intervene in a targeted and measurable way. The principal is tasked with ensuring that the staff makes frequent and consistent use of this data, combining it with effective interventions to improve performance.

Full-time online providers also are looking forward to implementation of the Common Core State Standards, and the assessments being developed to measure mastery of the Common Core. One of the challenges all schools face—whether brick and mortar, online, or blended—is the persistent mismatch between state curriculum standards and state assessments. The Common Core promises not just consistency in standards among states, but a deep correlation between what should be taught, what will be tested, and how.

Toward improved accountability systems

Recent data demonstrate the variability in online schools and establish the need for improvement in many schools. The data also demonstrate shortcomings in current accountability systems, and especially, the limitations of applying present accountability systems to situations where students can choose online courses (not just schools) from multiple providers.

The current K-12 education accountability chain—built during the pre-digital age—starts at the school level, goes through the district, and up to the state. Each state differs in the level of control afforded to districts, but many states defer to the districts—overseen most frequently by local school boards—on most operational decisions. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates that states dictate changes to schools and districts that fail to meet outcomes standards, but in practice the changes forced by states on districts have been limited.

Charter schools have their own accountability chain. Accountability in a charter system starts with the school and flows up to the charter school authorizer, which may be a district, state-level authorizing entity, or another type of organization. Authorizers may, in turn, be accountable to a higher-level body. For example, state authorizing bodies are responsible to their boards, which may be appointed by elected officials.

In each of these cases, the accountability chain starts with the school leadership, moves up to the district or authorizer and then perhaps up to the state. Selecting teachers, instructional materials, technology, and other system inputs falls to schools or districts. These tasks may be based on state standards (for content), adoption requirements (for textbooks), or union contracts (for teachers).

The accountability chain changes with online learning because it introduces new types of providers into the mix, and because online learning is allowing students increased choices among schools and courses. Student choice is, in turn, taking some responsibility away from the districts, thereby disrupting the accountability chain. In addition, identifying the new locus of accountability is not an easy task because of the many different types of providers. Education providers range from full-time virtual schools, which create their own content and provide teachers, software, and student support, to content providers that sell, among other services, individual course content. Course operators may or may not be the same entity as the content provider, and they may or may not be a school.

Online charter schools, as well as full-time online schools run by districts, fit into the existing accountability chain moderately well. Because these are full-time schools, their students take state assessments, and the schools are graded by the same mechanisms as other public schools in the state.

Still, even for these full-time schools, there are problems with the current accountability system. Some of these problems, of course, apply to all schools, whether online or brick and mortar:

- Students and schools are graded on a subset of grade levels and course subjects via assessments given once per year. The extent to which the results of a small set of annual assessments are a measure of actual student learning is debatable, and it is clear that some aspects of student learning are not measured.
- Few states have well-established assessments based on growth models, making it hard to measure accurately the progress of students performing well below grade level, including many students with disabilities and English language learners.
- Depending on one's point of view, the accountability measures may be too harsh, or rarely enforced. NCLB allows states to reform or close persistently low-performing schools, but in many cases such schools remain open.³⁸

A second set of stumbling blocks is specific to online schools, or exacerbated by elements of online schools:

- Many online students have high mobility, meaning that assessments that measure groups of students from year to year—but that don't measure individual student growth—are even less accurate for online schools than they are for traditional schools.
- In some cases, districts have the ability to designate an online program as a subset of another school, or of the entire district. This means that individual school results cannot be easily measured because data are not disaggregated at the online school level.
- Because online schools often serve students whose needs have not been met by traditional schools, they are penalized in states that do not accurately measure student growth.

Other online and blended providers, those that are not schools, are an even worse fit for the current accountability system. Typically, school districts contract with these providers, pay for their products, and agree to give credit to students who complete their courses. But who should be accountable for student learning: the district or the provider?

In the pre-digital world, nobody would have suggested that the textbook publisher should have been responsible for student results, for two reasons. First, the textbook was seen as a resource used by teachers, and nobody thought that the book would or should have a greater impact on outcomes than the teacher. Second, the publishers never provided teachers, so the line between content and instruction was clear.

³⁸ Thomas B. Fordham Institute, *The Scarcity of Turnarounds and Shutdowns in Both Charter and District Sectors*, retrieved September 26, 2011, <http://www.edexcellence.net/publications-issues/publications/are-bad-schools-immortal.html>

Online course providers blur the line by providing different choices than existed previously. Many providers will offer the content with or without an organizing technology (the learning management system), and with or without an online teacher. These options raise the question of which entity should be responsible for student outcomes when students are choosing online courses at the single course level.

While many states are addressing accountability for online and blended programs in different ways, no model has yet emerged as a new standard. This is, in part, because accountability systems must be based on the types of online learning providers in a state. Alabama, with one main provider (ACCESS), faces different accountability issues than states such as Utah and Florida, which are allowing students to choose from multiple providers at the course level.

In our view, accountability is the responsibility of educational providers—including schools, teachers, producers of online content, and others—to students, families, and other stakeholders, to produce positive student outcomes. In the virtual sphere, accountability should have the following features:

1. Accountability should be based on outcomes, not on inputs.

While quality may be addressed via inputs (such as teacher credentials, student-teacher ratios, course design, etc.),³⁹ accountability should be based on student results. In addition, outcomes should be based on student growth, so that providers are accountable for the amount of learning that happens in a course, instead of being penalized or rewarded for teaching students who are behind or ahead of their peers.

2. Data from online and blended schools must be disaggregated from overall district numbers.

In some states and for some schools, outcomes cannot be assessed because the results are encompassed within district-wide numbers that are not disaggregated. Proper oversight requires that data from online and blended schools be readily available.

3. Accountability must exist at the course level if students are choosing courses among multiple providers.

The accountability model required under NCLB uses state-level assessments in a relatively small number of subjects to measure student and school success. The transformation to the digital age and the possibility that students will take courses from multiple providers means that the “accountability unit” must shift from the school and district level to the course level.

Online and blended courses can mix and match teachers, content, and technology in new and unprecedented ways. In a traditional school, there is no question where accountability lies: with the school and, secondarily, with individual teachers. Online courses raise new accountability questions because a single provider may provide the content and teacher, or provide just the content. Similarly, the provider may work through the district, which selects the provider, or be chosen directly by the student. Although this confusion may make it difficult to identify the responsible entity or entities, it must be done.

³⁹ Quality in online courses, teaching, and programs has been extensively addressed by the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL). Quality standards are available at www.inacol.org.

Putting principles into action

Putting these principles into practice is a challenging undertaking. The accountability system would require many parts that must work together to create, track, and report on student data. The required elements of a system based on the principles above include:

Adopt the Common Core State Standards and the related assessments when they become available.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. Initial standards have been developed; more than 40 states have adopted them as of fall 2011. Widespread adoption of the Common Core allows providers to focus on developing the best instructional strategies for each course, instead of worrying about how to demonstrate alignment with standards across all the states. It also allows for cost savings, as courses can be developed once and used by students across the country.

Creation of the Common Core is a first step toward common assessments. Two consortia have been awarded funding through the Race to the Top competition to design new assessment systems based on the Common Core: SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of College and Careers (PARCC).⁴⁰ While these assessments will not be available for at least a couple of years, states should adopt them when they become available.

Adopting the Common Core and the common assessments will yield benefits to states, but this is just a first step toward creating an online learning accountability system.

Create end-of-course exams to supplement common assessment efforts, ensuring that outcomes from as many courses as possible can be assessed.

Many states already are moving toward creation of end-of-course exams; these efforts should continue and be expanded to provide course-specific outcome data until national assessments are available, and then to fill the gaps for courses that are not covered by national assessments. End-of-course exams should cover, at a minimum, science, math, English, and history courses.

Allow end-of-course exams or other course-level assessments to be taken online upon completion of the course, not just once near the end of the school year.

Students should be able to take course-level exams soon after they finish the course. The current approach of one testing period per year does not mesh well with a system in which students control the timing of their education. The most economical way to provide exams at multiple times throughout the year is to provide the assessments online, perhaps in a proctored environment.

Assess outcomes based on student growth.⁴¹

Outcomes must be based on the learning that takes place for each student, not on group averages. Student growth should be assessed at the completion of each course. This might require that a formative assessment be given at the start of each course, or student growth could be based upon the results of the student's assessment results from the previous year (for subjects in which the course progression allows, for example math).

⁴⁰ ETS, Common Core assessment information; retrieved September 26, 2011, <http://www.ets.org/k12/commonassessments>

⁴¹ An in-depth discussion of types of student growth models is beyond the scope of this paper. For more information about student growth models see *Growth Models and Accountability: A Recipe for Remaking ESEA*, Education Sector, 2011.

Share information so students, parents, teachers, and program administrators can make educated decisions about providers and courses.

Finally, the emerging system that aggregates multiple providers must make plentiful and transparent information available to all stakeholders: students, parents, educators, and policymakers. The information could be published in an annual report or on a website updated throughout the year. Providers would be listed, along with the courses they offer, and the ratings they and their courses have been given by the state. Several states already have provided examples of how reporting might work. For example, the Colorado Department of Education Unit of Online Learning (<http://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning>) has published an annual report showing results of all online schools, and the Wyoming Switchboard Network (<http://wyomingswitchboard.net>) provides a website that shows online courses and providers. Neither of these examples is as robust as such sites will need to be, but each provides an example and a framework for providing such information.

The long view: accountability in the digital age⁴²

While the accountability system envisioned above will take years to implement, it should be seen as an interim step. In the long term, digital education holds promise for completely transforming accountability in numerous ways. Key elements of education in the digital learning age include the following components:

Digital education allows for creation and disaggregation of data.

Online learning providers already track student achievement and disaggregate student outcomes to the levels of specific courses—or even units in courses—and teachers. Because learning software utilized in online classrooms regularly tracks student activity, much more is known about students' learning patterns in the online environment than in the traditional classroom. For example, online math teachers can see how long it took each student to answer a specific problem or type of problems. Online history teachers can tally how often students participate in online discussions, or if students turn in all assignments and take all assessments. All of these data points, and many others, are readily accessible to the online teacher. With each data point recorded by the software, the information remains long after a teacher's recollection of a classroom discussion has faded. These data are already being created in online courses, but most schools and all states do not have the ability to collect, analyze, and report on the data in a meaningful way.

As more courses move to online and blended learning environments, larger quantities of data will become available.

If state data systems synch with student information systems and learning management systems, the data that will be created as large numbers of students move online will hold immense value. In a given year, for example, hundreds of thousands of students will take Algebra 1, and in the future many of those students will take a course with an online component. If data systems are built to track outcomes down to a unit or topic level, we will know which topics students have the most difficulty with, and which providers' approaches are best—and worst—to address challenging topics.

⁴² Bror Saxberg of Kaplan, who is among the leading thinkers on assessment issues, was particularly helpful in formulating this section.

Student learning data will eventually replace state assessments.

Assessments are a proxy for learning; no test measures every element of learning that happens in a course. With extensive data available, true student outcomes will be demonstrated, making high-stakes tests less important—or perhaps eliminating the need for such tests entirely. This approach would require that courses be aligned with state standards, or the Common Core, and units of content (“learning objects”) be tagged with the applicable standard. Each standard would have its own mini-assessment that would be given and graded by the learning management system, demonstrating student outcomes at a far more robust level than could ever be shown by high-stakes tests. This system might require development of common mini assessments within courses to confirm student outcomes across districts or perhaps even across states. In addition, to confirm that student outcomes are measured accurately, a statistically valid subset of students from each provider or district might take a proctored course assessment. The use of the embedded mini assessments would be predicated on the proctored high-stakes assessments showing that the mini assessments are valid.

Competency-based pathways⁴³ will build on data to allow students to move through courses at their own pace, while requiring that students demonstrate mastery before moving to the next level. Digital education will force systemic changes in the ways that students progress through school—not just the ways in which educators are held accountable.

Seat time is a poor proxy for student learning, but it remains the key to student progression and funding of schools. This focus on seat time leads struggling students to be socially promoted each year; they find themselves moving into higher grade levels, post-secondary education, or jobs without the necessary prerequisite skills. It also 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, including dropping out of school.

Competency-based pathways flip accountability. Instead of making time the constant and allowing mastery to vary, competency-based approaches make mastery the measure by which students move to the next lesson, unit, course, or grade—regardless of how much time it takes. 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. Online and blended learning also can link competency-based learning to provider accountability.

The decoupling of student funding and advancement from seat time typically happens through one of three ways: waivers, credit flexibility, and systemic redesign. Waivers and credit flexibility are short-term measures by which states are providing districts the flexibility to use a competency-based approach to granting credits and funding students. A complete redesign is necessary in the long term. This redesign will tie student progression and funding to demonstrated student results at the course level, thereby linking true student outcomes with provider accountability.

⁴³ The term “competency-based pathways” is best described in the 2010 publication, *When Success Is the Only Option: Designing Competency-Based Pathways for Next Generation Learning*, written by Chris Sturgis and Susan Patrick for iNACOL. “Competency-based” is the term recognized in federal policy, and “pathways” acknowledge the fact that it would be challenging and unnecessary to replace the entire seat-time system. This section is based on the iNACOL publication.

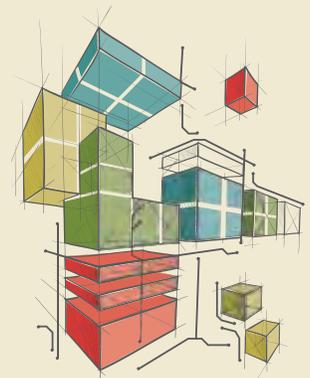
Planning for quality

Data on student outcomes show that online and blended schools can be high-quality, low-quality, or in between (as discussed in the preceding section). These results demonstrate the need for planning and investment by districts, charter schools, and other entities that wish to create an online or blended school, or add an online component to an existing school.

The critical initial question that all educators and stakeholders should ask when starting or expanding an online and blended program is:

What educational goals are we trying to meet?

Those goals may include creating new options for credit recovery and at-risk students, who have not succeeded well in the existing school; increasing opportunities for advanced courses; expanding the school day; enhancing existing classes; and ultimately transforming the instructional model being used with a goal of improving student outcomes. They must be prioritized and grounded in an understanding of existing constraints.



The following pages offer a snapshot of the K-12 online learning provider landscape, and then provide an outline of major strategic planning questions to consider in the early stages of planning. They are organized around four key categories: content, teaching, technology, and operations. Planning questions are explored in the operations section, although the entire section is designed to help with the planning process.

This section is a starting point, with the expectation that education leaders will subsequently use resources that are more detailed. In particular, the iNACOL website “How to start an online learning program”⁴⁴ is a superb source of detailed information that can be used for further planning.

⁴⁴ <http://www.onlineprogramhowto.org/>

The K-12 online learning provider landscape

Paralleling the growth of K-12 online learning has been the growth in private providers offering products and services to online and blended programs. Most online programs use one or more private suppliers to provide the content, software, hardware or other services 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 10 attempts to alleviate confusion by depicting the K-12 online learning provider landscape. The graphic gives 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 Professional Development section highlights key providers that offer professional development in support of online teaching and leadership.

The diagram shows representative companies and does not attempt to offer a complete list of providers in each area. It is a snapshot, as of fall 2011, of a rapidly changing landscape.

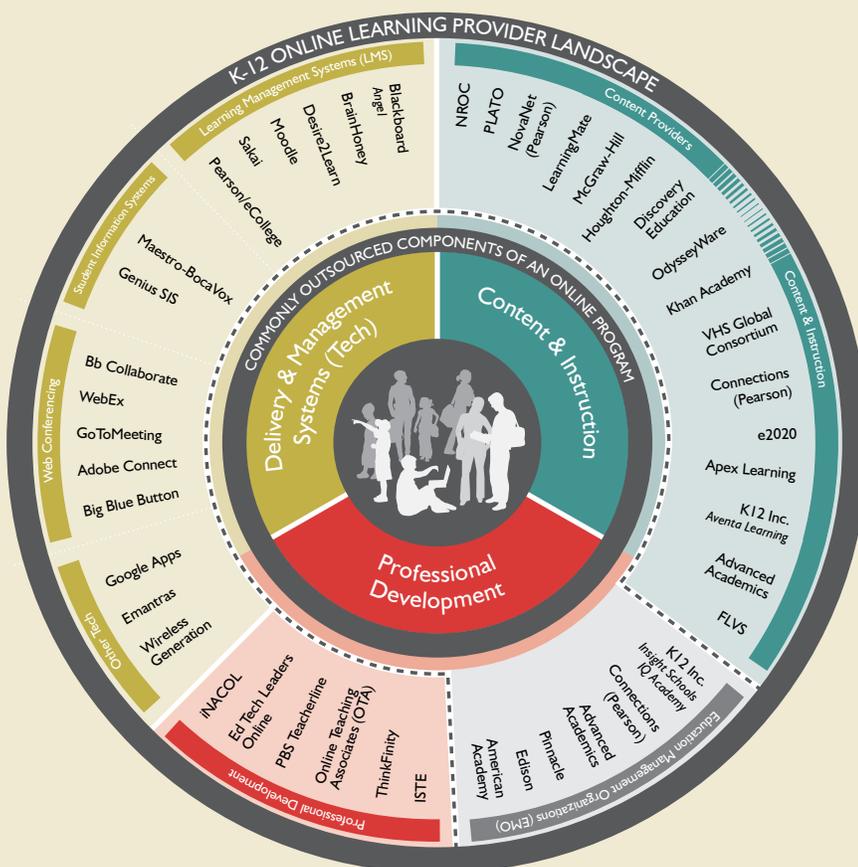


Figure 10: The K-12 online learning landscape

1 ORGANIZED STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

A Include key stakeholders

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What grade levels will be served?
 - Will you offer full-time, supplemental, blended learning, or a mix of all?
- Will your program be self-paced or cohort based?
- Will students be self-directed or will the teacher play a central instructional role?

2 FOUR FOCUS AREAS



CONTENT



TEACHING

DECISIONS TO MAKE

- Content Acquisition**
 - build,
 - buy,
 - license
 - or a mix?
- Content Purchase Options**
 - Comprehensive provider (*full curriculum*)
 - Individual courses
 - Individual learning objects (*units, lessons, or other objects*)
- How do Open Educational Resources fit into the plan?
- How do you evaluate the quality of online content? (*new iNACOL standards*)
- How can you link course quality to student outcomes?
- What are the standards for good online and blended learning instruction?
- How will you plan for teacher recruitment and hiring?
- How do you offer effective PD for experienced online or blended teachers?
- What process will you use to evaluate your online and blended learning teachers?
- What does professional development (PD) look like for first-time online or blended learning teachers?
 - Teacher preparation programs
 - Mentoring
 - PD by discipline
 - In-house or outsourced training?
- What supports are needed for teachers in their first year of online or blended instruction?

3 PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

B Agree on defined educational goals for a targeted group of students

What are your goals in terms of individualizing instruction for students?

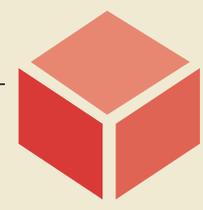
Will you operate on a traditional school calendar?
Will courses be open entry/open exit?



Remember: The goal is student learning



TECHNOLOGY



OPERATIONS

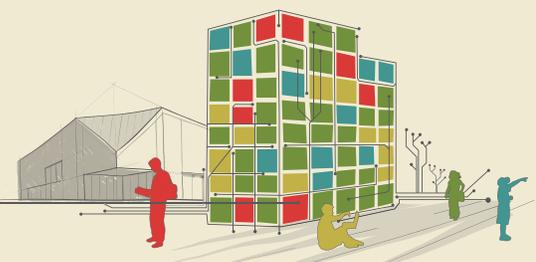
- How will you ensure interoperability between technologies?
- Which LMS approach serves us best?
 - Traditional vs.
 - Open Source
- Internet access?
- End-user devices?
- Do you plan to use mobile devices?
- What features do we need in a Student Information System (SIS) going forward?

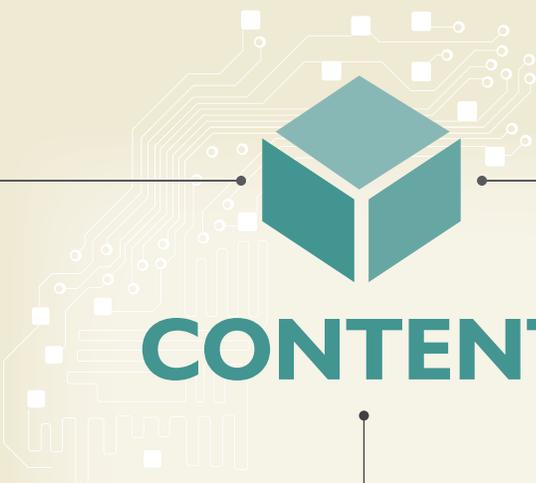
- Have you considered Total Cost of Ownership when making decisions?
- How to create a process to choose the most appropriate Learning Management System (LMS)
- How will our existing SIS work with online and blended learning?
- What is the right synchronous tool?
- PD for technology staff?

- How will you offer student support services unique to online learning?
 - Counseling
 - Enrollment and orientation
 - Technical support
 - Academic support
 - Special Education
 - Learning centers

- What will the budget look like for this new instructional model?
- How will you conduct an evaluation of your program and learning results?
- Have you engaged in a strategic planning process?

How will you organize for the challenge of student recruitment?





CONTENT

Content Acquisition

- build,
- buy,
- license
- or a mix?

Content Purchase Options

- Comprehensive provider *(full curriculum)*
- Individual courses
- Individual learning objects *(units, lessons, or other objects)*

Many content providers offer turnkey solutions pairing a complete online curriculum with technology and services. This comprehensive approach is relatively quick and easy, but can limit options and precludes content ownership.

How do **Open Educational Resources** fit into the plan?

How do you evaluate the **quality of online content**?

Take the new iNACOL National Standards of Quality for Online Courses and localize them for your use. Apply these standards to both content you develop internally or acquire externally.

How can you link course quality to **student outcomes**?

Plan to track courses, units, lessons, and even learning objects to gain in student outcomes. Leverage the longitudinal tracking built into your LMS and SIS to retire ineffective content.

MAKE THE CONNECTION

■ Choosing a mix of build, buy or license increases your options while reducing consistency and restricting costs savings. Make sure you have a vision and leader to champion this effort.

■ Building online content requires staff expertise, the commitment of resources, and an extended time horizon for development, but you maintain control and ownership. Online instructional design is not a skill inherent in all teachers.

■ Buying gives you access to high quality online content with immediate availability, but costs can be high and customization can be limited.

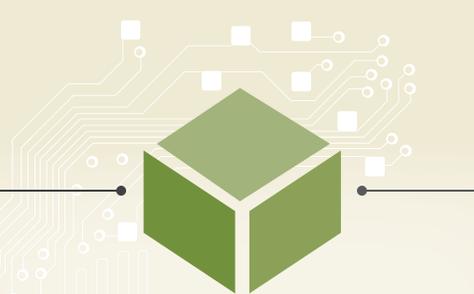
■ Acquiring complete courses offers convenience and an organized instructional approach, while seeking individual learning objects offers course design flexibility along with the responsibility to bring it all together.

■ Free always seems better, but quality can vary and the responsibility for search and retrieval requires dedicated staff time and expertise.

■ Can be an effective component of the content acquisition mix. To best utilize these resources requires a commitment to the community that supports and fosters Creative Commons licensing. You should add if you take.

■ Establish a review committee with various skill sets to examine content, instructional design, online assessment, technology interoperability, and usability. Make it better than the textbook committee.

■ Use formative and summative assessments to demand more from your digital content. Challenge student to maturely rate online content. Engagement counts.



TEACHING

• **What are the standards** for good online and blended learning instruction?

■ Take the new iNACOL National Standards for Quality Online Teaching and localize them for your use. Quantify standards where possible and establish an evaluation rubric for teachers. Help them know what is expected.

• How will you plan for **teacher recruitment and hiring?**

■ Avoid the myth, “any regular classroom teacher is qualified to teach online.” Some teachers will thrive using the new tool set offered online while others will struggle.

• What does **professional development (PD)** look like for first-time online or blended learning teachers?

- Teacher preparation programs
- Mentoring
- PD by discipline
- In-house or outsourced training

■ The first online teaching experience can feel like starting over for many teachers. Push them towards a community of peers to share success strategies and work through tough times. Provide a formal structure, but encourage informal connections.

• What supports are needed for teachers in their **first year of online or blended instruction?**

• How do you offer effective **PD for experienced online or blended teachers?**

■ Most of the teacher activities to support learning are documented in the LMS. Equip and train your administrators to understand online learning so they know good online and blended instruction when they see it. So much better than a brief classroom observation.

• What process will you use to **evaluate** your online and blended learning teachers?

MAKE THE CONNECTION

■ In blended learning environments, commit to instruction that gives students an increased level of control over the time, place, path and pace of their instruction. Help them take responsibility for their learning.

■ Know your program type, academic goals, and targeted student population. Develop a local profile of an excellent online or blended learning teacher. Challenge candidates by using online instructional tools in the hiring process.

■ Consider non-traditional recruitment processes. Offer part-time positions, flexible hours, and telecommuting as incentives. Look outside geographic boundaries for excellent candidates.

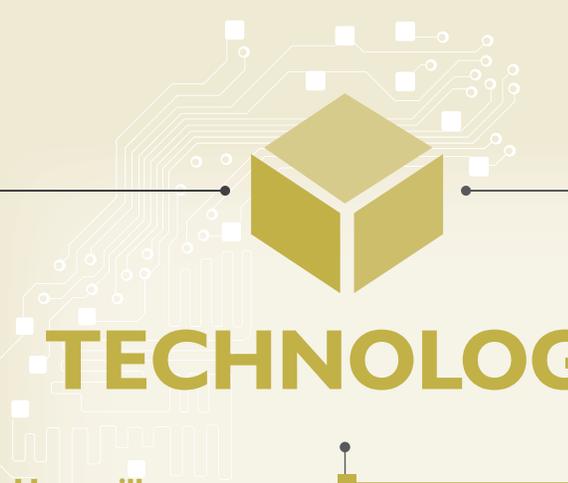
■ Get ahead and have your own required, in-depth, rigorous PD offering available to teachers prior to their first online or blended teaching. Don't rely on teacher preparation programs. Make PD your first thought, not an afterthought.

■ Be willing to look outside your organization for quality online and blended learning PD expertise. Consider organizing by PD discipline. Math teachers unite!

■ Online and blended environments call for teacher as facilitator. Support those who are making a big shift in their instructional style. Help them master the new communications tools and requirements. Communicate, communicate, communicate.

■ After working through that first year or two of online instruction, teachers can move to the next level with topics like: the psychology of online learning, working with at-risk students at a distance, project-based learning online and more. Look outside your organization if you lack the expertise to challenge these online teachers.

■ Work with master teachers to establish a teacher evaluation rubric using nationally accepted standards, combined with local learning goals. Keep this group together to update the expectations based on successful online teaching techniques. Reward excellence.



TECHNOLOGY

How will you ensure interoperability between technologies?

Have you considered **Total Cost of Ownership** when making decisions?

As online and blended learning becomes an essential part of instruction, the need for technologies to seamlessly work together becomes critical. Truly integrated systems save money.

Which **LMS approach** serves us best?

How to create a process to choose the most appropriate Learning Management System (LMS)

Commercial vs.

Open Source

Internet access?

End-user devices?

Do you plan to use mobile devices?

Get ready for a large jump in school-based Internet bandwidth and consider the access issues for all students outside the school building.

Have a plan to support multiple types of end-user devices. Always consider the organization of your instruction and education goals when purchasing any set of end-user devices. Leverage the smart phone that many students have already.

What features do we need in a Student Information System (SIS) going forward?

How will our existing SIS work with online and blended learning?

Engage your SIS provider in a discussion about online and blended learning. Urge them to add features that support the unique nature of online learning. The bell schedule and defined academic terms may no longer apply.

What is the right **synchronous tool**?

PD for technology staff?

MAKE THE CONNECTION

■ Always calculate the indirect and non-budgeted costs associated with the implementation of an online learning technology. Low initial investments can be misleading.

■ Make sure the educational goals of your program drive your LMS choice. Create a review committee of LMS users in your organization to ensure that various use cases are considered.

■ Leveraging the instruction and achievement data gathered by your LMS requires a tight integration with your Student Information System (SIS). Look for solutions that are real-time and require less manual intervention.

■ If you purchase or license content, understanding how your online content will function in each LMS is an important part of the evaluation process. Choosing an LMS that supports the “native” importation of content will save you time and money while taking full advantage of the LMS features.

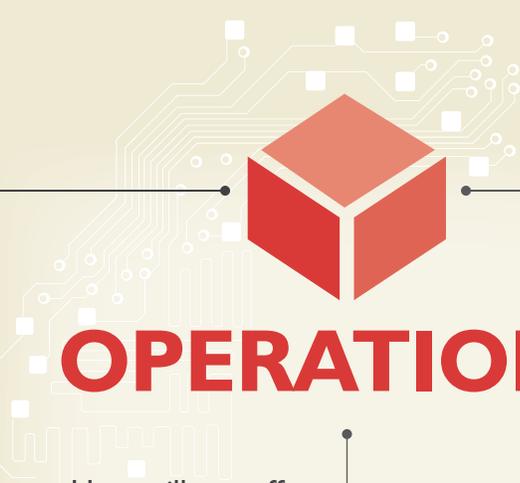
■ The evolved and flexible SIS supports delivery of student data from an LMS to an achievement “dashboard,” easy and cost effective customization for unique blended learning programs, and proven scalability for when your program grows.

■ Generally, a strong technical staff is needed to support an Open Source solution, especially if you choose to customize the LMS for your needs. Always understand the long-term costs of a commercial LMS contract. Programs grow and costs increase.

■ Commercial LMS solutions support organizations with limited technical resources. Understand what support is offered with an LMS contract.

■ Involve instructional leaders in the choice, investigate open-source options, and consider the advantages of effective LMS integration.

■ Establishing a scalable online or blended learning program requires unique technology expertise. Support those who support your quality instruction.



OPERATIONS

How will you offer **student support services** unique to online learning?

- Counseling
- Enrollment and orientation
- Technical support
- Academic support
- Special Education
- Learning centers

■ Involve your guidance counselors in the planning and implementation process for any online or blending learning program. Give them a view into some representative online courses, so they can properly advise students.

What will the **budget** look like for this new instructional model?

■ Be aware of the pitfalls of underfunding a new online or blended learning program in the first year of operation. Investment may be higher than initial revenues. Your best marketing is referrals from successful students in year one.

How will you conduct an **evaluation of your program** and learning results?

■ Start your strategic planning process with a needs assessment to help identify targeted educational goals that will affect student outcomes, especially where you are presented with unique educational challenges.

Have you engaged in a **strategic planning process**?

How will you organize for the challenge of **student recruitment**?

■ Enrollment marketing extends beyond recruitment for full-time online programs into outreach supporting new blended learning initiatives. Change the internal culture that assumes students are geographically bound.

MAKE THE CONNECTION

■ Develop an online orientation course for students to set performance expectations, familiarize the students with the technology and gauge their commitment. Consider successful completion a requirement to gain access to registered courses.

■ Plan ahead to support Special Education students and Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Include special education staff members in professional development that allows them to engage students in support of their online instruction. Support a culture that involves Special Education staff early in the online course.

■ Online learning offers an opportunity to consider new staffing models including teachers, instructional coaches, graders, lab monitors and other roles. Commit the resources needed to hire a dynamic leader.

■ Consider offering non-traditional Learning Center environments in support of full-time or credit recovery online programs. Support student success with access to online courses outside of school buildings and during extended hours.

■ Work your program evaluation into your strategic planning and initial budget. Develop an integrated approach that allows you to monitor student outcomes, stakeholder satisfaction, and the quality of your content and teaching.

■ Plan to use data from LMS to inform your evaluation process. Put the systems in place that support commitment to longitudinal data. Establish transparency to the community through your stakeholder group.

■ Complete a vision, mission, and educational goals exercise and then use the outcome to drive key decisions. Involve diverse stakeholders, and post the results in a prominent place for all to see, don't file them away.

■ If you operate in an environment of choice, make sure you engage in a competitive market analysis. Outreach and marketing to parents and students is more important than ever.

Outlook

Back in the 1960s, activists proclaimed that “the personal is political.” In 2011, is the digital now political?

The politics of digital learning

The growth of online and blended learning draws from many factors, including the recognized need to improve public education opportunities and achievement, the increasing influence of technology on a large variety of fields, and the rise in student options among public schools. Policy and politics undoubtedly have been among the components that have steered the growth as well. At times, the policies and politics have been a clear driving factor.

There are numerous examples of supportive policy driving the growth of online learning. In 2006, for example, Governor Riley of Alabama launched the Alabama ACCESS program to provide online courses to every high school student in the state. He supported this effort with a \$30 million appropriation over three years. Today, every student in Alabama has access to online high school and advanced courses. In Wisconsin, a lawsuit disputing the old policy language defining “schools” as place-bound threatened the continued existence of online schools. The legislature responded by passing a law to fix the policy definition, thus allowing the online schools to continue operating.⁴⁵ At other times, the growth of online learning has been spurred, at least in part, by factors tied to initiatives outside of online education. For example, the rapid growth of Florida Virtual School in recent years was catalyzed by a change in policy that was an indirect outcome of efforts to reduce class size.⁴⁶ In these cases and countless others, political changes led to increased opportunities for students, often catalyzing support from across the political spectrum. While the political process is dynamic and springs from many sources, political will has been a major factor in overcoming the inertia of bureaucracies and others not inclined to embrace new educational possibilities.

We believe online and blended learning truly are non-partisan, non-ideological issues that can unite those whose views may otherwise diverge. Members of both sides of the aisle have a history of supporting online and blended learning. The range of educators and policymakers engaged in online and blended learning suggests that the political views of such education advocates are diverse. Online and blended learning supporters are found in rural, suburban, and urban school districts; in states that are coastal or interior, north or south, and red or blue. Advocates are found in newly-created charter schools and within large school districts that have served students for decades. Online and blended learning educators are innovative, and their innovation is not tied to a particular political outlook. For the gains in online and blended learning to be real and long-lasting, policy changes should be based not on political gain, but on what is best for students. That’s politics with a small “p”—non-partisan, non-electoral and distinctively non-polarizing.

⁴⁵ For discussion of the Wisconsin events see *Keeping Pace 2010*, p. 144

⁴⁶ The funding change that allowed students to choose an online course from FLVS and have funding follow the student was likely a more important reason for the growth of FLVS, but class size issues were part of the history of growth as well.

This spectrum of diverse political views of education innovators is not, however, well-reflected in the recent media narrative or political debates tied to online learning laws in some states. While some online and blended learning policy advances are bipartisan and widely supported, too much of the commentary and high profile legislation in 2011 has been politicized. The polarization around digital learning-related legislation in Idaho, Utah, and Florida serves as a cautionary tale, as does divergent coverage in media outlets such as The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times.

The partisan arguments of 2011 reflect roiling historical battles in education, have very little to do with the web-based delivery model and do not focus on what we believe should be the primary role of digital learning endeavors: to enhance student success.

Making the debate of online learning appear to be a red-state/blue-state battle overwhelms the nuance of what is actually happening in many states. In 2011, the Board of Regents in New York state supported seat-time rule changes on behalf of programs in rural and urban districts in order to provide more online and blended learning opportunities. County offices of education and large districts in California are overcoming inertia at the state level and creating new opportunities. West Virginia's State Board of Education passed a resolution supporting digital learning in a bipartisan manner. All of these changes were done without making online learning a partisan issue. They provide a model for future debates.

A proposal to guide debate

We propose several first principles to guide ongoing discussions:

Outcomes should drive policy: Data from many schools and states show that high quality online and blended learning can provide benefits to students, schools, and states by providing new opportunities that lead to improved student outcomes. Other data demonstrate that a course or school is not necessarily good at improving student outcomes simply because it is online—nor because it is brick and mortar. Student learning outcomes—using individual student growth—should drive policy discussions.

Students need options with accountability: State policies should allow for a wide array of online and blended learning options, while setting high standards of accountability. State policies should go beyond simply providing choices for students and parents to, at a minimum, providing options that are held accountable through performance data.

Teachers (still) matter: Online and blended learning advocates should be clear that online learning requires teachers. The gold standard of quality in any classroom is the teacher. No successful, sustainable, and scalable digital learning exists without teachers. The role of teachers may change in a digital class to look more like a coach, but the need for the teacher does not go away. Digital learning does not represent an alternative to teachers; it presents a new opportunity for innovative teachers seeking new challenges—or seeking to work in a technology-rich environment that is similar to that of most other professions.

It's not about the money: Digital learning does not equate to automatic, substantial cost savings. Every example of a program with cost savings can be countered with a digital learning implementation that has improved student outcomes but did not save money. While there is some promise for costs savings, additional research is needed on costs and various funding models.

Online and blended learning should not be confused with, or associated with, a partisan agenda. A focus on sustainable changes that concentrate on improving student outcomes and educational opportunities is surely not a partisan issue.

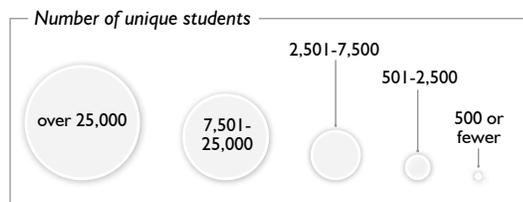
State policy profiles

The state profiles that follow capture an overview of key programs and policies in each state. Major laws that pertain to online learning are detailed, particularly those that passed in 2011. For some states that have had extensive policy activity over several years, the history and additional details are provided on the *Keeping Pace* website at www.kpk12.com.

Each profile starts with a state snapshot of online learning activity as of the 2010-11 school year. On the right side of the snapshot, bulleted text offer items of note about each state.

The left side of the snapshot provides a graphical representation of programs in the state. It shows the following elements:

Program size, in categories, based on the number of unique students in the program



Program type

- State Virtual School
- Charter School
- Post-secondary
- Consortium Program
- District Program (non-charter)

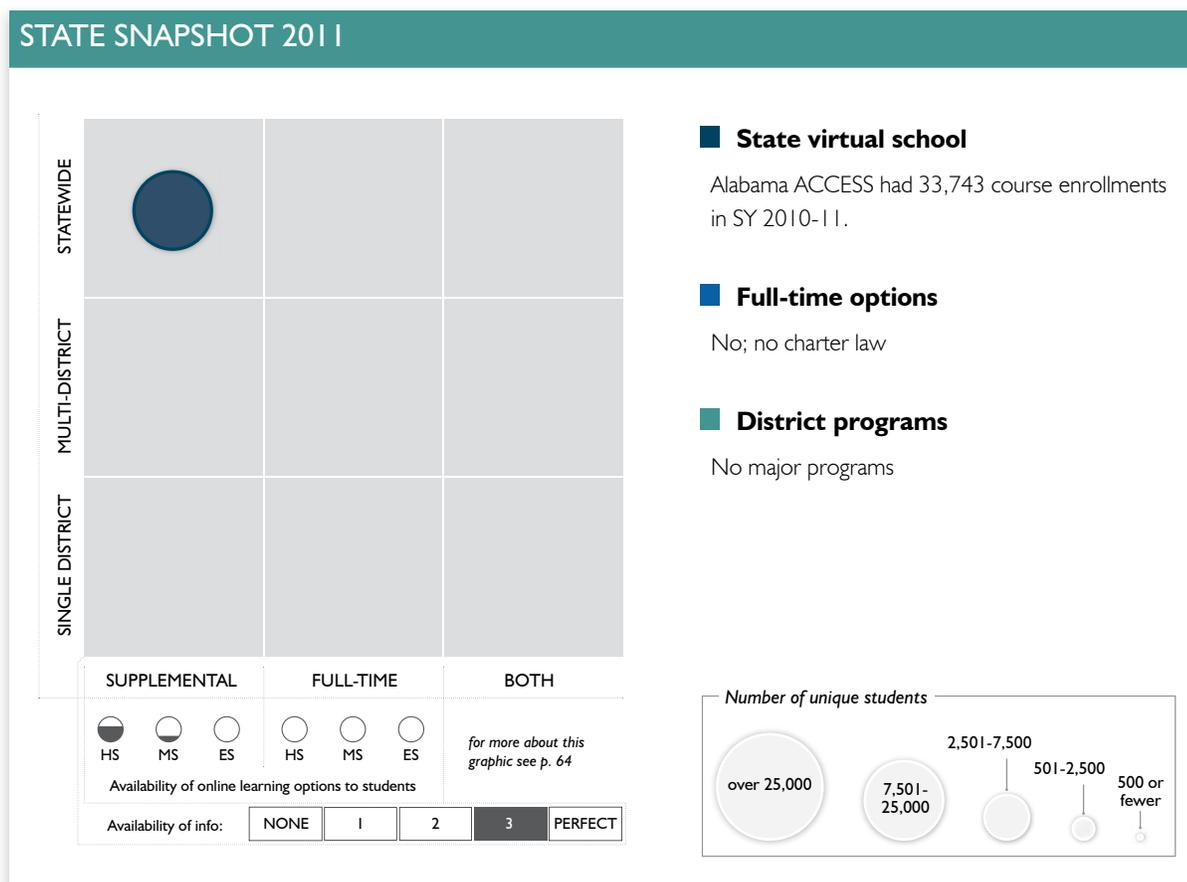
Programs are placed on a grid to show whether they operate in a single district, multiple districts, or statewide, and whether they are supplemental, full-time, or both. Placement within a square of the grid does not convey meaning. The snapshot demonstrates the very different online learning landscapes in different states. Alabama, for example, has one program, which is large and supplemental. Arkansas has two, but both are much smaller. Arizona has many, operating statewide. California has many, but none operating statewide.

Below the grid is an assessment of opportunities available to students across the state. These are the same ratings collected for all states in Table 2; a full explanation of how the ratings were created is given on p. 15.

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

At the bottom of the snapshot is a rating for the availability of information in the state. It acknowledges there is likely activity happening that we don't know about, or for which data are not available. This is our assessment of the "known unknowns." We recognize that our assessments may be off and it is likely that we are missing "unknown unknowns," especially activity at the district level.

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, Alabama became one of the first states to establish an online learning requirement.

ACCESS is a supplemental program that started in fall 2005. Course enrollments have grown from approximately 7,300 in 2006-07 to 33,743 in 2010-11. This was an 8% increase over the previous year, with more than 15,000 additional non-credit course enrollments. ACCESS has funding for approximately 36,000 enrollments in 2011-12, but does not plan to cap enrollments if course enrollments continue to grow; rather the program will adjust its internal budget to accommodate growth. ACCESS offers 70 unique courses to grades 8-12, including over 20 original courses developed in partnership with the University of Alabama. Courses are accredited by the NCAA. Five remediation modules for the Alabama High School Graduation Exam are also available to students. Students take ACCESS courses from delivery school sites during set time periods, allowing it to offer courses to receiving school sites that otherwise would not have an Alabama-certified teacher to instruct the course.⁴⁷

In addition to its supplemental courses, ACCESS provides other services:

- 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

⁴⁷ AAC Rule 290-3-1-.02(12); retrieved May 25, 2011, <http://www.alabamaadministrativecode.state.al.us/docs/ed/McWord290-3-1.pdf>

sites throughout the state. This means that a significant portion of the relatively high level of funding (compared to other state virtual schools) is going toward technology infrastructure, including bandwidth, tablet computers, and interactive videoconferencing (IVC) equipment.

- ACCESS is blending traditional high school instruction, web-based instruction (WBI), and interactive videoconferencing (IVC) courses to provide students with a variety of options. The delivery model is determined at the local school level by the school counselor by examining the learning style and needs of each student.
- A new program in summer 2011 encourages blended learning by allowing districts to use ACCESS online courses and the LMS by their teachers at no cost. All web-based content and LMS tools are available for use in all types of courses.
- In 2010, ACCESS began a partnership with eLearning for Educators to offer online professional development for all Alabama K-12 teachers: classroom, online, and blended.⁴⁸ ACCESS offers 120 courses with five Professional Learning Units for administrators; it served 5,212 teachers, counselors, and administrators in its first year.
- Alabama has implemented a web-based statewide registration, enrollment, and scheduling system to manage the increase in enrollment due to the online learning requirement. It integrates with the existing statewide student information system as well as ACCESS' LMS.⁴⁹

The online learning requirement mandated by the state board states 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).”⁵⁰ The department of education has published guidelines⁵¹ 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. The seat-time waiver applies to all delivery methods.

Funding

The ACCESS state appropriation for 2011-12 is \$18,506,242, a decrease of \$597,537 from 2010-11. ACCESS is also allowed to carry over budget dollars from the preceding fiscal year, which ends October 1. 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.

State policies

State policies did not change significantly in 2011 and are available in *Keeping Pace 2010* and at www.kpk12.com.

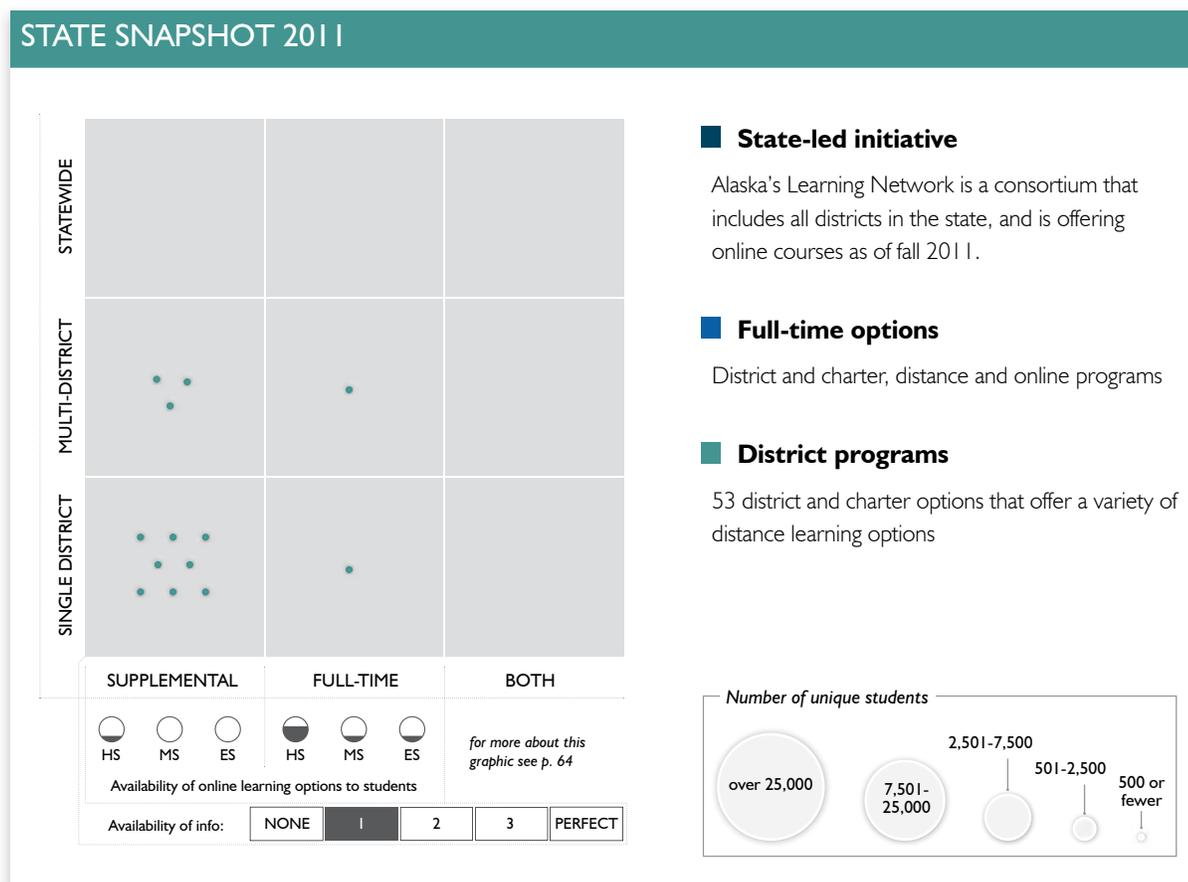
⁴⁸ eLearning for Educators; retrieved May 13, 2011, <http://elearning.alsde.edu/>

⁴⁹ Alabama Department of Education press release; retrieved May 13, 2011, <http://www.sti-k12.com/press/infolive.pdf>

⁵⁰ Alabama State Code, 290-3-1-.02-(8)(d)4; retrieved May 13, 2011, <http://www.alabamaadministrativecode.state.al.us/docs/ed/McWord290-3-1.pdf>

⁵¹ High School Distance Learning: Online/Technology Enhanced Course or Experience Guidance; retrieved August 21, 2011, <ftp://ftp.alsde.edu/documents/61/OnlineGuidance.pdf>

Alaska



Alaska has offered a variety of distance (not always online) options to its students for many years, but the 2011 launch of Alaska’s Learning Network is bringing together distance programs from around the state to expand course options to all Alaska students.

In late 2010, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (EED) awarded \$1.2 million of Enhancing Education Through Technology (E2T2) funds to Chatham School District, as a competitive grant award, to establish a consortium of Alaska districts to develop Alaska’s Learning Network⁵² (AKLN, originally named the Alaska Virtual Learning Network). The state-led initiative that started with 11 Alaska school districts and two nonprofit statewide education agencies will “locate, modify, or develop courses aligned to Alaska’s academic standards and presented by Alaska teachers.”⁵³ The consortium aims to improve student achievement by providing online courses to high school students and professional development to Alaska students and educators.

As of summer 2011, all 54 districts had signed on to participate with AKLN. AKLN will provide a highly qualified teacher, the curriculum, and a recommended grade; the student’s home school awards the final course grade. The initial 21 courses were pulled from existing distance learning programs in Wrangell and Anchorage and are web-based courses. Depending on the needs of rural schools, AKLN expects to include a variety of synchronous and asynchronous courses. These may incorporate video conferencing, DVD, and other teaching methodologies, since less than 10% of students in Alaska have access to fast broadband connections.⁵⁴

⁵² Alaska Learning Network; retrieved June 24, 2011, <http://aklearn.net/>

⁵³ AKLN press release November 2010; retrieved June 13, 2011, http://www.eed.state.ak.us/news/releases/2010/ak_learning_network.pdf

⁵⁴ As defined in the Notice of Funding, Availability [NOFA] for Broadband Initiatives Program [BIP] and Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) Mapping, <http://www.broadband.gov/maps/availability.htm>

Initial AKLN funding paid for a director, teacher leaders, content creator, technology director, overhead costs, an advisory board, and infrastructure to create the AKLN consortium. Any remaining funds will be applied to \$300 scholarships for students in the 2011-12 school year. Costs for courses will vary, but districts will pay about \$150 per course. Scholarships are weighted to allow for a larger number of scholarships to smaller rural high schools.

AKLN is creating a content object library⁵⁵ that can be used by teachers seeking to implement blended learning in their classrooms. Content is aligned to Alaska Standards and the Common Core State Standards (even though Alaska has not adopted the Common Core). It also is reviewed for quality based on a rubric. All artifacts are free to all Alaskan educators to download, revise, upload, and use as needed.

Online programs

The grant effort to create the AKLN is the first large-scale effort to coordinate online learning opportunities for Alaska students, although the state's schools historically have offered correspondence courses to support students working at home. Increasingly these courses are being offered online, though many are still delivered through video conferencing and other forms of blended learning. A comprehensive list of district distance learning options is available on the *Keeping Pace* website.⁵⁶ There are 26 correspondence programs and 27 charter programs.⁵⁷ Thirteen of those programs serve students statewide; five of those programs offer online courses. Of those, several offer students statewide a full-time online option (Delta Cyber School, Raven Correspondence School, Galena's I.D.E.A.). There are several statewide full-time correspondence schools, although no school offers full-time online and/or blended courses to all 54 districts. The Delta Cyber School operates out of the Delta/Greely School District and is available to students ages 5-19. In 2010-11 it served 140 students, a 42% decrease from 242 students in 2009-10, and a 60% decrease from 350 students in 2008-09. The Alaska Virtual Academy at Wrangell opened in fall 2009 and served 85 students in 2010-11 in grades K-8 under the management of K12 Inc. The Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District opened Fast Track Virtual School in 2009-10; it is a correspondence school that served 70 students in 2010-11 in grades K-12 with print and online courses. Fairbanks North Star Borough School District launched Building Educational Success Together (B.E.S.T.) in fall 2009, a full-time distance (not necessarily online) program that enrolled 195 students in 2010-11 in grades 7-12 with services provided by Advanced Academics.⁵⁸ Anchorage's MyHigh and the Kenai School District also have expanded their online options for students within their districts.

Funding

Districts receive 80% of the standard per-pupil funding for all students served in a correspondence program based on the number of courses toward the student's full-time schedule. Through AKLN, districts will be able to enroll their students in online and blended courses that do not affect the per-student formula funding provided. Tuition-based courses also are available for public school students through AKLN. Base funding was slightly increased for the 2011-12 school year, and AKLN anticipates soliciting additional funds from the Alaska Legislature for ongoing sustainability.

State policies

State policies did not change significantly in 2011 and are available in *Keeping Pace 2010* and at www.kpk12.com.

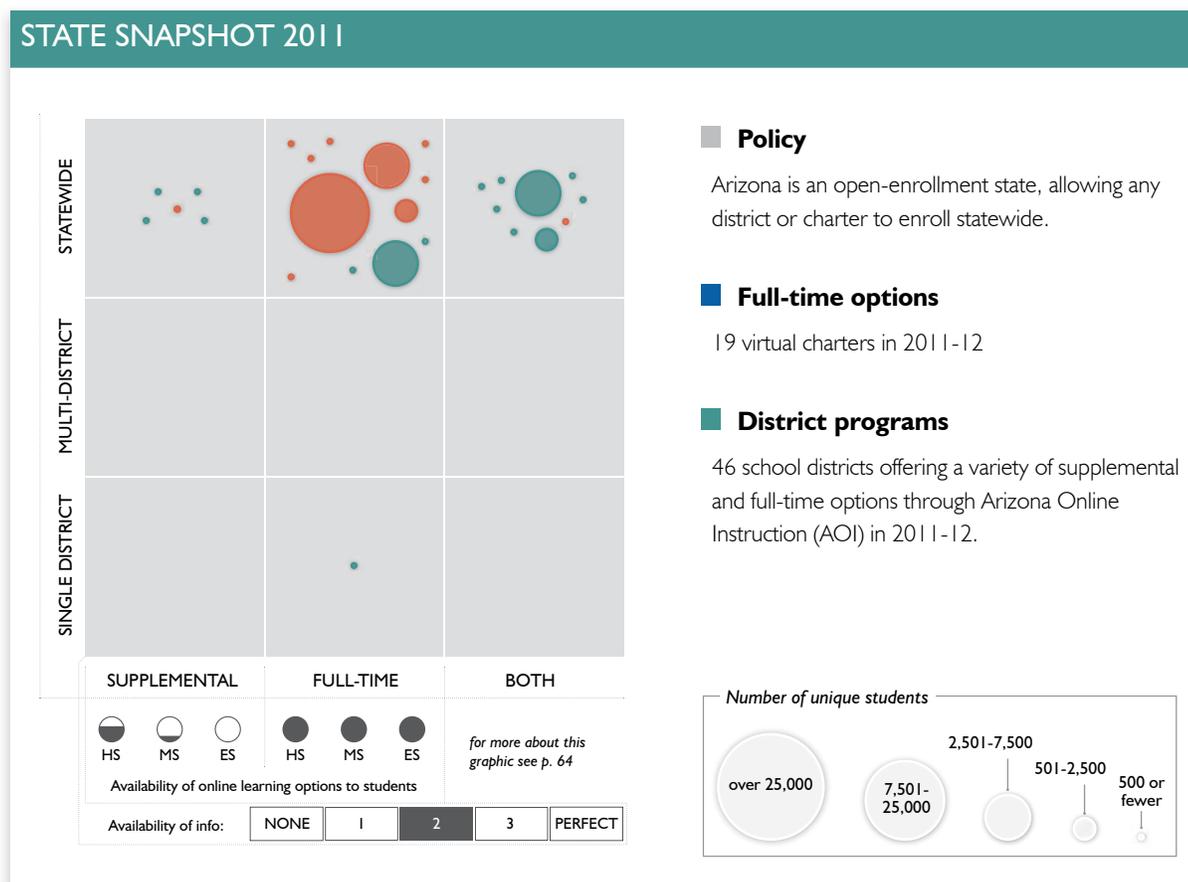
⁵⁵ Digital content library; retrieved July 14, 2011, <http://alaskadigitalsandbox.org/>

⁵⁶ *Keeping Pace* profile of Alaska; retrieved August 24, 2011, <http://kpk12.com/states/alaska/>

⁵⁷ Alaska Distance Education Models; retrieved July 19, 2011, www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_document.asp?session=26&docid=4394

⁵⁸ Fairbanks B.E.S.T. program; retrieved June 13, 2011, <http://www.fairbanksbest.com/main.html>

Arizona



The online learning landscape in Arizona has altered significantly in recent years due to changes legislated in SB1196 (2009)⁵⁹ and now found in Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) 15-808.⁶⁰ What started as the Technology Assisted Project-Based Instruction (TAPBI) pilot program has evolved into the Arizona Online Instruction (AOI) program. Details of that transition can be found on the *Keeping Pace* website.⁶¹ As a result of SB1196, any district or charter school in the state can apply to start an online program, and all approved programs can serve any student in the state. Any student can apply to any approved provider in the state (and to multiple providers), as long as the provider has capacity to serve that student. Under AOI, the number of approved programs has expanded dramatically, from 36 in 2010-11 to 65 in 2011-12.

Online programs

Under the original TAPBI program, there were 14 online programs consisting of seven charter schools and seven school districts, all of which were grandfathered into AOI. This includes Mesa Distance Learning Program, which served 11,205 students in 2010-11, an increase of 22% over 9,128 in 2009-10, and 21,901 course enrollments in 2010-11, an increase of 18% from 18,573 in 2009-10.⁶²

In 2008-09, 30,076 students were enrolled in online courses through TAPBI. In the first full year of AOI (2010) enrollments grew by 1% to 30,338. In 2010-11, 36 programs were approved under AOI and served 36,814 students in full- and part-time programs. This increase was expected, as

⁵⁹ SB1196; retrieved July 1, 2011, <http://www.azleg.gov/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/legtext/49leg/1r/laws/0095.htm>

⁶⁰ ARS 15-808; retrieved August 1, 2011, <http://www.azleg.gov/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/ars/15/00808.htm&Title=15&DocType=ARS>

⁶¹ Arizona *Keeping Pace* profile; retrieved August 24, 2011, <http://kpk12.com/states/arizona/>

⁶² Personal communication with Dr. Doug Barnard, Executive Director, Mesa County Online; August 10, 2011

enrollments have grown each year as more online programs are approved. Additional enrollment information for AOI schools can be found on the *Keeping Pace* website.

AOI allows any of the state's 227 districts and 500-plus 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 the Arizona State Board of Charter Schools (ASBCS). As of summer 2011, 48 public school districts were approved, and 46 were offering online courses.⁶³ Courses offered are primarily supplemental and use a mix of existing online providers and in-house course development. In addition, there were 19 virtual charter schools as of August 2011.⁶⁴ Students may take up to three courses from supplemental providers; a full-time online school provides four or more courses to a student at a given time.

The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) began directly offering online courses for the first time in fall 2009 through a pilot program; it originally offered Advanced Placement (AP) US History, AP Calculus AB and Calculus. The pilot ended in 2011. However, the ADE publishes a catalog of some of the online courses available to K-12 students.⁶⁵

State policies

State policies are based on SB1996, modifying ARS 15-808. In addition, HB2129⁶⁶ (2010) changed the definitions of full- and part-time students, and SB1039 (2010)⁶⁷ required 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 full-time equivalent (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.⁶⁸
- Pupils may generate ADA during any hour and any day of the week. Programs must maintain a daily student log describing the amount of time spent by each pupil on academic tasks.
- Virtual charter schools receive funding based on current-year enrollments (ARS 15-185-B-2⁶⁹), whereas virtual public schools receive funding based on prior-year enrollments (ARS 15-901-A-13).

Governance, tracking, and accountability

- As of July 1, 2010, schools participating in AOI must provide an annual report describing the program and how student achievement will be measured. Schools also must 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.

⁶³ AOI and list of approved districts; retrieved August 1, 2011, <http://www.ade.az.gov/stateboard/AOI/>

⁶⁴ List of virtual charters; retrieved August 10, 2011, <http://www.asbcs.az.gov/userfiles/Distance%20Learning%20Schools%20List%20Revised%20format%207-15-11.pdf>

⁶⁵ ADE catalog of all K-12 online courses; retrieved June 13, 2011, <http://ade.az.gov/technology/onlinecatalog.asp>

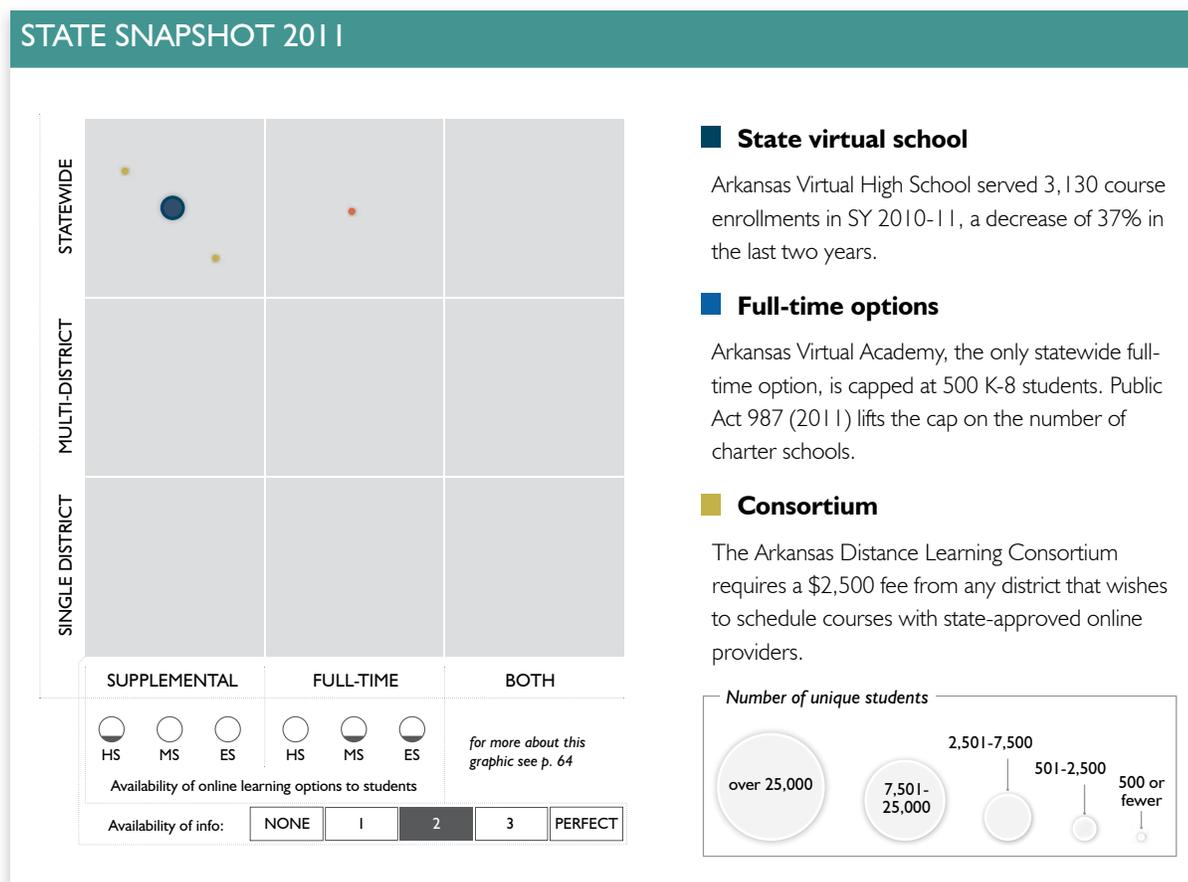
⁶⁶ HB2129; retrieved June 13, 2011, http://www.azleg.gov/DocumentsForBill.asp?Bill_Number=2129

⁶⁷ SB1039; retrieved June 13, 2011, http://www.azleg.gov/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/legtext/49leg/2r/summary/s.1039ed_asenacted.doc.htm

⁶⁸ FTE funding; retrieved June 13, 2011, http://www.azauditor.gov/ASD/PDF/Charter_Schools/USFRCS_Memo_%2083.pdf

⁶⁹ ARS 15-185; retrieved July 27, 2011, <http://www.azleg.gov/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/ars/15/00185.htm&Title=15&DocType=ARS>

Arkansas



Arkansas has a state virtual school (Arkansas Virtual High School; AVHS) and one full-time, statewide charter school, the Arkansas Virtual Academy (ARVA). In addition to AVHS and ARVA, online courses are available through a number of the state’s Educational Service Cooperatives (ESC), though the district must provide the instructors.

AVHS was started in spring 2000; it served a total of 3,130 course enrollments in 2010-11. This is a decrease of 37% from 5,000 high school course enrollments in 2009-10, and 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 funding decreased to \$590,000, leading to a drop in enrollments. Funding stayed level at \$590,000 for 2010-11.

ARVA is an open enrollment public charter school and is overseen by the Arkansas State Board of Education. It serves grades K-8 across the state, is limited to 500 unique students, and maintains a waiting list of students interested in attending. As of spring 2011 that waiting list included over 600 students. The State Board of Education denied a request to expand either the number of students or grade levels served to include high school in June 2011.⁷⁰ ARVA operates as its own school district and is funded through the same student average daily membership (ADM) formula as other open enrollment public charter schools. ARVA received \$6,023 per ADM for the 2010-11 school year, and it expects to receive \$6,144 in 2011-12.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Arkansas State Board of Education June 2011 meeting notes; retrieved August 8, 2011, <http://arkansased.org/about/sbe/minutes.html>

⁷¹ Public school funding amounts; retrieved August 23, 2011, <http://adesharepoint2.arkansas.gov/memos/Lists/Approved%20Memos/DispForm2.aspx?ID=348> and http://arkansased.org/about/pdf/reports/state_aid_notice_charter_022811.pdf

Public Act 987 (2011)⁷² removes the cap on the number of open enrollment charter schools permitted in Arkansas (including Arkansas Virtual Academy). The current statewide cap is 24 charter schools. Under the new law, the charter cap will increase by five each time the number of charters approaches the cap.

The ADE and the Arkansas Distance Learning (ARDL) content providers (including AVHS) have combined resources to form the ARDL Consortium beginning with the 2011-12 school year.⁷³ Arkansas school districts that wish to schedule courses with the consortium will pay a \$2,500 annual membership fee. This fee affords schools the opportunity to schedule courses with any of the state-funded providers. In addition, it streamlines policies and procedures statewide, coordinates a master schedule and centralizes billing for school districts.

Act 827 (2009) created a three-year pilot program that explores 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. The Hector School District became the first to launch a bus in November 2010. Teachers are 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, subsequent score comparison with non-pilot districts, and surveying pilot student interest in math/science/technology careers.

State policies

Governance, accountability, and tracking

Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing Distance Learning (2005)⁷⁴ state:

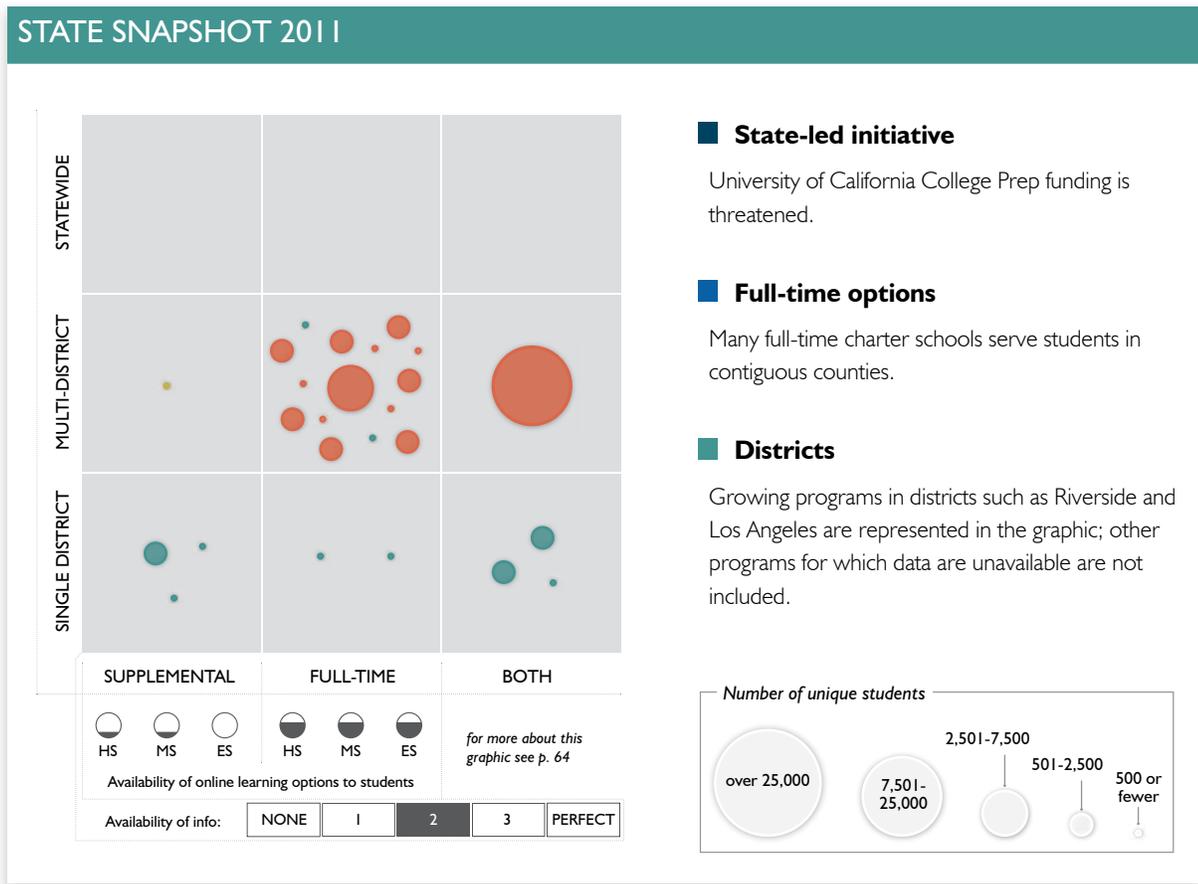
- The ADE must approve all distance learning courses prior to the course being offered or taught by a public or charter school. Courses must have a licensed or approved primary instructor.
- An adult facilitator must be present to proctor any assessments used to determine a student's final grade. A student's 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.
- Student interaction with the primary instructor or an appropriately licensed teacher(s) shall be available at 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, ARVA must adhere to all charter school accountability rules, which include administration of all state-mandated testing.

⁷² Public Act 987 (2011); retrieved August 10, 2011, <http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2011/2011R/Acts/Act987.pdf>

⁷³ Arkansas Distance Learning Consortium; retrieved August 19, 2011, <http://ardl.k12.ar.us/Docs/Resources%20for%20School%20Administrators%20and%20Techs/ARDL%20Consortium%20Basics%202011-2012.pdf>

⁷⁴ ADE Rules Governing Distance Learning; retrieved August 11, 2011, <http://ardl.k12.ar.us/Documents/ADE%20Rules%20Governing%20DL.pdf> and http://dlc.k12.ar.us/pdf/ADE_Rules/ADE_167_Availability_Distance_Learning.pdf

California



California has extensive online and blended learning activity, including extensive activity at a local level. The California Department of Education (CDE) has identified more than 70 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 and Advanced Academics.⁷⁵ At least 15,000 students are enrolled in full-time online charter schools.

Online programs

Riverside Virtual School offers a comprehensive online program that included 1,083 full-time online students, 2,032 supplemental enrollments, and 11,694 students enrolled in blended learning courses in 2010-11, for a total of 14,809 students who utilized online courses and/or content through the program. In 2009-10, there were 305 full-time students, 3,356 supplemental enrollments, and 2,100 blended course enrollments, for a total of 5,761 students. This was a 15% decrease in online enrollments (largely due to decreased funding for summer school), but a 160% increase in overall use of the program with the increased enrollments in blended courses.

⁷⁵ CDE is working to identify all schools and programs in the state that deliver at least 30% of their instruction online. It launched a searchable map in October 2011 that tags synchronous, asynchronous, and blended learning programs, as well as public, private, and charter programs. It is available at <http://www2.cde.ca.gov/coep/imagemap.aspx>.

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) offers a variety of online and blended opportunities to its schools, which then develop online programs to meet student needs. Offerings target grades K-12 through a variety of vendors and district-created content and resources. Online offerings have increased significantly in recent years due to a memorandum from the LAUSD Office of Curriculum and Instruction that instructed all schools to offer an online credit recovery option. As a result, there was a significant increase in credit recovery offerings and overall use of online resources to supplement and blend classroom instruction. In 2010-11 there were over 5,000 enrollments using a variety of vendor and internal District-created content to serve credit recovery, credit acceleration, and blended instructional needs. The City of Angels School started as an independent study alternative high school. It began offering a full-time online option in 2010-11 through City of Angels Virtual Academy (CoAVA), serving 50 full-time students in its first year. In both spring 2011 and summer 2011, CoAVA enrolled over 575 students in online credit recovery classes that were available to all LAUSD high school students.⁷⁶ San Andreas Alternative Education High School reported 1,500 full-time students. Some programs, such as Pacific Coast High School, have formed consortia for sharing online courses developed by member schools.

The California Online Learning Consortium is a new initiative funded and initiated by California County Offices of Education. Its purpose is to facilitate collaboration among county offices of education, school districts, and state-level organizations in their use and support of online learning including curriculum resources, advocacy, and professional development. Initially, these collaborations will include brokering consortium purchases on curriculum/courses, learning management systems, and related technologies on behalf of all members and online learning symposiums for member counties and districts to share, collaborate and grow online programs.

The University of California College Prep (UCCP) is a state-led 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 Advanced Placement courses in many high schools across California. It grew to offer a variety of high school courses and instruction, as well as open educational resources for 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.⁷⁷ UCCP is working with the K-12 High-Speed Network (K12HSN), an agency of CDE tasked with providing districts with Internet 2 access, to distribute its courses at no cost to any California school through the Galaxy website as of fall 2010, allowing small and rural schools access to online learning. UCCP and K12HSN also have started RAMP-UP, a project which will provide these services and others to schools lacking college prep resources.

State policies

Legislation guiding online and blended learning has not been updated in recent years, however, online programs in California are governed by a series of laws that are detailed in *Keeping Pace 2010*. These include:⁷⁸

- Independent study regulations for all non-classroom based instruction that include student-teacher ratios⁷⁹
- In 2005 new regulations⁸⁰ were created that allow schools to avoid the student-teacher ratio provisions of the law

⁷⁶ Details about Los Angeles Unified School District's online offerings obtained through personal communication with Paul Guenther; July 12, 2011

⁷⁷ Personal communication with Curt Anderson, UCCP; July 6, 2011

⁷⁸ 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 June 27, 2011, http://www.k12hsn.org/files/research/Online_Learning/SOLC.pdf

⁷⁹ Independent study requirements; retrieved June 27, 2011, <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/is/>

⁸⁰ California Administrative Code, Title 5, 11963.5; retrieved June 27, 2011, http://weblinks.westlaw.com/result/default.aspx?cite=5CAADCS11963%2E5&db=1000937&findtype=L&fn=_top&pbc=DA010192&rlt=CLID_FQRLT31245484416276&rp=%2FSearch%2Fdefault%2E5&rs=WEBL11%2E04&service=Find&spa=CCR-1000&sr=TC&vr=2%2E0

- Charter school laws, some of which are specific to online programs (SB740, 2001)⁸¹ and others that are not. Online charter schools are also governed by the independent study provisions.
- SB247 (2009) allows state funding for textbooks to be used toward the purchase of electronic versions of materials. The initiative required an approval process to ensure each textbook is aligned with the appropriate state standards; 47 textbooks have been reviewed by the California Learning Resource Network (CLRN) as of December 2010.⁸² In a pilot program started in 2010, Riverside Unified was the first district in the state to use this money to purchase Netbooks for 7th grade students in two middle schools.
- AB1398 (2009) redefined “technology-based materials” to include basic and supplemental instructional materials, and the physical equipment required to use those materials.

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.⁸³

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 (ADA) funding applied through the provisions of AB294.⁸⁴ 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

The University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) designed “a-g” policy standards⁸⁵ that all courses must meet in order to satisfy the UC and CSU entrance requirements. While not required for a course to be approved for graduation or offered by an online program, most courses offered in California are designed to meet these standards.

The California Learning Resource Network (CLRN) is a state-funded project that reviews supplemental electronic learning resources, data assessment tools, free web links, and digital textbooks for their alignment to California’s original content standards, the Common Core State Standards, and California’s social content criteria. In November 2010, CLRN collaborated with iNACOL and the Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN) to co-chair a national committee to continue rewriting the course criteria and reviewer considerations that can be used by any eLearning program. The completed criteria and considerations, published in 2011, are the core criteria for CLRN’s online course reviews.⁸⁶

A consortium of public and private agencies came together to fund the Leading Edge Certification alliance in an effort to address a perceived statewide need for professional development related to online learning. The project is offering 21st Century training programs for online teachers, classroom (blended learning) teachers, administrators, teacher librarians and lead learners (course developers) seeking certification in digital skills.⁸⁷

⁸¹ AB294; retrieved June 27, 2011, http://info.sen.ca.gov/pub/03-04/bill/asm/ab_0251-0300/ab_294_bill_20030909_enrolled.html

⁸² California Learning Resource Network; retrieved June 27, 2011, <http://www.clrn.org/fdti/>

⁸³ A Summary of Existing and Pending Law Involving Online Learning in California Public Schools, University of San Diego; retrieved June 27, 2011, <http://www.sandiego.edu/soles/documents/CEPALOnlineLearningLegislation020810.pdf>

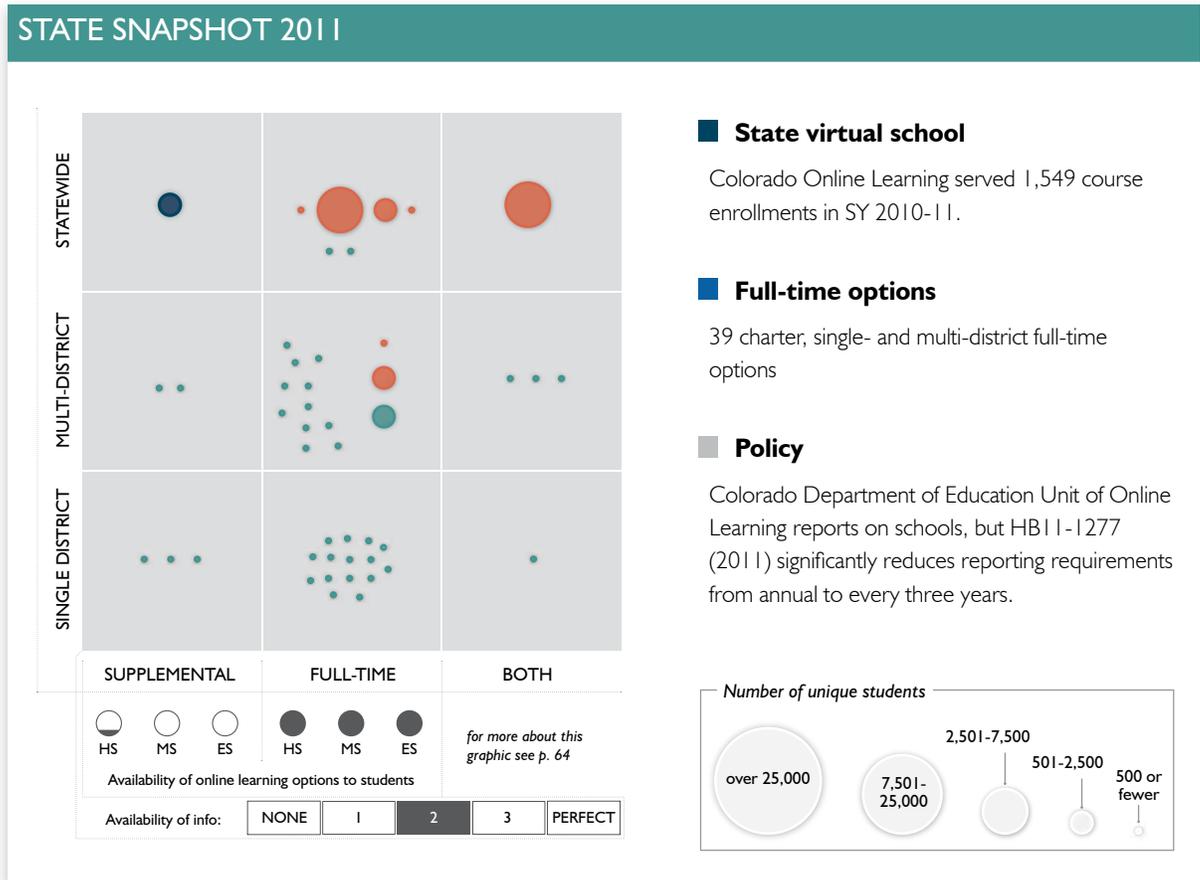
⁸⁴ AB294; retrieved June 27, 2011, http://info.sen.ca.gov/pub/03-04/bill/asm/ab_0251-0300/ab_294_bill_20030909_enrolled.html

⁸⁵ a-g policy website; retrieved June 27, 2011, http://www.ucop.edu/a-gGuide/ag/online_course.html

⁸⁶ California Learning Resource Network course review standards; retrieved July 6, 2011, <http://www.clrn.org/search/courseCriteria.cfm>

⁸⁷ Leading Edge Certification; retrieved July 6, 2011, <http://www.cue.org/leadingedge>

Colorado



State virtual school

Colorado Online Learning served 1,549 course enrollments in SY 2010-11.

Full-time options

39 charter, single- and multi-district full-time options

Policy

Colorado Department of Education Unit of Online Learning reports on schools, but HBI 11-1277 (2011) significantly reduces reporting requirements from annual to every three years.

Colorado has a state virtual school, numerous full-time programs, and district-level programs. The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) reported 15,314 unique students enrolled in full- and part-time programs, an increase of 16% from 2009-10. CDE believes 14,932 of these students are full time. There were 22 multi-district and eight single-district programs in 2010-11. Three statewide supplemental district-level programs are not included in the enrollment total, and 11 additional single-district programs launched in fall 2011.⁸⁸ In addition, Colorado Online Learning (COL), another supplemental statewide program not included in the enrollment total from CDE, reported 1,549 course enrollments in 2010-11. This is up 12% from 2009-10, a year that saw a drop in enrollments attributed to districts' inability to pay tuition for their online students.

From 2009-11, the CDE Unit of Online Learning released its annual Summary Report of the Operations and Activities of Online Programs in Colorado,⁸⁹ which is among the best examples of online program activity reporting in any state. However, HB11-1277 (2011)⁹⁰ significantly reduces these reporting requirements to every three years, easing the administrative burden on online programs but potentially reducing the amount of information available to stakeholders. The law also removes the time period for which certification of online schools is granted. Online programs

⁸⁸ Online programs; retrieved August 23, 2011, <http://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/schools.htm>

⁸⁹ CDE, Unit of Online Learning, Summary Report of the Operations and Activities of Online Programs in Colorado, June 1, 2011; retrieved June 13, 2011, <http://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/index.htm>. Unless otherwise noted, many of the numbers in this profile are taken from this report.

⁹⁰ HB11-1277 (2011), sections 23-28 address online learning; retrieved June 21, 2011, http://www.leg.state.co.us/clics/clics2011a/csl.nsf/fsbillcont3/A58089DC75F0EAB1872578080080FD9?open&file=1277_enr.pdf

remain certified indefinitely until the Unit of Online Learning has reason to believe the program is not in substantial compliance with one or more of the statutory or regulatory requirements.

State policies

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 CDE in overseeing these programs.⁹¹ The Trujillo Commission⁹² formed in response to the audit, and a task force formed by the State Board of Education,⁹³ suggested recommendations for legislators, and expressed concerns about the lack of oversight of full-time online programs. In response, the legislature passed SB215⁹⁴ in May 2007, which made numerous changes to online education regulations. Many of the basic provisions of the 2007 law are intact and are available in *Keeping Pace 2010* and at www.kpk12.com.

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 addressing the statutory requirements of SB215, including the creation of new quality standards⁹⁵ that are now a cornerstone of the rules for online program accreditation. The unit is focused on facilitating program certification, as well as providing support for parents, students, authorizers and other entities related to online learning.

A second online education law, HB1037,⁹⁶ passed in 2007 and was scheduled to sunset in 2010. However, HB1066⁹⁷ was passed in 2010 to repeal this deadline. HB1037 provides \$480,000 annually to fund a Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to contract with a provider to offer 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, was selected as the statewide provider by the Mountain BOCES. It has been renewed each year since 2007 and now serves as the state virtual school. These House bills all modify Colorado revised statute 22-2-130, "Supplemental on-line education grant program."⁹⁸

Funding

- Per-pupil revenue (PPR), a full-time equivalency (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 online students in multi-district programs. Single-district online schools are funded at the district per-pupil revenue rate, receiving the same funding as the brick-and-mortar schools in that district. 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.

⁹¹ Report of the State Auditor; retrieved June 13, 2011, [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)

⁹² The Trujillo Commission's report; retrieved June 13, 2011, <http://www.dkfoundation.org/PDF/TrujilloCommissionOnlineEducationFinalReport-2-15-2007.pdf>

⁹³ Online Education Interim Report; retrieved June 13, 2011, <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdecomm/download/pdf/OnlineReportInterimReport.pdf>

⁹⁴ SB215; retrieved June 13, 2011, <http://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/download/SB215.pdf>

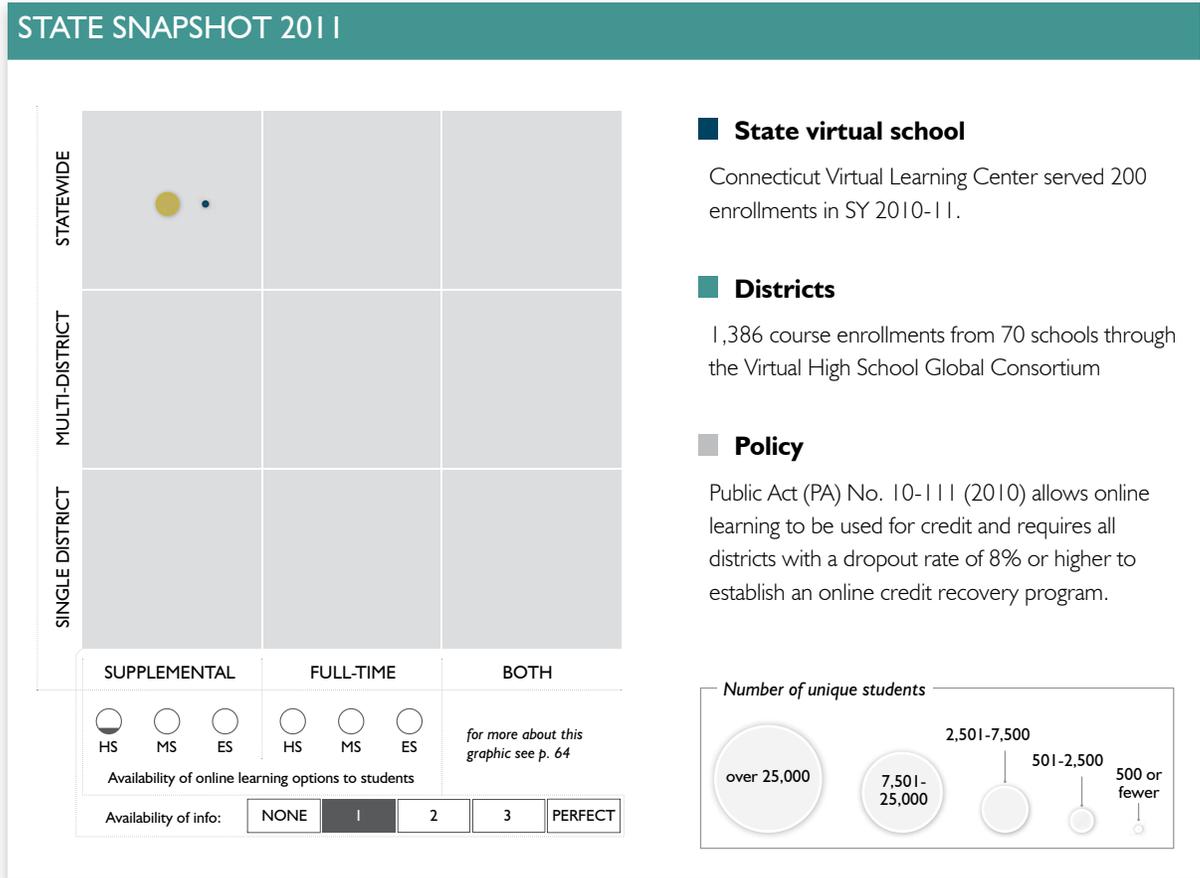
⁹⁵ 1CCR301-71, The Quality Standards for Online Programs can be found as section 3.0; retrieved June 13, 2011, http://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/download/FINAL_permanent_rules_as_AMENDED_10.08.pdf

⁹⁶ HB1037; retrieved June 13, 2011, http://www.leg.state.co.us/CLICS/CLICS2010A/csl.nsf/fsbillcont3/584ABEF08DBB8FB4872576A80026B247?Open&file=1037_enr.pdf

⁹⁷ HB1066 (2010); retrieved June 13, 2011, http://www.leg.state.co.us/CLICS/CLICS2007A/csl.nsf/fsbillcont3/F9696758891E5C2B87257251007B2A8F?Open&file=1066_enr.pdf

⁹⁸ Colorado Revised Statutes 22-2-130; retrieved June 13, 2011, <http://www.michie.com/colorado/lpext.dll?f=templates&fn=main-h.htm&cp=>

Connecticut



State virtual school

Connecticut Virtual Learning Center served 200 enrollments in SY 2010-11.

Districts

1,386 course enrollments from 70 schools through the Virtual High School Global Consortium

Policy

Public Act (PA) No. 10-111 (2010) allows online learning to be used for credit and requires all districts with a dropout rate of 8% or higher to establish an online credit recovery program.

Connecticut has a very small state virtual school; 70 schools are part of the Virtual High School Global Consortium, but there is little additional online learning activity in the state.

Connecticut passed its first online learning legislation in 2010 as part of the high school reform act, Public Act (PA) No. 10-111.⁹⁹ The act formally included 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 teachers 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. As the act is unfunded, districts are creating unique policies.

The legislation also required 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

⁹⁹ Public Act No. 10-111; retrieved May 9, 2011, <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2010/ACT/Pa/pdf/2010PA-00111-R00SB-00438-PA.pdf>

program,” leaving local districts to work within the parameters of section 10-221¹⁰⁰ of the general statutes. Each school in the school district must designate an online learning coordinator to administer the credit recovery program.¹⁰¹ Beginning in 2013, districts must provide student support and remedial services for students, including online learning options, beginning in 7th grade. The requirements of PA 10-111 are unfunded and currently have no formal monitoring process by the State Department of Education (SDE).¹⁰² The SDE has formed a committee to look at the use of technology, data collection, and organization.

Online programs

The Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium (CTDLC), an organization within the Department of Higher Education, in partnership with the SDE, operates two statewide online learning programs. 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 in part with state dollars and in part with Title II (Workforce Investment Act) dollars through the SDE’s Bureau of Adult Education. In 2010-11, the CTAVHS experienced a 13% budget cut and course enrollments dropped from over 2,300 in 2009-10 to approximately 2,000 for 2010-11. Course enrollments are limited by funding.

The Connecticut Regional Educational Service Center (RESC) has a partnership with Massachusetts-based Virtual High School Global Consortium (VHS) to provide reduced-rate VHS membership to school districts serving 70 middle and high schools. VHS had 1,386 course enrollments through these district memberships during 2010-11, a 14% increase over the previous year. In addition, the Virtual Learning Academy, an RESC program, offers online credit recovery and special needs courses for grades K-12. Courses are provided through student licenses for \$450 annually, and students can take as many courses as desired during that period.¹⁰³

Connecticut Virtual Learning Center (CTVLC) is also operated by the CTDLC. CTVLC was launched by the SDE in 2008 to offer supplemental online courses to public high schools.¹⁰⁴ CTVLC had about 200 course enrollments in 2010-11. Startup funding of \$845,000 and two years of operational funding (for the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years) were provided by an appropriation from the General Assembly, but the second year was later retracted due to state budget constraints. Without an annual appropriation, CTVLC now offers courses for \$320 per semester course enrollment to all public school students (\$199 for credit recovery courses), and \$350 for private high school and homeschool students (\$220 for credit recovery courses). Funding CTVLC through course fees has affected 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.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Chapter 170, section 10-221; retrieved May 9, 2011, <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2005/pub/chap170.htm#Sec10-221.htm>

¹⁰¹ Ibid

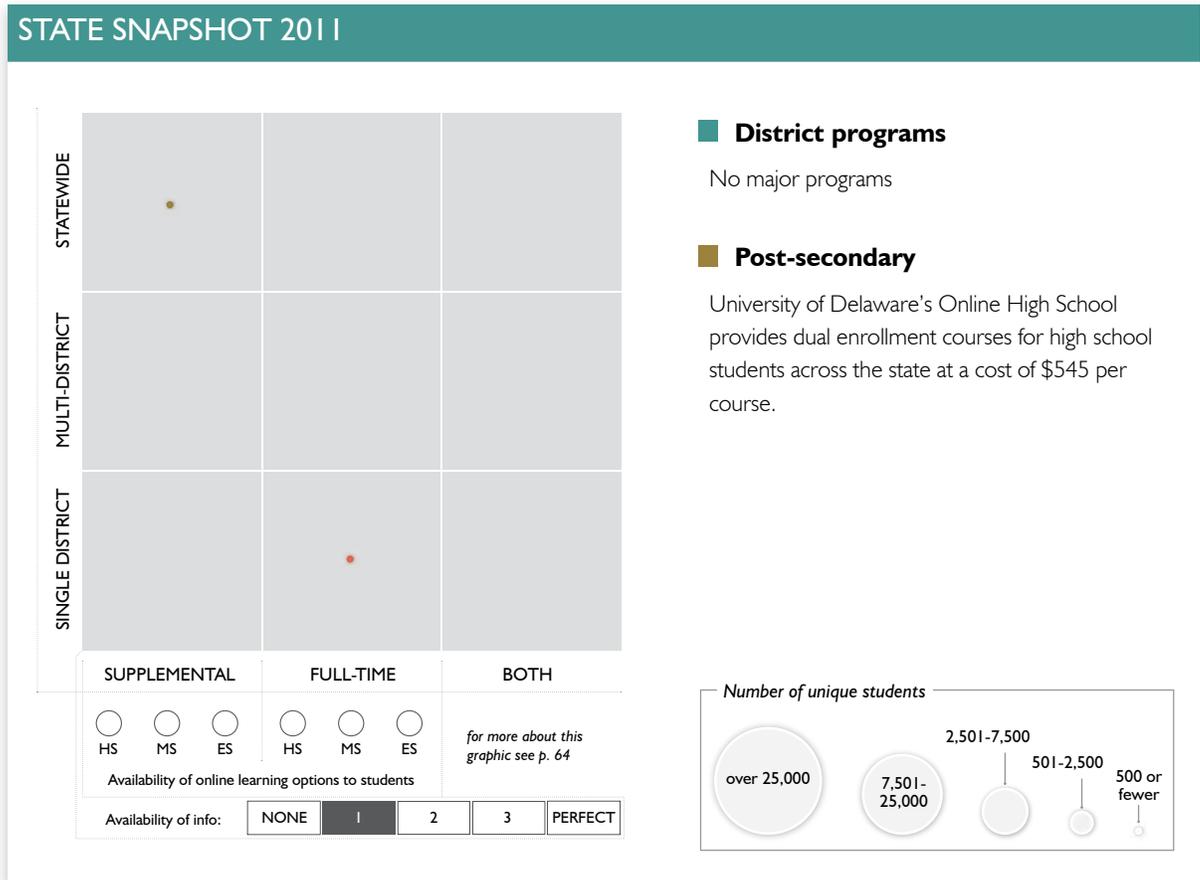
¹⁰² Personal communication with Gretchen Hayden, Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium; May 11, 2011

¹⁰³ Virtual Learning Academy; retrieved May 11, 2011, http://www.crec.org/tabs/documents/VLA_Flier.pdf

¹⁰⁴ Online Courses Available to Connecticut High School Students, Connecticut State Department of Education; retrieved May 9, 2011, <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/taxonomy/taxonomy.asp?DLN=45425&sdeNav=|45425|>

¹⁰⁵ Personal communication with Gretchen Hayden, Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium; May 11, 2011

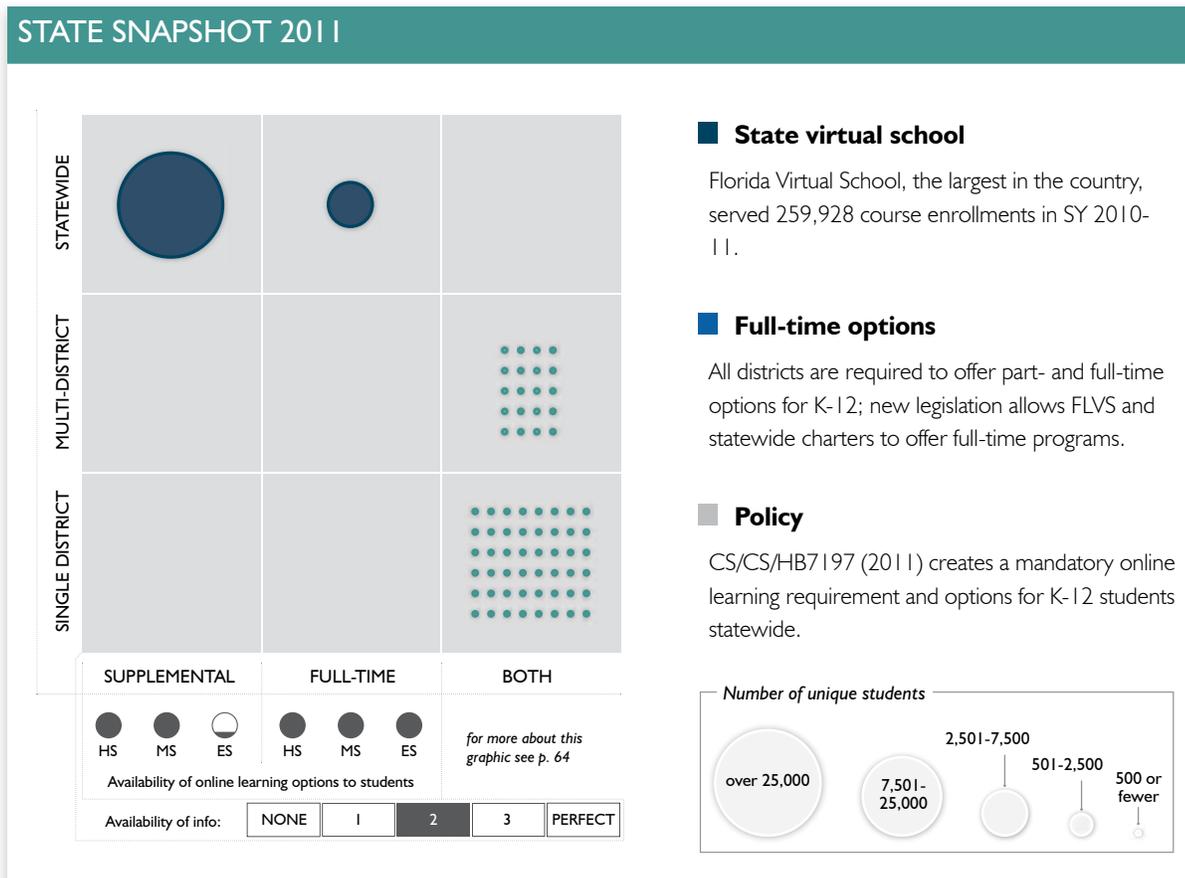
Delaware



Delaware has very little online and blended learning activity. 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. Unfortunately, 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. It has not received funding since the initial pilot. Some districts use vendor courses on a limited 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. One school, Moyer Academy, uses online curriculum from K12 Inc. in a blended environment, requiring that students be at the school site every school day.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Maurice J. Moyer Academy; retrieved August 23, 2011, <http://www.k12.com/participating-schools/delaware/1257>

Florida



Florida has a long history of online learning options, with the Florida Virtual School (the country’s largest public online course provider, and among the oldest), statewide full-time online schools, district online programs and extensive policy activity. More students take online courses in Florida than in any other state.

Legislation passed in 2011 (CS/CS/HB7197)¹⁰⁷ changes Florida’s online learning landscape, opening the door to a full suite of supplemental and full-time online options—often with multiple providers to choose from at both the district and state level—for all students in grades K-12. Modifications to existing legislation, as well as new online and blended program options, are as follows:

- Florida Virtual School Full Time (FLVS FT) now offers a full-time option directly to all K-12 students statewide. Previously, all districts had to provide students with a full-time option through the School District Virtual Instruction Program (VIP). Now students can choose a state-level option via FLVS. FLVS FT will offer high school diplomas beginning in 2012-13.
- FLVS and school district franchises of FLVS can offer supplemental middle school courses to 4th and 5th graders.
- School districts can offer individual online courses for students in grades pre-kindergarten to 12th, in addition to what they offer in their brick-and-mortar schools, district virtual instruction

¹⁰⁷ CS/CS/H7197 (2011) establishes Florida Statute 1002.31; retrieved July 13, 2011, <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=46852>

programs (VIP) and district franchises of FLVS. Students from other districts can also enroll in these courses if their district does not offer them.

- Medium and large districts must now offer three different options at all grade levels as part of each district's VIP program; small districts must offer at least one option.¹⁰⁸
- The district VIP part-time program was expanded to include a new grades 9-12 program that includes courses measured by state assessments (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and end-of-course) and Advanced Placement (AP)[®] exams. The Florida Department of Education (DOE) will develop an evaluation method for part-time providers that includes the percentage of students making learning gains, successfully passing end-of-course assessments, taking AP exams, and scoring three or higher on AP exams.
- The previous part-time VIP program for students enrolled in dropout prevention, core courses to meet class size, community college-offered K-12 courses, etc., has expanded beyond grades 9-12 to include K-8.
- Full-time online charter schools are now authorized. They must use DOE-approved providers for their educational programs, and they must document this when they apply to school districts to operate virtual charters. They may only serve students within the district.
- Beginning with students entering 9th grade in 2011-12, all students must take an online course as a high school graduation requirement.
- By 2014-15, all state-mandated end-of-course assessments must be delivered online.
- District schools are authorized to offer both online and blended courses. Full-time online charter schools are authorized to offer blended courses.
- However, funding was also slashed across the state for both brick-and-mortar and virtual schools. Virtual options lost class size funding (as FLVS did two years ago), so the funding for all students is, for most districts, at or near the minimum of \$4,800 per student for the 2011-12 school year.

Online programs

Florida has a variety of online options (see Table 14) for students in grades PK-12. Florida Virtual School (FLVS) is the largest state virtual school in the United States. In addition, through VIP, all Florida school districts offer full-time and now part-time virtual instruction programs for students in grades PK-12. What's more, 56 of 67 school districts and two university lab schools (total of 56) will operate franchises of Florida Virtual School in 2011-12. Districts also may offer individual online courses for grades PK-12 outside of their VIP and district franchises. Students from other school districts may take these courses if not offered by their school districts. K12 Inc. continues to operate its state-level K-8 virtual school, and the Connections Academy full-time K-8 virtual school has become the new FLVS FT statewide school.

¹⁰⁸ District size is determined by the district sparsity supplement, as defined in Florida Statutes 1011.62 (7); http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/FileStores/Web/Statutes/FS09/CH1011/Section_1011.62.HTM

Virtual Program / School	Grade Levels Served	Student Eligibility	Type of Program
State Level			
Florida Virtual School (FLVS) Classic	Grades 6-12 Grades 4-5	All students** Eligibility per s. 1002.455* FLVS Eligibility ¹	Part Time / Full Time Part Time (Grades 6-8 courses)
Florida Virtual School Full Time	Grades K-12	K-1 and 6-12 – All students** 2-5 eligibility per s. 1002.455*	
District Level			
District Virtual Instruction Program	Grades K-12	Eligibility per s. 1002.455*	Full Time, Limited Part Time
District Franchise of FLVS	Grades 6-12 Grades 4-5 Grades K-12	All students ** Eligibility per s. 1002.455* K-1 and 6-12 All students ** 2-5 eligibility per s. 1002.455*	Part Time / Full Time Part Time (Grades 6-8 courses) Full Time
District Virtual Course Offerings	Grades PreK-12	Eligibility per s. 1002.455*	Part Time
Virtual Charter School	Grades K-12	Eligibility per s. 1002.455*	Full Time

Table 14: Florida’s virtual public education options¹⁰⁹

*Student eligibility criteria in Florida Statutes section 1002.455 includes prior-year Florida public school attendance, military dependents who moved to Florida within last 12 months, siblings of students in virtual programs in previous and current school years, and students eligible to enter grades K-1.

**All students = Public, private, and home education students

All of Florida’s virtual schools and programs are designated by law as school choice options¹¹⁰ for Florida families. Teachers in these programs must hold Florida teaching certificates and the curriculum must meet state standards. In addition, the 2011 legislation states that virtual programs and courses must meet standards set by iNACOL and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). Full-time public school students participate in state assessments, and full-time schools and programs receive school grades through Florida’s accountability system.

Florida Virtual School (FLVS) had 259,928 course enrollments in 2010-11, a 22% increase from 213,926 enrollments in 2009-10. In 2000, legislation established FLVS as an independent education entity. Legislation enacted in 2002 and 2003 granted parental rights for public school choice,¹¹¹ 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 2010-11 school year, FLVS will receive roughly \$110 million in funding. The school employed 1,028 full-time and 103 part-time teachers in 2010-11.

FLVS offers online courses and a full-time program for students in grades 6-12. In addition, FLVS partners with Connections Academy to provide full-time services for students in grades K-8; it served 1,084 students in 2010-11. The number of district franchises serving grades 6-12 has increased dramatically over the last three years—eight to 17 from 2008-09 to 2009-10, to 39 in 2010-11 and to 56 in 2011-12. The franchises reported 28,368 half-credit completions in 2010-11 (these are in addition to the FLVS enrollments reported above); about 10,000 of these were supplemental course enrollments. Although districts may use their franchises to meet Virtual Instructional Program (VIP) requirements, the franchises also serve home education, private school, and other public school students.

¹⁰⁹ Florida’s Virtual Public Education Options; retrieved July 8, 2011, <http://www.fdoe.org/schools/virtual-schools/pdf/veof.pdf>

¹¹⁰ School choice options; retrieved July 13, 2011, <http://info.fdoe.org/docshare/dsweb/Get/Document-5250/dps-2009-007.pdf>

¹¹¹ Florida Statutes 1002.20 and 1001.42 regarding school choice; retrieved July 13, 2011, http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=1000-1099/1002/Sections/1002.20.html and http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=1000-1099/1001/Sections/1001.42.html

As legislated by Florida Statute 1002.45, beginning in 2009-10, all 67 Florida school districts offered a full-time virtual education option for their students through the District VIPs.¹¹² School districts had a number of options to offer virtual instruction. 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, contract with community colleges, enter into an agreement with a virtual charter school, or operate their own programs. Most districts operate more than one virtual program under the VIP umbrella, and the number of options may increase in 2011-12 due to the new requirement for many districts to offer at least three options at all levels. About 4,000 full-time students enrolled in district VIP options in 2010-11, including 1,580 who enrolled as full-time students in district franchises (one of the district options for providing VIP).

To accommodate the requirement that all but the small districts offer multiple providers, some districts are entering into agreements with other districts to allow their students to enroll in their VIPs. While many districts are expected to start their own programs, outside providers are likely to remain an option.

State policies

Information in this section comes from Florida Statute 1002.45 and the DOE public virtual education website.¹¹³ Additional state policies address the operations, funding, and governance of FLVS, most of which are not covered below.

Funding

- The District Virtual Instruction Program (VIP) and virtual charter schools are funded through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) based on successful completions. Districts receive FEFP funding for each student and may negotiate with virtual instruction providers for rate below the per-pupil funding. Completions are defined by 1011.61¹¹⁴ as:
 - Grades K-5: grade promotion
 - Grades 6-8: course completion with passing grade
 - Grades 9-12: credits earned
- For Florida Virtual School, per-student funding was cut by about 10%, including class size funding, for 2009-10, to \$469 per semester course for a total of \$101.3 million. In 2010-11, per-student funding dropped to \$432 for a total of \$116.7 million. FLVS no longer will receive an 11.4% add-on to FTE funding to account for public school students who do not complete their courses.

¹¹² 1002.45; retrieved July 13, 2011, http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=1000-1099/1002/Sections/1002.45.html

¹¹³ Virtual education website; retrieved July 13, 2011, <http://www.fldoe.org/Schools/virtual-schools/>

¹¹⁴ Florida Statute 1011.61; retrieved July 13, 2011, http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=1000-1099/1011/Sections/1011.61.html

Governance and tracking

FLVS is governed by Florida Statute 1002.37;¹¹⁵ 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 instruction program. Section 1002.33 authorizes virtual charter schools as of 2011. Section 1003.498 authorizes districts to offer individual online courses in addition to their current virtual schools and programs. Section 1002.455 delineates student eligibility for most virtual programs. The following policies and rules apply to district virtual instruction programs and virtual charter schools:

- Students must have been Florida public school students the previous year, military dependents who recently moved to Florida, siblings of students already in the virtual program or eligible to enter grades K-1.
- 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.

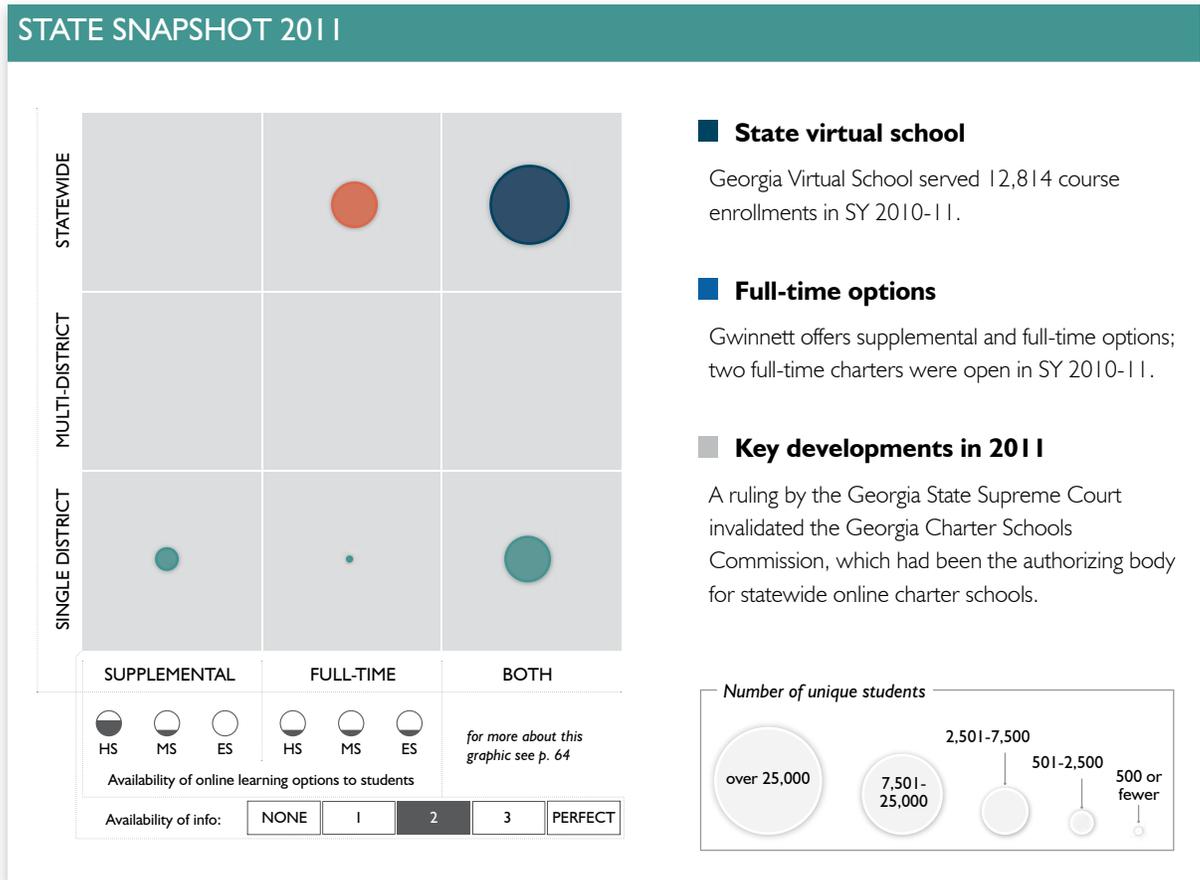
Quality assurance, teaching, and curriculum

- Instructional staff must be Florida-certified, and curriculum and course content must be aligned to state standards.
- Provider virtual instruction online programs and courses must meet iNACOL standards.
- All full-time virtual 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 four-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."
- Part-time providers will be evaluated by the DOE.
- SB2110 authorizes Florida's auditor general to audit virtual education providers.
- SB2120 (2011)¹¹⁶ states that by the 2015-16 fiscal year, each district school shall use at least 50% of the annual allocation for purchase of digital or electronic instructional materials included on the state-adopted list.

¹¹⁵ Florida Statute 1002.37; retrieved July 13, 2011, http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=1000-1099/1002/Sections/1002.37.html

¹¹⁶ SB2120 modifying Florida Statutes 1006.40; retrieved July 13, 2011, <http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2011/2120/BillText/er/PDF>

Georgia



State virtual school

Georgia Virtual School served 12,814 course enrollments in SY 2010-11.

Full-time options

Gwinnett offers supplemental and full-time options; two full-time charters were open in SY 2010-11.

Key developments in 2011

A ruling by the Georgia State Supreme Court invalidated the Georgia Charter Schools Commission, which had been the authorizing body for statewide online charter schools.

Georgia has online learning activity through the state virtual school Georgia Virtual School, (GAVS), several large district programs, and two virtual charter schools; about 14,000 unique students in Georgia took online courses in 2010-11.¹¹⁷

Virtual charters have a tumultuous history in Georgia in regard to authorization and funding. Details of the history can be found on page 32 in the Cost and Funding section of this report, however, the current debate is based on two pieces of legislation:

- SB610 (2006)¹¹⁸ amended charter school law to allow for online charter schools, but only allowed local district boards to act as charter school authorizers. The State Board of Education could also grant state-charter special schools (SCSS) status.
- HB881 (2008)¹¹⁹ created the “Georgia Charter Schools Commission as an independent, state-level charter school authorizing entity ... empowered to approve commission charter schools.” It authorized the Commission to set charter funding levels.

In May 2011, the Supreme Court of Georgia found HB881 to be unconstitutional. In June 2011, the State Board of Education took action to restore charters to those schools that had been stripped of them by the Supreme Court decision; this included two virtual charters. First, it voted unanimously

¹¹⁷ Personal communication with Dr. Garry McGibboney, GADOE; July 29, 2010

¹¹⁸ SB610; retrieved June 19, 2011, http://www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/2005_06/versions/sb610_AP_6.htm

¹¹⁹ HB881; retrieved June 19, 2011, http://www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/2007_08/pdf/hb881.pdf

to renew an existing charter for the Georgia Cyber Academy (GCA), a K-10 program administered by K12 Inc., operating the online arm of the brick-and-mortar Odyssey Charter School. The Odyssey/GCA charter was approved for the 2007-08 school year by the State Board before HB881 and the formation of the commission. GCA had also applied to the commission for authorization.¹²⁰ The remaining 13 charter schools previously approved by the commission, including Georgia Connections Academy, could have applied for the same state board authorization, but the deadline for SY 2011-12 had passed. The State Board revisited the annual deadline in June, reopened applications, and in late June voted to grant SCSS status to nine schools and Local Charter status to two schools,¹²¹ making Georgia Connections Academy the second statewide virtual charter school operating for the 2011-12 school year.¹²² Although SCSS status is usually granted for a five-year charter, the State Board issued two-year charters.

The governor then pledged to “forward-fund” the existing brick-and-mortar charter schools approved by the Commission for 2011-12 at the same level they had anticipated before the Supreme Court ruling, but the additional funding was not extended to virtual charters.¹²³ The result of all this is that two virtual charter schools will operate in Georgia in 2011-12, but will do so under SCSS status at a much lower level of funding. Funding will be based on the quality basic education (QBE) formula of \$2,800 per pupil for 2011-12.¹²⁴

Online programs

Online programs include the Georgia Virtual School (GAVS), the Georgia Cyber Academy (GCA), Georgia Connections Academy serving full-time students in grades K-8, and several suburban Atlanta districts that operate online programs, including Cobb Virtual Academy and Gwinnett Online Campus. The Gwinnett Online Campus was granted charter authorization by the State Board of Education in July 2011; it is opening for high school students in fall 2011, middle school students in 2012, and some elementary students in 2012. Charter status allows Gwinnett Online to offer full-time options for Gwinnett County students in addition to supplemental courses. Gwinnett Online had about 5,000 course enrollments in 2010-11.

GAVS was created by legislation in 2005,¹²⁵ and in 2006 the State Board of Education created the rule that governs the school.¹²⁶ GAVS is unusual for a state virtual school in that its supplemental students take state end-of-course exams, allowing for a comparison of test scores between students in online courses and state averages. 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. In 2011, State Board of Education rule eliminated a restriction that limited GAVS students to one online course per term. All resident students are allowed to take GAVS courses, whether public, private, or homeschool, but public students are given priority.

GAVS had 12,814 course enrollments in 2010-11, a 6% increase over the previous year. GAVS serves students in grades 9-12, and offers summer school courses on a tuition basis only, with no cap on summer enrollment. GAVS received about \$5.4 million for 2010-11, and will receive a slight increase for 2011-12. When students take courses with GAVS, funds are diverted from the home

¹²⁰ State Board-authorized charters operate essentially as both a school and a separate district and are eligible to receive state funding, but are not eligible for local tax dollars, prompting the GCA application to the Charter Schools Commission.

¹²¹ Georgia Department of Education press release; retrieved August 5, 2011, http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/pea_communications.aspx?ViewMode=1&obj=2046

¹²² Provost Academy Georgia was authorized by the Georgia Charter Schools Commission, but has delayed operations until 2012

¹²³ Public Policy Journalism; retrieved August 5, 2011, <http://mikekleinonline.com/2011/07/14/governor-deal-improves-state-special-charter-schoolsfunding/>

¹²⁴ Earnings sheets through personal correspondence with the GaDOE, August 22, 2011

¹²⁵ SB3; retrieved August 22, 2011, http://www1.legis.ga.gov/legis/2005_06/versions/sb610_AP_6.htm

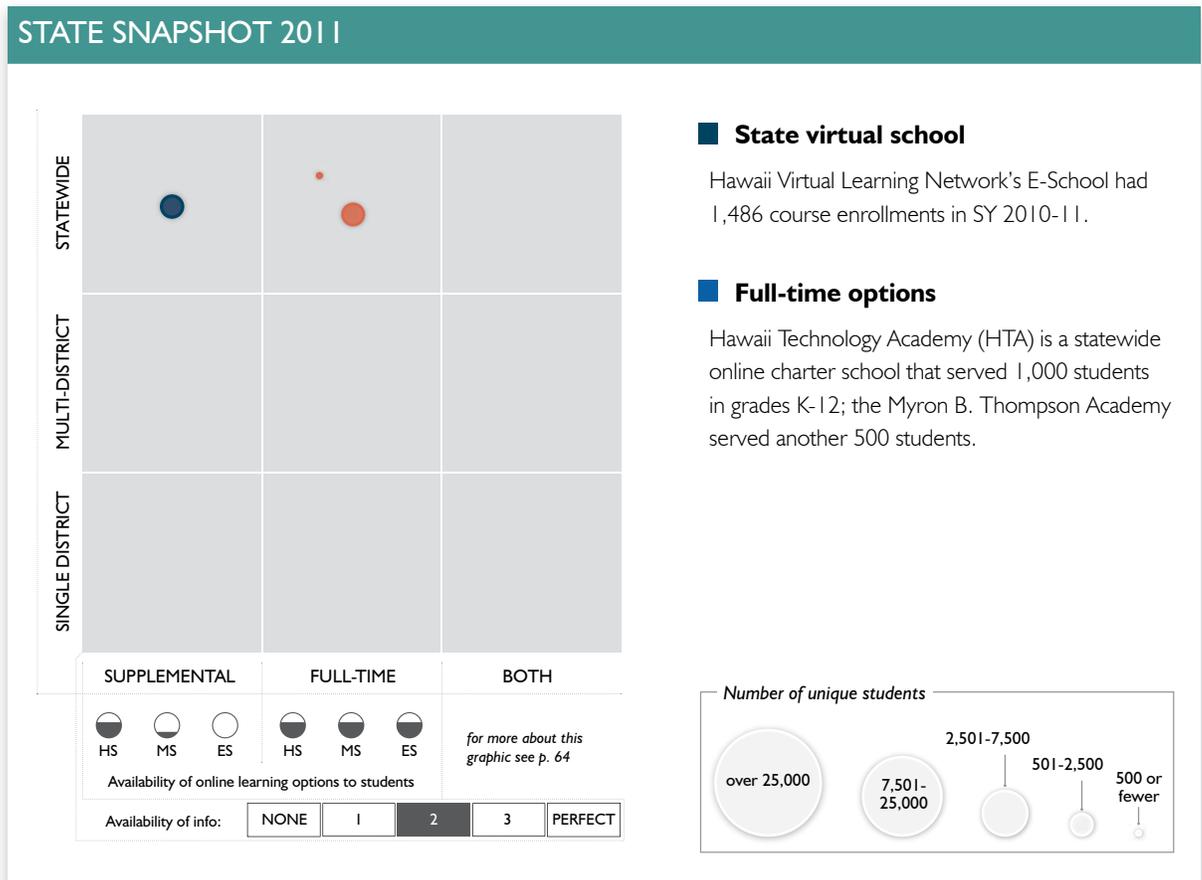
¹²⁶ 160-8-1-.01 Georgia Virtual School; retrieved June 19, 2011, http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/_documents/doe/legalservices/160-8-1-.01.pdf

district to GAVS, which receives the equivalent of the district's full-time equivalent (FTE) portion for that course segment.¹²⁷ The state then uses those monies to pay GAVS for up to 8,500 FTE, although GAVS seeks to serve 10,200 enrollments with that funding by maximizing classes.

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) designated GAVS as its leading partner in implementing the Georgia Credit Recovery program,¹²⁸ which had 12,343 enrollments during the 2010-11 school year, an 84% increase from the previous year. GAVS supplies an online, teacherless program where students progress on their own. The program is administered by participating school districts, is legislatively funded, and free to students. However, schools must provide a credit recovery monitor for these courses, and this expense is not covered by the GaDOE. Approximately 70-80% of students successfully recover their credits.¹²⁹ Due to the self-paced nature of the courses, the NCAA will no longer accept the GaDOE's Credit Recovery Program course credits. GAVS online credits are still accepted by the NCAA.

GAVS is working with nine high schools across the state on blended learning pilots for fall 2011. Teachers have agreed to use online content for 30-80% of instructional time.

Hawaii



Hawaii has several statewide online programs, 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.¹³⁰ In recent years

¹²⁷ The amount that GAVS receives per course segment varies by district based on the funding formula. Districts receive \$25 per course segment to defer administrative costs.

¹²⁸ Georgia Credit Recovery Program; retrieved August 6, 2011, <http://www.gacreditrecovery.org/Home.aspx>

¹²⁹ Personal communication with Joe Cozart, GAVS, August 4, 2011

¹³⁰ Hawaii has only a single, statewide school district; therefore the multi-district designation for online schools in other states does not apply.

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.¹³¹ In 2008 the legislature passed HB2971 SD2, which implemented the task force recommendations. The bill directed the Department of Education (DOE) to expand online learning opportunities for students across the state by building on online programs, and proclaimed that “online learning is a strategic vehicle that will define the Department as a 21st Century learning institution.”¹³² To that end, the Hawaii Online Task Force created the Hawaii Virtual Learning Network (HVLN).

The most important part of the legislation directed the charter partners, including the DOE’s E-School, Myron B. Thompson Academy, and the University of Hawaii Online Learning Academy, to expand and systematize online course offerings. To accomplish this, the HVLN has:

- established criteria, evaluated, and approved online courses and offered training to teachers in online instruction
- provided centralized support services to online students
- established partnerships with institutes of higher education, private schools, charter schools, state virtual schools, and commercial vendors¹³³

HVLN’s more than 90 courses are available to all public schools and to private schools during summer sessions; all students pay for courses offered during the summer session. During the school year, public school students are offered courses at no charge. 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 is a supplemental online program offering courses to grades 7-12; it had 1,486 enrollments in 2010-11. Myron B. Thompson Academy is a full-time charter school that serves about 500 students statewide. It is mostly online, though it has some face-to-face requirements. These numbers were combined in previous years’ enrollment reports, and together represent a 20% decrease from 2009-10.

Hawaii Technology Academy (HTA) is a statewide online charter school for grades K-12. The academy served 250 K-10 students in its first year of operation in 2008-09, under the cap set by the Charter School Review Panel. The school expanded to 500 students and added grade 11 (K-11) its second year (with a waiting list of 348 students) and expanded to 1,000 students, adding 12th grade during 2010-11 with 843 students on the waiting list. HTA combines face-to face and online instruction through a centrally located learning center on Oahu. The Elite Element Academy¹³⁴ 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. Kamehameha Schools enrolled 160 students in 2011 in blended learning courses with a focus on Hawaiian culture through its ‘Ike Hawaii Distance Learning Program.¹³⁵

State policies

State policies did not change significantly in 2011 and are available in *Keeping Pace 2010* and at www.kpk12.com.

¹³¹ Online Learning Task Force Report to Hawaii State Legislature; retrieved August 1, 2011, http://doe.k12.hi.us/reports/tolegislature_2008/A20-EduOnlineLearningTaskForce.pdf

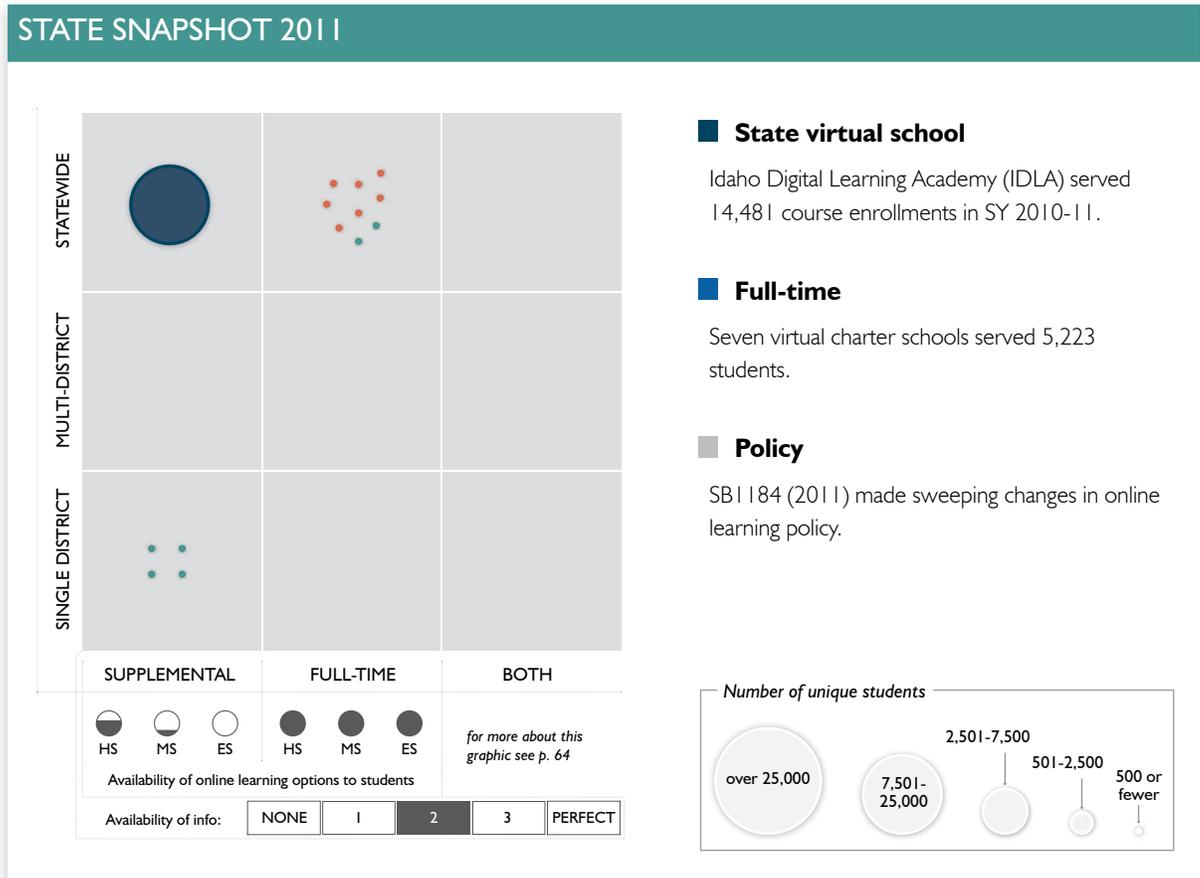
¹³² HB2971; retrieved August 1, 2011, http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2008/bills/HB2971_sd2_.htm

¹³³ Hawaii Virtual Learning Network; retrieved August 1, 2011, <http://hvl.n.k12.hi.us/>

¹³⁴ Elite Element Academy; retrieved August 1, 2011, <http://www.eliteelementacademy.com/>

¹³⁵ Kamehameha Schools Distance Learning; retrieved August 1, 2011, <http://ksdl.ksbe.edu/ikehawaii>

Idaho



Idaho has a state virtual school with the Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA), full-time charters, district programs and a state distance education academy.¹³⁶ The seven virtual public charter schools are 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, ICON (Idaho Connects Online School), and Kootenai Bridge Academy, which is open to high school juniors and seniors ages 16-20. The seven virtual charter schools enrolled 5,223 students in 2010-11.¹³⁷ Idaho Distance Education Academy is similar to a virtual charter but is classified as a distance education academy. There are a few district programs, including the Bonneville District Virtual Academy which launched an online program for grades K-9 in 2009 using K12 Inc. curriculum. The Vallivue, Emmett, and Coeur d'Alene school districts also offer online programs, largely using commercial online learning provider content and technology support.

SB1184, passed in 2011, makes sweeping changes in online learning policy affecting key issues around supplemental online course providers.¹³⁸ The law includes the following provisions:

- Provides expanded student choice to enroll in online courses without district approval beginning with the 2012-13 school year, with specific limitations, e.g., state does not fund

¹³⁶ Idaho Public Charter Schools; retrieved May 9, 2011, http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/charter_schools/regions.htm

¹³⁷ Idaho SDE enrollment statistics by district; retrieved June 22, 2011, http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/statistics/fall_enrollment.htm

¹³⁸ SB1184; retrieved May 9, 2011, <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/legislation/2011/S1184Bookmark.htm>; all quotes in the following section are from the legislation

online courses beyond a full class load, courses must be verified to meet state content standards by the State Department of Education (SDE) or IDLA, and the teacher must be Idaho certified and qualified to teach the course. Students may choose an online course from an out-of-district provider even if the online course is available through the student's local district.

- Assigns two-thirds of students' average daily attendance (ADA) funding for the single online course to the course provider, except when a "school district or public charter school has a contract in place for the provision of online courses."
- Increases the percentage of instructional staff allowance that can be used to pay for virtual instruction from 5% to 15%.
- Requires the State Board of Education to create digital citizenship standards, and an online course graduation requirement for students beginning with the graduating class of 2016.¹³⁹ The online learning requirement was codified in August 2011, requiring two online credits (a credit is equal to a semester), "one (1) of which will be from an asynchronous online course. The second credit may be an online course or blended course credit."¹⁴⁰ The code also updated the state's definitions of an online course and online learning, and defined blended learning: "A blended course ... consists of a course having between 51% and 79% of the course content delivered through the use of technology and may include models such as rotation model, flex model, or online lab model."¹⁴¹
- Provides funding for mobile computing devices for high school teachers in 2012-13 and for high school students in 2013-14. The state will procure the devices unless a district indicates it already has acquired hardware that meets state standards. In this case, the district would receive funds equal to what is being spent by the state on individual devices and support based on the size of the district. Mobile devices are funded through the Educational Support Program, a state appropriation from "total state funds" for education, before district funding is apportioned. A funding formula in the Educational Support Program determines the annual level of support for mobile devices.
- Creates a task force to develop a plan for one-to-one mobile computing devices and online courses and to recommend online course graduation requirements to the State Board, which must approve the task force suggestions. Dollar values for the one-to-one mobile computing devices are based on a percentage of a "support value," which varies upon state funding each year. The Technology Task Force is formulating recommendations on a range of online items omitted from SB1184.¹⁴²
- Provides funds for "professional development and training that promotes the effective use of technology" to "train high school staff in the use of mobile computing devices by students in the classroom, and the integration of such use into the curriculum." Professional development is also funded through the Educational Support Program. A funding formula in the Educational Support Program determines the annual level of support for professional development.
- Funds the development of "high quality digital learning resources and software linked to state and local curricula, including model lesson plans, content and formative and summative assessment tied to rigorous college and career-ready standards and safe and secure online knowledge sharing and collaboration systems."
- Funds online Advanced Placement and dual-credit courses, but eliminates funding for courses taken outside the traditional school day, impacting student access to accelerated options.

¹³⁹ SB1184 originally required four online courses for graduation, but a final definition for the online learning requirement is pending as of September 2011. Where online learning requirements in MI and AL focused on promoting the 21st century skills that usually accompany online instruction, the ID legislation has been perceived more as a cost-cutting measure and has met with significant resistance from stakeholders.

¹⁴⁰ IDAPA 08.02.03.105; retrieved August 29, 2011, <http://adm.idaho.gov/adminrules/rules/idapa08/0203.pdf>

¹⁴¹ Ibid

¹⁴² Technology Task Force; retrieved July 6, 2011, <http://www.studentscomefirst.org/technologytaskforce.htm>

- Allows higher education institutions to open charter high schools, including virtual charters.

SB1184 reduces guaranteed funding for IDLA to \$3.5 million for fiscal years (FY) 2013 and 2014,¹⁴³ following the 22% reduction in the IDLA budget for 2010-11. Effective July 2012, the third and largest component of the IDLA's three-part funding formula will be eliminated, with fractional ADA funding replacing the existing state appropriation. If revenue received by IDLA is less than \$3.5 million in FY2013 or FY2014, then the state will make up the difference for those two years. IDLA had 14,481 course enrollments in 2010-11, growing only 1% from 14,345 enrollments in 2009-10, after experiencing 49% growth from 9,646 in 2008-09. This is likely a result of the legislative debate and resulting changes in 2011.

Two additional new 2011 laws, SB1108 and SB1110, will impact virtual charter schools as they do all schools in the state. SB1108 eliminates continuing contracts for Idaho teachers, removes collective bargaining rights other than for salaries and benefits, and phases out teacher tenure.¹⁴⁴ SB1110 will implement a \$38 million pay-for-performance plan (fall 2012) that will give teachers bonuses for filling leadership or hard-to-fill positions.¹⁴⁵

SB1184 also requires the SDE to develop a website to provide transparency for all education provider expenditures, including online providers. Each provider must prominently display a link to the website on its homepage, update expenditures monthly, provide a description of the purpose of the expenditure, and post its annual budget and master labor agreements.

HB303¹⁴⁶ (2010) allows school districts to count and report average daily attendance of blended program's students the same as traditional instruction. Blended funding may be redefined as a result of SB1184 due to the way in which fractional funding is calculated for the online provider and the local school provider, but there was no change in definition through September 2011.

HB727¹⁴⁷ (2010) significantly revised portions of HB157¹⁴⁸ (2009), which had clarified the role of the Idaho Education Network (IEN), created to provide broadband Internet access and interactive video statewide. HB727 revised the duties of the SDE and the department of administration in providing oversight to the state superintendent of public instruction, and 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.

Idaho SDE rule¹⁴⁹ established a pilot project allowing 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 local education agency.¹⁵⁰

The Idaho Standards for Online Teachers¹⁵¹ were approved by the State Board of Education and adopted in 2010 by the Idaho legislature, establishing 10 core standards for online teacher competency.

Additional details on funding, governance, tracking, and accountability can be found in *Keeping Pace 2010* and on www.kpk12.com.

¹⁴³ Idaho SB1197, section 11; retrieved May 9, 2011, <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/legislation/2011/S1184Bookmark.htm>

¹⁴⁴ SB1108; retrieved August 24, 2011, <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/legislation/2011/S1108.htm>

¹⁴⁵ SB1110; retrieved August 24, 2011, <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/legislation/2011/S1110.htm>

¹⁴⁶ HB303; retrieved May 15, 2011, <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/legislation/2009/H0303.htm>

¹⁴⁷ HB727, Idaho Education Network; retrieved May 15, 2011, <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/legislation/2010/H0727.pdf>

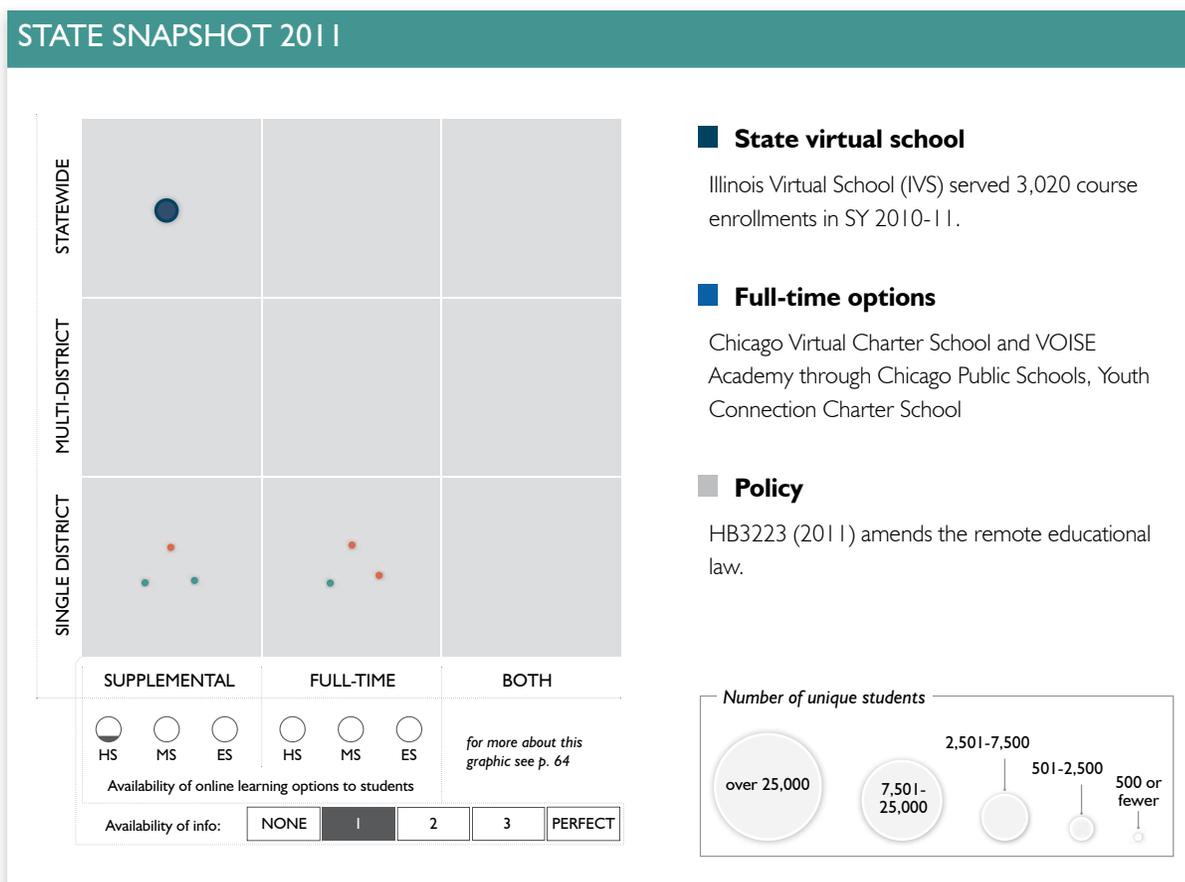
¹⁴⁸ HB157; retrieved June 22, 2011, <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/legislation/2009/H0157.pdf>

¹⁴⁹ Idaho statutes; retrieved June 22, 2011, <http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/idstat/Title33/T33CH16SECT33-1620.htm>

¹⁵⁰ IDAPA 08.02.03.105; retrieved June 22, 2011, <http://adm.idaho.gov/adminrules/rules/idapa08/0203.pdf>

¹⁵¹ Idaho K-12 Online Teaching Standards; retrieved June 22, 2011, http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/forms/augDocs/Online_Teaching_Standards_°SBE.pdf

Illinois



Illinois has a state virtual school (Illinois Virtual School; IVS),¹⁵² several district-level online schools including three in Chicago, and one online school that has been approved to open in 2011-12, although with limitations.

In 2009, Illinois enacted its first online learning law, HB2448, which allowed school districts to establish “remote educational programs” and count these enrollments toward the general state aid formula.¹⁵³ In 2011, HB3223 passed, amending the remote educational law by allowing districts to receive state funding for the remote educational programs only when the student is participating in the program during a day outside the standard school calendar.¹⁵⁴ A limited number of school districts have created a “remote educational program” as defined in HB2448.

Online programs

VOISE (Virtual Opportunities Inside a School Environment) Academy in Chicago uses a blended learning approach in which students attend the physical school. The VOISE Academy is a Chicago Public Schools (CPS) performance school created under the CPS Renaissance 2010 initiative. Youth Connection Charter School, also in Chicago and operated in partnership with K12 Inc., is

¹⁵² Prior to the summer 2009 term, the program was known as the Illinois Virtual High School.

¹⁵³ HB2448; retrieved August 1, 2011, <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/billstatus.asp?DocNum=2448&GAID=10&GA=96&DocTypeID=HB&LegID=44612&SessionID=76>

¹⁵⁴ HB3223; retrieved August 1, 2011, <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/97/HB/PDF/09700HB3223lv.pdf>

a blended program for students 18-21 who dropped out of high school. The school graduated 120 students in 2010-11. Indian Prairie School District offers online courses and reported 250 enrollments in 2010-11.

The Chicago Virtual Charter School (CVCS), with curriculum and services provided by K12 Inc., had its first students in fall 2006. It requires students to meet at a physical location once a week to address a legal provision that charter schools not be home-based. However, a June 2009 court ruling seems to indicate that other aspects of CVCS operations are what keep CVCS from being home-based.¹⁵⁵ This ruling addresses a 2006 lawsuit filed by the Chicago Teachers Union claiming that CVCS was not a legal charter school because Illinois 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. In June 2009, Judge Daniel Riley of the Circuit Court of Cook County dismissed the lawsuit. In his ruling,¹⁵⁶ Riley found that CVCS was not home-based. In addition, he found that 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.

Cambridge Academy is a virtual academy that received approval from the state in June 2011 to offer full-time options for K-12 students statewide. However, to serve students from outside the district it will need to have agreements in place with each student's district of residence. Prairie Crossing Charter School also is offering online courses.

IVS experienced a 24% increase in course enrollments, from 2,445 in 2009-10 to 3,020 during 2010-11. Beginning with the 2010-11 school year, IVS implemented flexible enrollment. Students and schools have the opportunity to enroll in IVS courses 14 terms each school year; each of the 14 terms has a set start and end date. Funding for IVS is through a state appropriation (\$1.45 million in 2011-12), and from course enrollment fees of \$250 per enrollment.

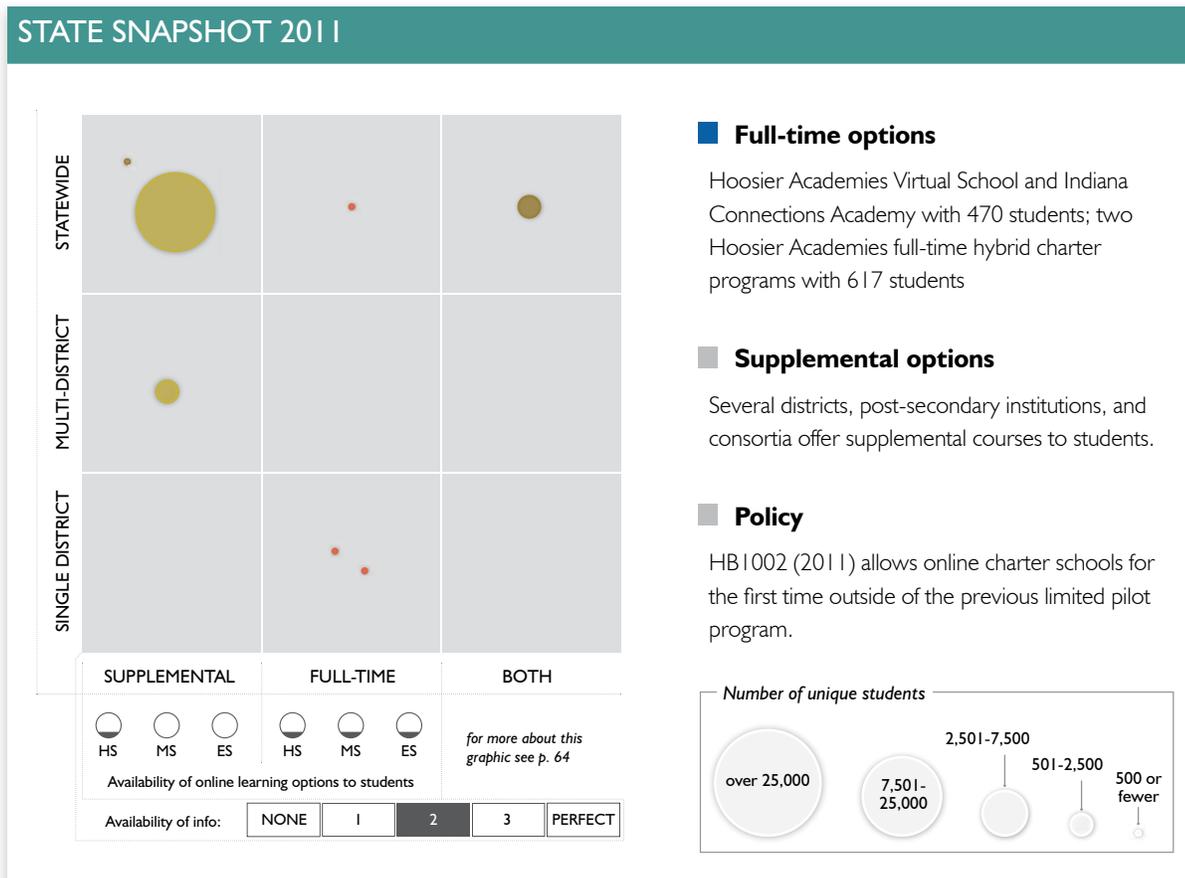
State policies

State policies did not change significantly in 2011 and are available in *Keeping Pace 2010* and at www.kpk12.com.

¹⁵⁵ Illinois charter school law; 105 ILCS 5/27A5; retrieved August 1, 2011, <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/fulltext.asp?DocName=010500050K27A-5>

¹⁵⁶ 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 (ISBE) 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."

Indiana



Full-time options

Hoosier Academies Virtual School and Indiana Connections Academy with 470 students; two Hoosier Academies full-time hybrid charter programs with 617 students

Supplemental options

Several districts, post-secondary institutions, and consortia offer supplemental courses to students.

Policy

HB1002 (2011) allows online charter schools for the first time outside of the previous limited pilot program.

Indiana passed sweeping education reform laws in 2011, including legislation that directly affects virtual charter schools. HB1002 (2011)¹⁵⁷ accomplishes the following:

- It ends the virtual charter school pilot program in existence since 2009, opening the doors for virtual charters to seek sponsors and districts to start their own public programs.
- As of December 31, 2011, it provides that a virtual charter school's funding is equal to the sum of: 1) the virtual charter school's average daily membership (ADM) multiplied by 87.5% (up from 80%) of the school's foundation amount plus 2) the total of any special education grants to which the virtual charter school is entitled.
- It provides that each school year, at least 60% (down from 75%) of students enrolled in virtual charter schools for the first time must have been included in the state's ADM count for the previous school year.
- After December 31, 2011, a virtual charter school is entitled to receive special education grants under IC 20-43-7. These will be calculated in the same manner as special education grants are calculated for other school corporations.

¹⁵⁷ HB1002; retrieved July 11, 2011, <http://www.in.gov/apps/lssa/session/billwatch/billinfo?year=2011&session=1&request=getBill&docno=1002>

Online programs

Indiana has one statewide virtual public school, two statewide virtual charter schools, several statewide supplemental programs, two hybrid charter schools and some district programs. The state's first non-charter virtual public school, Achieve Virtual Education Academy, opened in Wayne Township in Indianapolis for the 2011-12 school year. Hoosier Academies was the first to launch a full-time virtual charter school pilot program, opening the Hoosier Academy Virtual School (previously known as the Hoosier Academies–Virtual Pilot School), which enrolled 204 students in 2010-11. In addition, two hybrid schools, one in Indianapolis and another in Muncie, enrolled a total of 617 students in 2010-11. Hoosier Academies previously was known as the Indiana Virtual Pilot School (IVPS). IVPS utilized the same curriculum and back-office systems as the Hoosier Academies, but was funded separately. IDOE provides program oversight. In addition, Rural Community Schools opened the Indiana Connections Academy Virtual Public School in fall 2010 to serve students in grades 1-8. Moving forward, it will be known as the Indiana Connections Academy.¹⁵⁸ It served 266 students in 2010-11.

In addition to the virtual schools, there are several online programs in Indiana that offer supplemental courses throughout the state. The Indiana Virtual Academy is an initiative of the Ripley County Community Foundation that provides virtual learning opportunities for the four Ripley County School Corporations and the County Career Center. It serves middle and high school students across the state, and it reported 2,123 supplemental enrollments in 2010-11.¹⁵⁹ Indiana Virtual Academy is a member of a broader consortium called the Indiana Virtual Learning Consortium, which 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 various topics.¹⁶⁰ Indiana University High School (IUHS) is a diploma-granting program providing online courses to students around the world; about 60% of enrollments are from Indiana students. IUHS had 3,116 student enrollments in 2010-11, representing a mix of supplemental and diploma-seeking courses. Students are charged \$200–\$225 per course.¹⁶¹

State policies

IC 20-24-7-13 is the definitive education code for virtual charter schools.¹⁶² HB1001 (2005) clarified the ability of charter schools to provide online courses. It did not authorize funding for full-time virtual charter schools.¹⁶³ Legislation in 2009 established the virtual charter pilot program, which was then considered complete with the passage of HB1002 in 2011. Further details about previous legislation can be found on the *Keeping Pace* website. In addition, the state collected information on the status of virtual learning through several mechanisms in 2008 and 2009; findings were reported in *Keeping Pace 2009*.

¹⁵⁸ Rural Community Schools; retrieved June 16, 2011, <http://www.doe.in.gov/news/2009/07-July/VirtualCharterExpansion.html>

¹⁵⁹ Indiana Virtual Academy; retrieved June 16, 2011, <http://www.indva.org/>; enrollments reported through *Keeping Pace 2011* survey

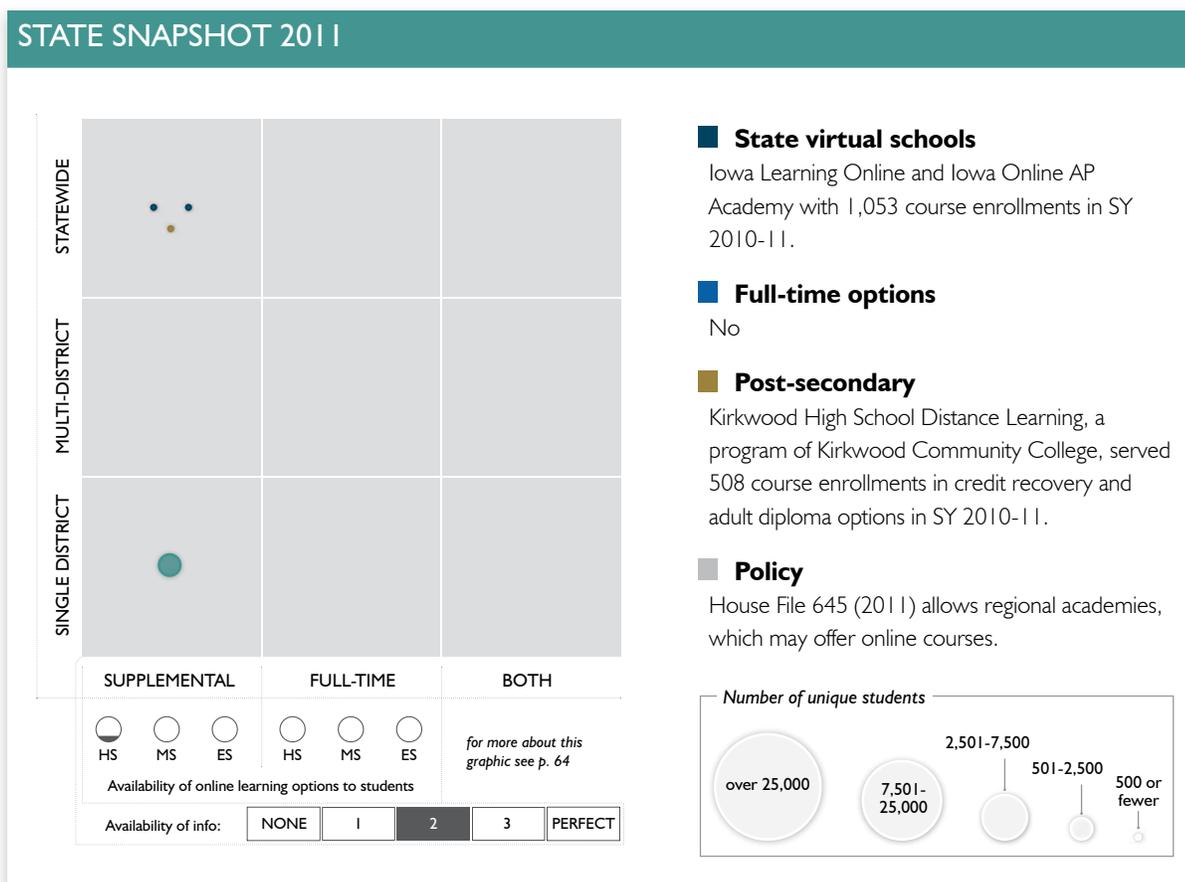
¹⁶⁰ Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics, and Humanities; retrieved June 16, 2011, <http://www.bsu.edu/academy/distance/>

¹⁶¹ Personal communication with Dr. Bruce Colston, Indiana University High School, June 22, 2011

¹⁶² IC 20-24-7-13; retrieved August 24, 2011, <http://www.in.gov/legislative/ic/code/title20/ar24/ch7.html>

¹⁶³ HB1001; retrieved June 16, 2011, <http://www.in.gov/apps/lsa/session/billwatch/billinfo?year=2005&session=1&request=getBill&docno=1001>

Iowa



Iowa has two partnering supplemental statewide online programs, no full-time online schools, little major district-level online learning activity, and one community college offering high school credit recovery. Iowa’s charter school law has been considered the third weakest in the country by the Center for Education Reform, which partially explains the lack of full-time online schools.¹⁶⁴ House File 645, passed in 2011, allows regional academies that may offer online courses.¹⁶⁵ This new law may affect the online learning landscape, but the effects are unclear as of September 2011.

Iowa Learning Online (ILO), run by the Iowa Department of Education (IDOE),¹⁶⁶ offers a variety of Internet, face-to-face, video-based, and blended courses. ILO started in summer 2004, offers courses in grades 9-12 (students in grades 8-12), and reported 574 course enrollments for 2010-11. This reflects an 8% increase in enrollments over the 2009-10 school year. 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. ILO had its first full-time director in 2008, with a mandate from the IDOE to integrate the activities of ILO into the daily activities of the IDOE.

¹⁶⁴ The Center for Education Reform; retrieved August 11, 2011, http://www.charterschoolsearch.com/stateprofile.cfm?&state_id=16

¹⁶⁵ House File 645, Section 18; retrieved August 11, 2011, http://www.legis.iowa.gov/DOCS/NOBA/84_S3287_SFA.pdf

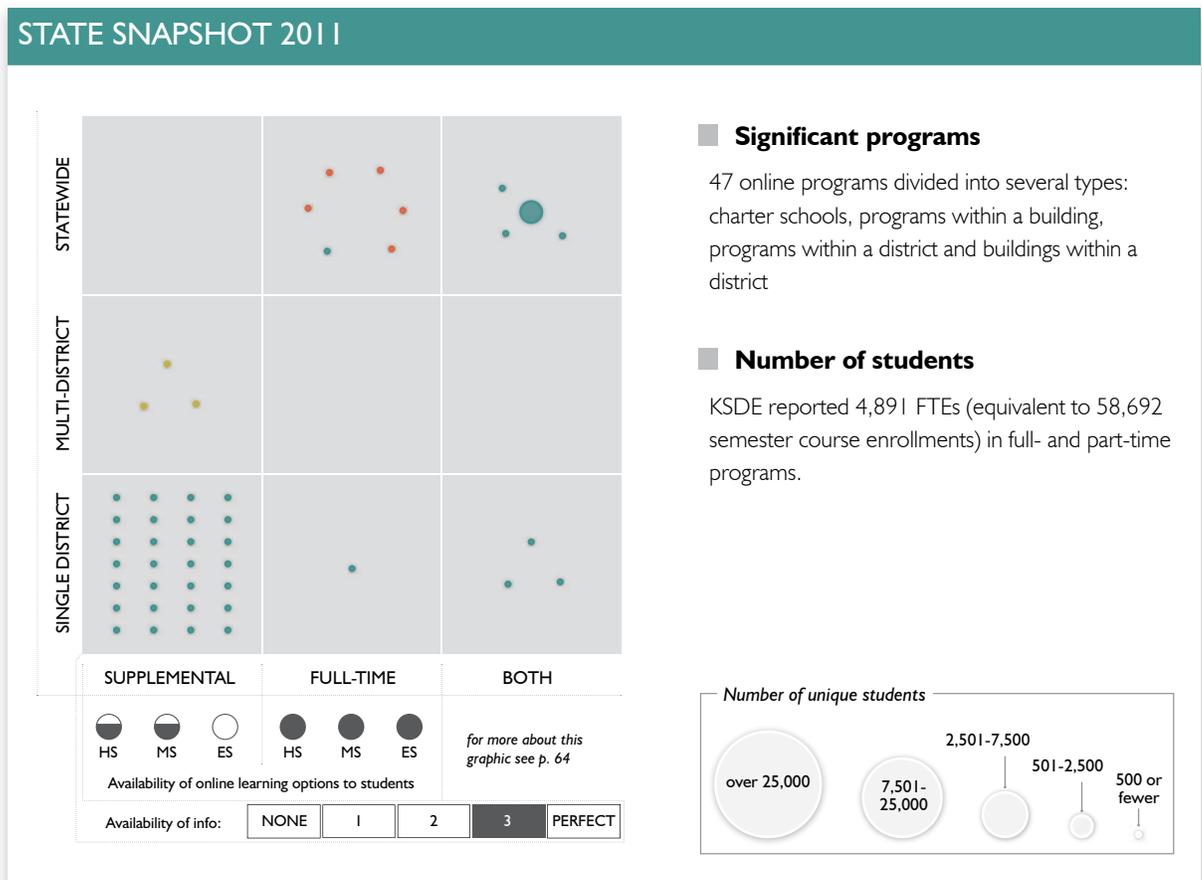
¹⁶⁶ Iowa Learning Online; retrieved August 8, 2011, <http://www.iowalearningonline.org/>

The Iowa Online AP Academy (IOAPA) reported a 22% decrease in course enrollments, from 611 in 2009-10 to 479 in 2010-11. This may be due in part to a reduction in funding in recent years, resulting in a reduction in the number of courses offered. The program received an appropriation of \$481,849 for the 2010-11 school year.

A weighted funding provision was passed for the 2008-09 school year that provided additional funding for schools offering distance courses to other Iowa schools through the use of the Iowa Communication Network.¹⁶⁷

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 to students looking for credit recovery opportunities. Kirkwood had a 31% increase in course enrollments from 389 in 2009-10 to 508 during 2010-11.

Kansas



Kansas has extensive district-level online learning activity, including full-time schools that are drawing from across the state. 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 2007 questioned whether KSDE's policies were being

¹⁶⁷ I.C.A. 257.11; retrieved August 8, 2011, <http://coolice.legis.state.ia.us/Cool-ICE/default.asp?Category=billinfo&Service=IowaCode&input=257.11>

carried out appropriately.¹⁶⁸ The Virtual School Act, SB669 (2008), 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 list 47 online programs in Kansas, divided into several types: charter schools, programs within a building, programs within a district, and buildings within a district.¹⁶⁹ KSDE reported 4,891 FTEs (equivalent to 58,692 semester course enrollments) in 2010-11, a 22% increase from 2009-10. A significant but unknown percentage of online students in Kansas are part-time, and the number of unique students is unknown. All grade levels are represented in online schools. Kansas Online Learning Program (KOLP) started in 2010 and offers online courses to grades K-12 through the Centre School District. In 2011, KOLP created the adult learning initiative to help adults obtain a high school diploma.

State policies

State policy guiding virtual education is based on SB669, a legislative brief,¹⁷⁰ and documents available on the KSDE website, including an extensive explanation of Virtual Education Requirements.¹⁷¹ The policies define:

- virtual schools,
- registration and reporting requirements for online programs,
- funding and attendance information,¹⁷² and
- quality assurance and accountability information for online programs, including communication guidelines.

Details can be found in *Keeping Pace 2010* and on www.kpk12.com.

¹⁶⁸ School District Performance Audit Report, *K-12 Education: Reviewing Issues Related to Virtual Schools*, April 2007; retrieved August 4, 2011, http://www.kansas.gov/postaudit/audits_perform/07pa29a.pdf

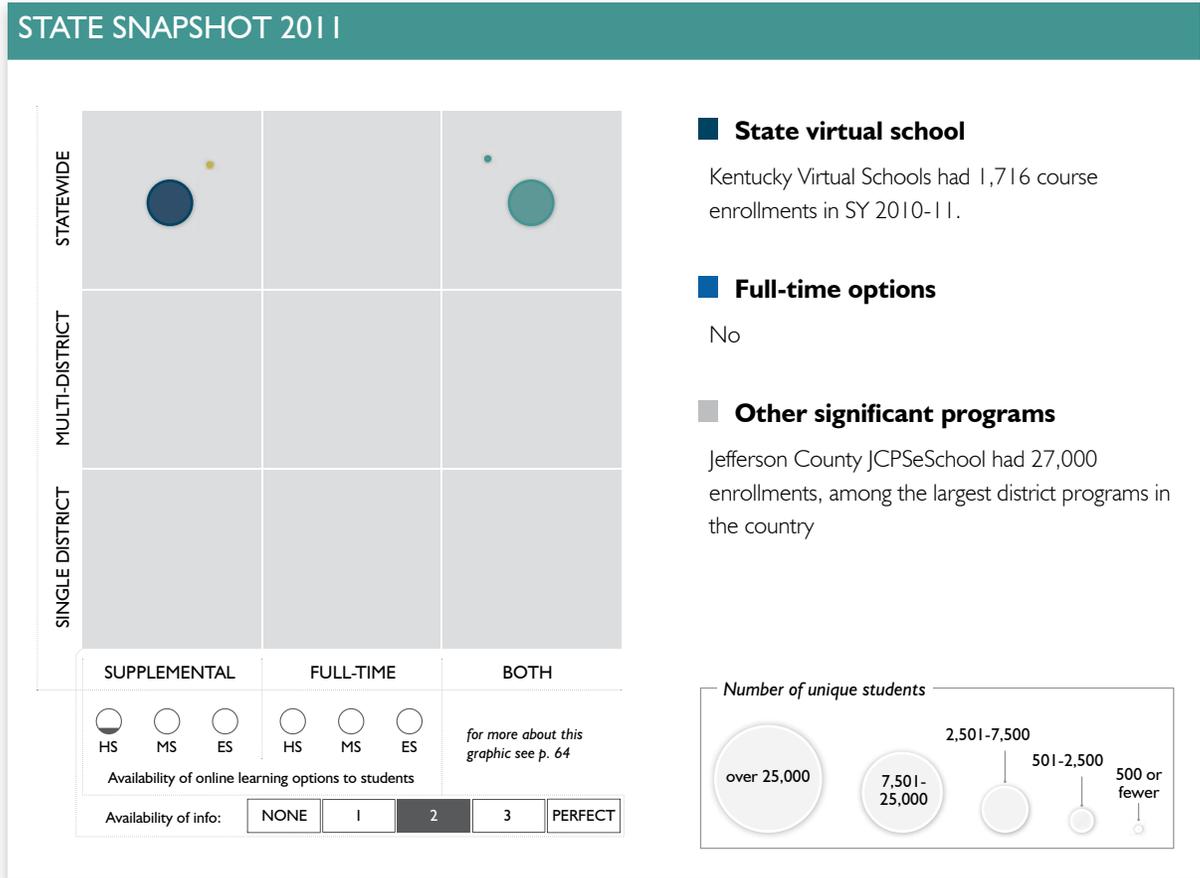
¹⁶⁹ 2010-2011 Virtual List; retrieved August 4, 2011, from <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=455>

¹⁷⁰ SB669 Legislative brief; retrieved August 4, 2011, http://skyways.lib.ks.us/ksleg/KLRD/2008ConfCommRpts/ccrb669_001_23.pdf

¹⁷¹ Virtual Education Requirements; retrieved August 4, 2011, <http://www.ksde.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=vQyfsb4K6ig%3d&tabid=455>

¹⁷² Guidelines for Reporting Virtual Education Students to KIDS; retrieved October 11, 2011, <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=2491>

Kentucky

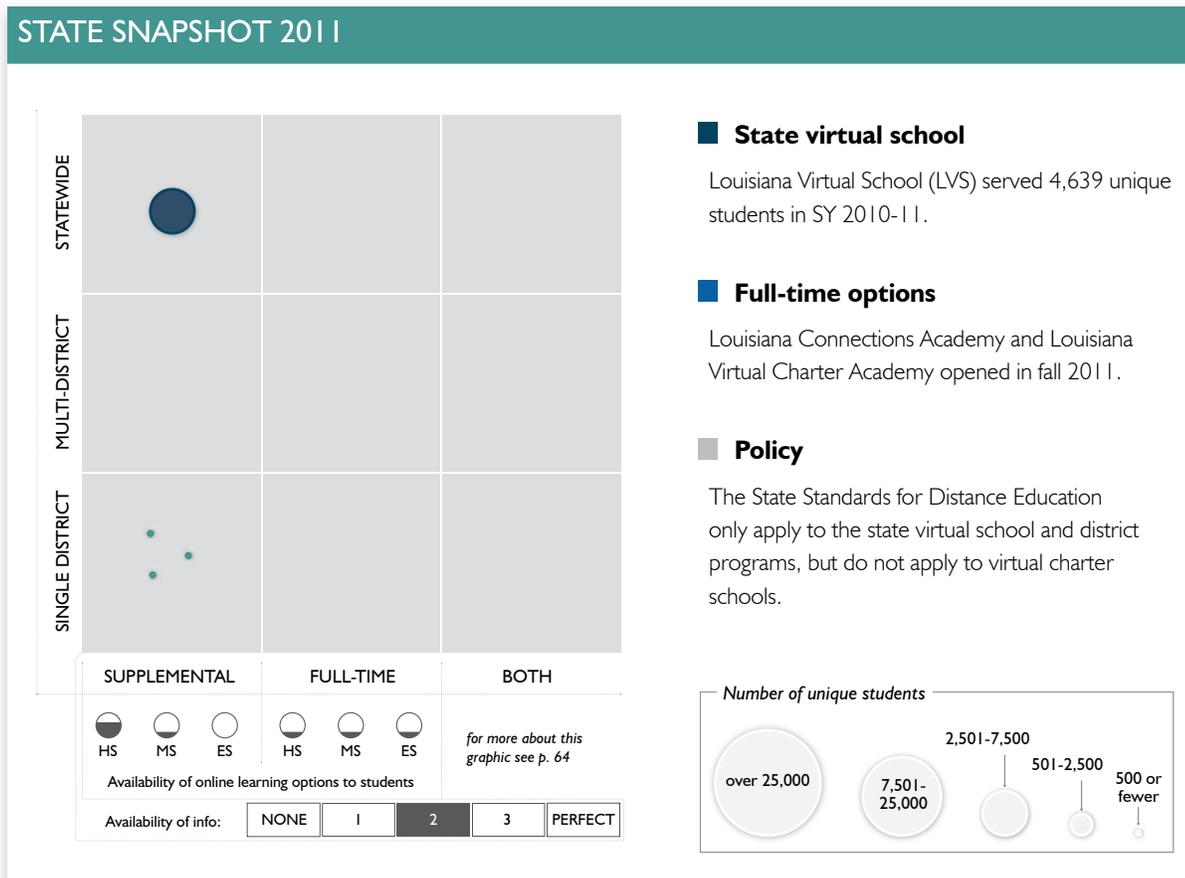


Kentucky Virtual Schools (KYVS) is the state virtual school (formerly Kentucky Virtual High School) and encompasses eLearning Kentucky (online professional development), Area Technology Centers, and other state agency partners. Kentucky does not have charter schools or charter school legislation. There is a prominent district online program in Jefferson County, JCPSeSchool with 27,000 course enrollments.

The Kentucky Virtual Schools program was created by the governor in January 2000 and serves grades 9-12, although courses are made available to qualified middle school students upon the recommendation of their school and approval of the course instructor. KYVS reported a 6% increase in course enrollments, from 1,615 in 2009-10 to 1,716 enrollments and 1,137 unique students in 2010-11. KYVS offers 66 supplemental online courses that students can take with the permission of their resident school district, including 22 Advanced Placement® courses. KYVS is funded through an annual state legislative allocation, which was reduced in 2011 from \$800,000 to \$753,100, and also via course fees paid by school districts.

JCPSeSchool offers over 60 online courses to students in grades 3-12, as well as credit recovery for middle school students. While most students are local, over 200 institutions from 11 states bought enrollment slots in 2010-11. It is a competency-based curriculum with rolling enrollment; students take a proctored exam when they complete the course content. State-level end-of-course exams are still required and offered five times a year. BAVEL (the Barren Academy of Virtual and Expanded Learning) serves about 90 full-time students alongside supplemental enrollments each year.

Louisiana



Louisiana is opening its first two statewide full-time online schools in fall 2011. Louisiana Virtual School is the state virtual school with 8,578 course enrollments in 2010-11; and district programs offer distance learning courses, including satellite and compressed video.

Online programs

Two virtual charters have been authorized to begin serving students in fall 2011. Louisiana Connections Academy (LACA) is authorized to serve students statewide in grades K-12. Louisiana Virtual Charter Academy (LAVCA), a K12 Inc. school, is available to Louisiana students in grades K-10.

The Louisiana Virtual School (LVS) started in fall 2000 and is a supplemental program for grades 6-12; it offers 66 unique course titles in both block and full-year formats. In 2010-11, students from 107 (out of about 275) districts, diocesan systems, and independent charter and nonpublic schools participated with LVS. In 2010-11, there were 4,639 students in 5,659 course seats (a mix of block, one-semester, and full-year course enrollments), accounting for 8,578 one-semester enrollments.¹⁷³ This is a 20% drop from 5,789 students in 7,030 course seats in 2009-10. A notable element of LVS is the Algebra I Online Project, which provides students with a certified Algebra I instructor and a standards-based curriculum delivered through a web-based course. It also provides the mathematics teacher with face-to-face and online professional development opportunities to assist with facilitation of in-class learning activities that support teacher efforts toward mathematics certification.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Personal communication with Sandy Huval, July 28, 2011. Some of the fluctuation in enrollment numbers is due to an increase in students taking full-year courses in lieu of block schedule courses.

¹⁷⁴ Algebra I Online Project; retrieved June 20, 2011, <http://www.louisianavirtuallschool.net/?algebra>

State policies

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. Historically, online charter applicants have sought authorization from BESE. BESE formed a Virtual Education Study Group in fall 2009 to study the unique needs of virtual schools and the students attending them, as well as any policy revisions required to ensure needs are met. Though no formal recommendations were issued, feedback from the group has influenced recent policy changes.

In June 2009, Louisiana lifted its 70-school cap on charter schools with the passage of HB519, enacted to improve the state's competitiveness for federal Race to the Top funds.¹⁷⁵ In the 2010-11 school year there were 90 charter schools operational statewide, up from 65 in 2008-09.¹⁷⁶ An additional 11 are expected to open for 2011-12, including two online charter schools approved at the December 2010 BESE meeting.¹⁷⁷

The Department of Education published State Standards for Distance Education¹⁷⁸ that cover online learning and other types of distance education. The standards do not apply to virtual charters. Further details can be found in *Keeping Pace 2010*.

Funding

Louisiana Virtual School receives funding from a variety of state, federal, and foundation sources. Prior to the 2010-11 school year, no tuition was charged other than tuition fees assessed by university partners for dual enrollment. Beginning with the fall 2010 semester, LVS began collecting \$150 per course enrollment from the student's district, school, or LEA. LVS is primarily a BESE 8(g)-funded program. It received an allocation of \$2.27 million for 2011-12, a small reduction from \$2.37 million in 2010-11 and a significant drop from \$2.7 million in 2009-10. LVS also will receive about \$466,000 (a reduction from \$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, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded \$250,000 to the DOE and Algebra I Online project. The total budget from state allocations and grant funding for 2011-12 is stable at roughly \$2.9 million, though that was a reduction of about \$1.5 million compared to 2009-10.

Virtual charters are considered Type 2, chartered through the BESE. As a result, they receive Minimum Foundation Program funding at 90% of the state and local per-pupil amount of the district in which the student resides, as calculated per charter school law.¹⁷⁹

Quality assurance, teaching, and curriculum

At this time, the State Standards for Distance Education do not apply to charter schools, but do apply to the state virtual school and district programs. With the approval of the first two virtual charters to open in 2011, it is likely that new rules for distance education will be proposed.

¹⁷⁵ HB519 (2009); retrieved June 20, 2011, <http://www.legis.state.la.us/billdata/streamdocument.asp?did=667635>

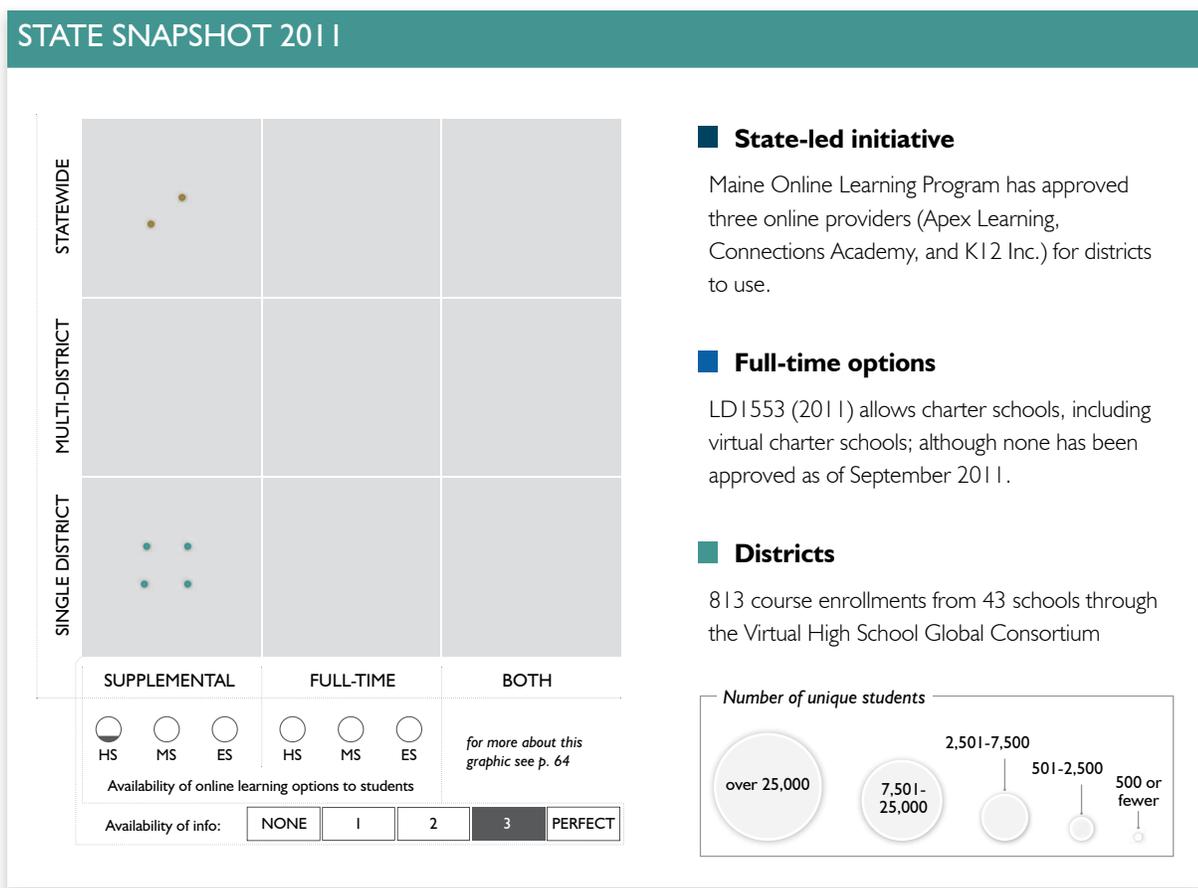
¹⁷⁶ DOE charter school program; retrieved June 20, 2011, http://www.doe.state.la.us/divisions/charters/key_concepts.html and list of all Louisiana charter schools; retrieved June 20, 2011, <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/16821.pdf>

¹⁷⁷ BESE December 2010 meeting minutes; retrieved September 6, 2011, <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/17860.pdf>

¹⁷⁸ State Standards for Distance Education, January 2000, published by the Louisiana Department of Education; retrieved June 20, 2011, <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/2756.pdf>

¹⁷⁹ BESE December 2010 meeting minutes; retrieved September 6, 2011, <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/17860.pdf>

Maine



Online learning has been limited in Maine, as the state has no major statewide online programs. LD1553¹⁸⁰ (2011) allows charter schools in Maine for the first time, including virtual charter schools; however, none has been approved as of September 2011. Online learning options include:¹⁸¹

- The Maine Online Learning Program (MOLP) was created by SP0531 (2009)¹⁸² to promote online learning programs and courses for K-12 students. MOLP is meeting its goals primarily through establishing an approved list of providers for districts. As of August 2011, MDE has approved three providers: Apex Learning, Connections Academy, and K12 Inc.¹⁸³ The MDE will be required to report online data annually (beginning with the 2011-12 school year) to the legislature, including a list of programs and courses offered; the number of participating students; student performance; expenditures; and the number of students unable to enroll because of space limitations.
- The Virtual High School Global Consortium has 43 member schools (36% of all middle and high schools) in Maine. It reported 813 course enrollments in 2010-11.

¹⁸⁰ LD 1553, retrieved August 2, 2011, http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/bills_125th/billtexts/SP049601.asp

¹⁸¹ 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

¹⁸² Maine public law, Chapter 330; retrieved August 1, 2011, http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/bills_124th/chappdfs/PUBLIC330.pdf; further quotes are from this source

¹⁸³ Approved providers list; retrieved September 2, 2011, <http://www.maine.gov/education/technology/molp/approved.html>

- AP4ALL was established to provide equity of access to Advanced Placement courses for low-income students; it is managed by the Maine Department of Education (MDE). AP4ALL increased from 2007-08, when there were six courses with 88 enrollments, to 11 courses/200 enrollments in 2008-09, to 14 courses/374 enrollments in 2009-10. AP4ALL was funded by a federal AP/IP grant that ended in June 2010, when the program was suspended. It was resurrected in 2011-12 and as of August 2011 reported 230 course enrollments.
- The University of Maine's Academ-e program offers 22 courses and has about 245 juniors and seniors from Maine high schools participating in University courses each semester. The program is funded through two sources: the University of Maine, which discounts tuition by 50%, and the Maine Legislature's Aspirations Program, which covers the remaining 50%.
- In 2009-10, K12 Inc. started a pilot program with two Maine school districts, Regional School Unit 2 and Maine School Administrative District 31. In 2010-11, these programs reported about 26 students per semester participating in 28 courses in a variety of subjects.
- The Maine Learning Technology Initiative 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 nine years. It will be the first in the country 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 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 career centers.¹⁸⁴
- The Maine Project Based Learning Program is a pilot program that started with a 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 by the MDE, Maine State Library, University of Maine, and 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 multipoint video conferences.

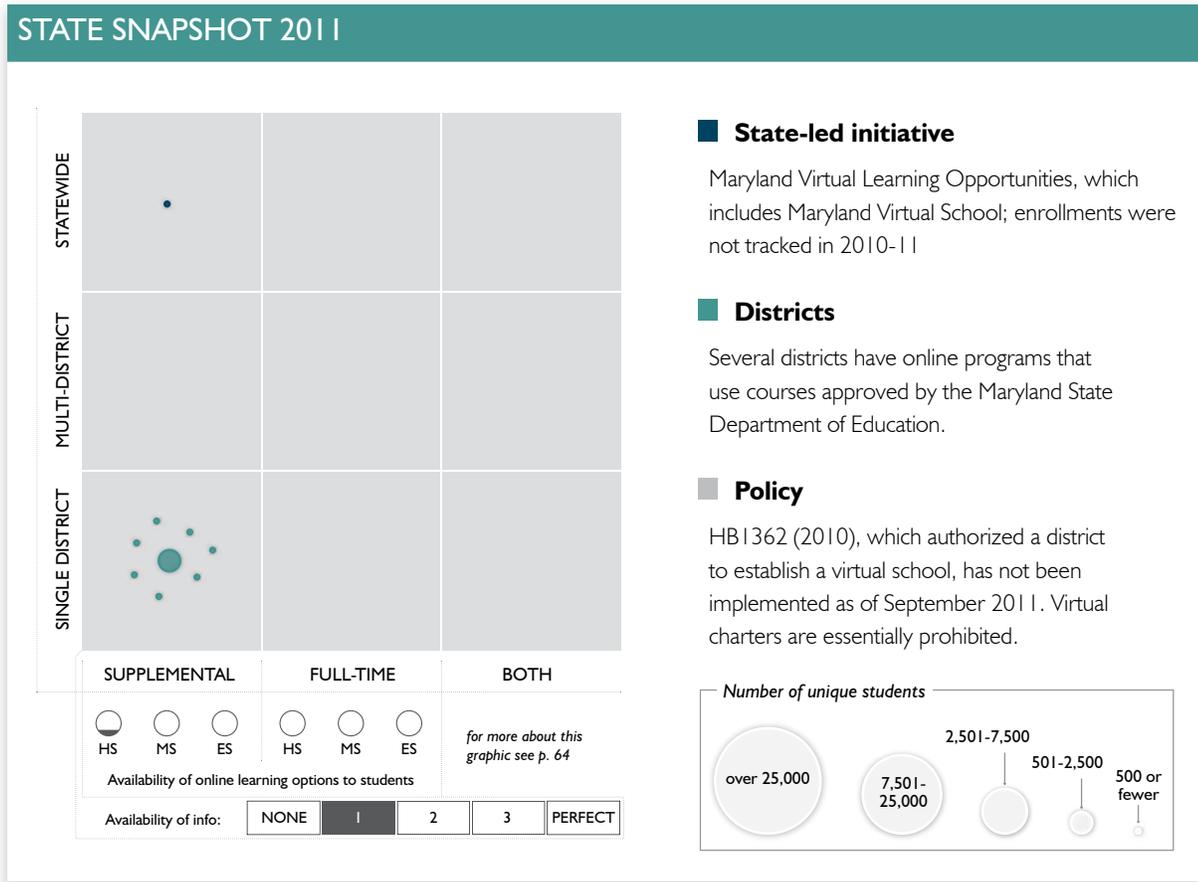
LD1553 (2011) allows for the creation of charter schools in Maine, including virtual charter schools, which it defines as schools "that offer educational services predominantly through an online program." The law creates a State Charter School Commission, the only entity that can authorize virtual charter schools. (Other types of authorizing entities are allowed in the law, and they can authorize charter schools that have an online component). The law has several quality assurance measures, including:

- Courses must meet state content standards.
- Parents must verify the number of hours of educational activities completed by the student each school year.
- The school must monitor students through proctored exams and biweekly parent-teacher conferences. It must provide "regular instructional opportunities in real time."
- State assessments must be provided in a proctored setting.

Maine allows students to enroll across districts, so the potential exists for the creation of statewide online charter schools. As of September 2011, the State Charter School Commission had not yet authorized any virtual charter schools; the timing of next steps is unknown, including whether virtual charter schools are likely to be operational by fall 2012.

¹⁸⁴ Maine SDE press release; retrieved August 2, 2011, <http://www.maine.gov/tools/whatsnew/index.php?topic=DOENews&id=69205&v=article>

Maryland



Maryland has a state-led initiative with Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities (MVLO), and several districts offer local online programs using courses approved by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). These districts include Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Frederick, Prince George’s, Montgomery, and Washington County Public Schools. Because of a legal provision that courses delivered more than 80% online must be approved by the state, while courses delivering less than 80% online do not need such approval, several blended learning initiatives exist. These include pilot programs in Prince George’s County Schools and in Baltimore County for at-risk and/or incarcerated students. Cecil County Schools, in partnership with other districts, has used a federal Title II D competitive partnership grant to develop a blended learning world history course that will be shared statewide.¹⁸⁵ Maryland charter school law effectively prohibits online charter schools.

HB1362 (2010) authorized school districts to establish a virtual public school subject to the approval of MSDE.¹⁸⁶ The legislation does not state whether a public school student has the choice of enrolling in online courses in programs outside the resident school district. Although slated to go into effect in fall 2011, the governor tasked MSDE with reviewing and recommending changes to HB1362 during the 2011 legislative session, but no funding was appropriated to support the activities of HB1362, and no new district programs have been initiated as of September 2011. The legislation required the curriculum of a virtual school “have an interactive program with significant online components,” but it 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

¹⁸⁵ Personal communication with MSDE, June 14, 2011

¹⁸⁶ HB1362; retrieved May 15, 2011, <http://mlis.state.md.us/2010rs/billfile/hb1362.htm>

state-certified, but the law does not require any additional training specifically in online instruction, although there are teacher requirements established by MVLO. Also, a virtual school must maintain an office in the state 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.”¹⁸⁷ Without funding support, establishment of virtual schools by local school districts will not likely occur in 2011-12. MSDE will establish a task force in 2011-12 to make recommendations regarding the state-led virtual learning program.¹⁸⁸

Maryland Virtual School (MVS) is one of three components of MVLO directed by MSDE. MVLO was established by HB1197 (2002)¹⁸⁹ and § 7-1002; the first set of approved online courses was piloted in fall 2003. The three separate programs for students and teachers are: 1) MVS, a supplemental online provider for courses bearing high school graduation credit; 2) online professional development; and 3) online High School Assessment (HSA) courses and resources.

Students may take a course through MVS only with permission from the local system and school principal. Course fees are paid either by the school district or the student’s family. Fees range from \$25 per student per course for districts that want to use a course that MSDE owns or leases, to \$800 for a course that includes a highly-qualified instructor. The average fee is \$450-\$600 per course. MVLO does not receive a legislative appropriation and will lose Title II D Ed Tech headquarters funding for 2011-12 since the program was eliminated by Congress.

MVS provides many of the services associated with state virtual schools. It reviews and approves online courses that local school systems (LSS) can offer; licenses online courses for use by LSS; publishes the catalog and technical requirements for courses offered through MVS; and provides approved vendor contact information. However, MVS does not hire and train online teachers; it provides instruction only upon request of the LSS, supplied by the online course vendor. MVS course enrollments were not tracked in 2010-11 due to budget and staff constraints, with student enrollment delegated to individual districts. MVS course enrollments have been declining, from 927 in 2007-08, to 710 in 2008-09, and to 633 in 2009-10.

HB1197 authorizes MSDE to develop standards for teachers and other school system employees for the offering of online courses or services, to review courses and courseware to “assure quality and alignment with the Maryland content standards and other appropriate standards,” and to purchase and develop Internet-based learning resources and courses for students and staff.¹⁹⁰ The law required the 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),¹⁹¹ Maryland schools can only award credit for online courses approved by MSDE, although a district may offer a course that is up to 80% online without going through the online course approval process. The MSDE has established an approval process that applies to all online courses offered by a local school district for high school graduation credit, whether commercial curriculum providers or the school districts themselves develop courses. The MSDE course approval process also applies to online courses from higher education institutions used in partnerships with high schools for dual enrollment. The loss of federal Enhancing Education through Technology funding makes this approval process problematic, with the MSDE exploring various methods to fund approvals.

¹⁸⁷ Maryland Education Code § 9-102; retrieved September 2, 2011, http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/charter_schools/docs/md_charter_school_laws

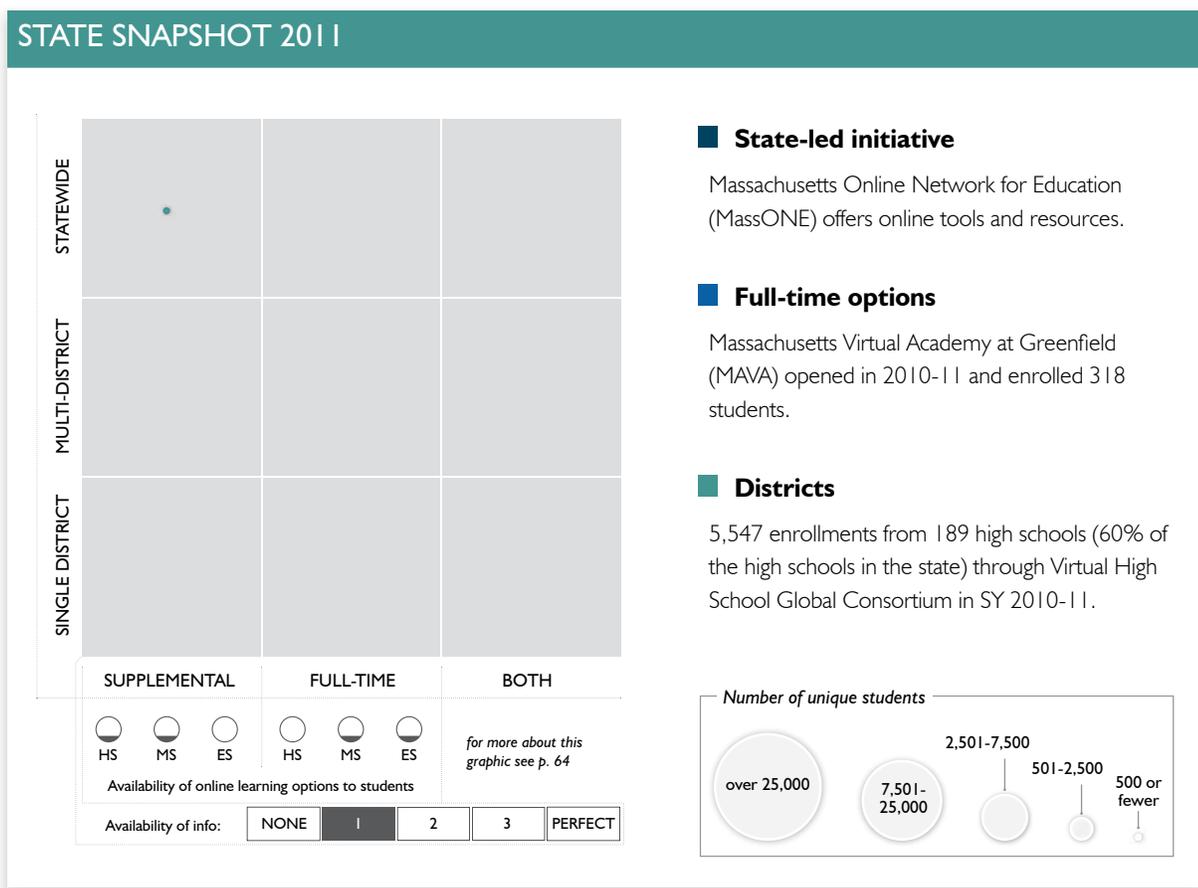
¹⁸⁸ Personal communication with MSDE, June 14, 2011

¹⁸⁹ HB1197; retrieved September 1, 2011, <http://mlis.state.md.us/2002rs/billfile/hb1197.htm>

¹⁹⁰ The State of Online Learning in Maryland 2010-11, Maryland State Department of Education, retrieved May 15, 2011, http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/D895AEF0-476A-46CF-86E5-A77C87A4E129/27450/OnlineLearning_MD_2010_2011.pdf

¹⁹¹ COMAR 13A.03.02.05D(1); retrieved May 15, 2011, <http://www.dsd.state.md.us/comar/comarhtml/13a/13a.03.02.05.htm>

Massachusetts



Massachusetts has one full-time online school operating statewide, a state-led initiative to provide tools and resources to educators (MassONE), and 10,398 students who took courses sponsored by their school districts in 2009-10 (the most recent year for which data are available). As the home of the Virtual High School Global Consortium (VHS), Massachusetts has the most course enrollments of any state in the consortium, with 5,547.

Massachusetts passed a sweeping education law (603 CMR 1.00)¹⁹² in January 2010 that permitted 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.¹⁹³ 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 waive the restrictions.¹⁹⁴ Online students 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,

¹⁹² 603 CMR 1.00; retrieved June 16, 2011, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr1.pdf>

¹⁹³ Board of Elementary and Secondary Education innovation school guidelines; retrieved June 16, 2011, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr48.html>

¹⁹⁴ Letter from Commissioner to Board describing changes, July 13, 2010; retrieved June 16, 2011, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/0710/item2.html>

which specify what subject matter should be taught at each grade level.¹⁹⁵ Students also must take the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) summative tests.¹⁹⁶

Massachusetts Virtual Academy at Greenfield (MAVA)¹⁹⁷ was the first full-time online school to be created under the new law. It opened in fall 2010 in partnership with K12 Inc. after receiving a waiver from the BESE that allowed it to have only 2% of its students live in the district operating the school. While that number is relatively small, it requires that a step be added to the registration process to ensure that a sufficient number of local resident students are enrolled at any given time. MAVA enrolled 318 students in grades K-8 in 2010-11. It is authorized to serve up to 500 students in grades K-8 in 2011-12. Though MAVA sought to expand to grades 9-12, the BESE did not approve the request at its May 2011 meeting.¹⁹⁸ In that same meeting, the BESE voted to deny an application from Hadley Public Schools to open a virtual middle and high school.

The Commissioner of Education and BESE have stated that the Innovation Schools Act is not working as intended.¹⁹⁹ The commissioner has made legislative recommendations, including one to move virtual schools under charter school purview.

In 2009-10, 43% of the school districts in Massachusetts reported having at least one student taking an online course; this is up from 40% in 2008-09.²⁰⁰ This translates to 10,398 students taking an online course that was paid for or sponsored by their district, a 59% increase from 6,560 students in 2008-09. In addition, about 189 middle and high schools (60% of the schools in the state) participated in online courses through VHS in 2010-11, with a total of 5,547 enrollments. It is unclear if the statewide enrollment number includes VHS enrollments. In addition, 63% of districts reported at least one educator taking an online course.

Massachusetts has a state-led learning portal, MassONE, that offers online tools and resources to all 70,000 pre-K-12 teachers in the state, and supports 577,000 students in grades 5-12. Teachers roster students into classes for blended (face-to-face and online) course work. The number of teachers and students who currently are active users has dropped from 50,396 teachers and students (January 2009 to July 2010) to 30,223 from September 2010 through June 2011.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) continues to pilot the use of Moodle to provide teachers online professional development courses. The pilot is supported through No Child Left Behind Title II-D competitive grants, American Recovery and Reinvestment funds, and the federal Special Education Project Focus grant. The Moodle program has seen significant growth, from 57 courses in 2009-10 to 90 in 2010-11, and from 550 participants to 1,119.

State policies

Massachusetts does not have any legislation governing supplemental online courses. However, in 2003 the ESE published “Massachusetts Recommended Criteria for Distance Learning Courses.”²⁰¹ Additional information about that publication is available in *Keeping Pace 2010*.

The ESE launched a pilot program in 2009-10 in online assessment for students taking the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA); 7,500 students will participate in spring 2012. The pilot will continue to grow until the entire MCAS will be offered online.

¹⁹⁵ Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks; retrieved June 16, 2011, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>

¹⁹⁶ Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System; retrieved June 16, 2011, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/>

¹⁹⁷ MAVA website; retrieved June 21, 2011, http://gpsk12.org/virtualschool/virtualschool_home.html

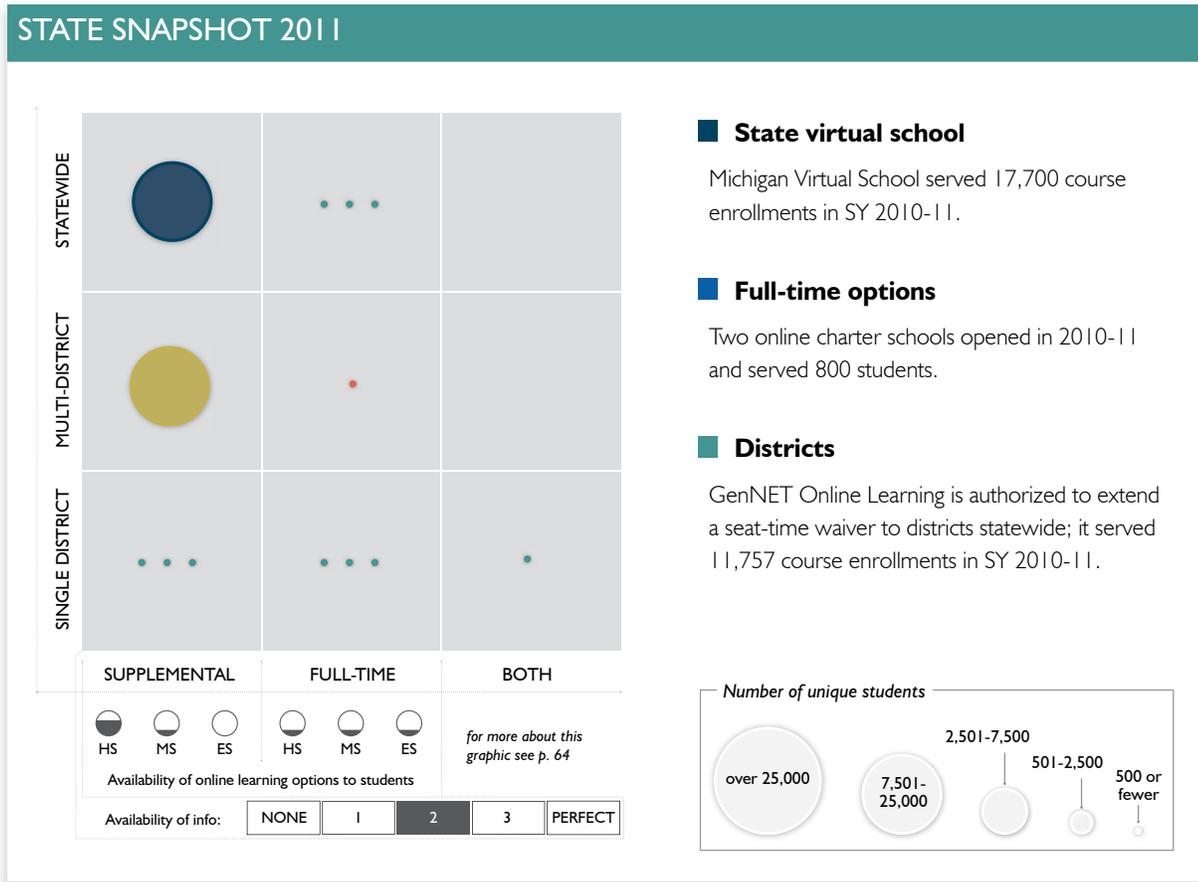
¹⁹⁸ State Board of Education May 24, 2011 meeting minutes; retrieved August 8, 2011, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/minutes/11/0524reg.pdf>

¹⁹⁹ Commissioner memo to BESE May 2011; retrieved June 21, 2011, <http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/0511/item3.html>

²⁰⁰ Personal communication with Connie Louie, BESE; June 21, 2011 Note that all statewide numbers are reported for 2009-10, the most recent year for which data are available.

²⁰¹ Recommended Criteria for Distance Learning Courses, November 2003; retrieved June 16, 2011, from www.doe.mass.edu/edtech/news03/dl_letter.html

Michigan



Michigan has one of the larger state virtual schools, Michigan Virtual School; a large consortium program, GenNET, operated by the Genesee ISD with over 500 districts participating; two statewide online charter schools that opened in 2010; and a number of district programs. Public Act 205,²⁰² passed in 2009, allowed the formation of full-time online schools for the first time in fall 2010.

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. The Genesee ISD was granted a seat-time waiver in 2009. This was extended to over 50 districts using courses selected by GenNET from several online providers in 2010. Courses must be teacher-led to qualify for the waiver. In July 2011, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) released a memo announcing a “Streamlined Process for Approving Seat Time Waivers for 2011-12”²⁰³ in anticipation of a permanent legislative solution.

In an April 2011 message to the Michigan Legislature,²⁰⁴ Michigan’s governor proposed that funding for online courses follow a student rather than being tied to a school district. The governor’s plan also would give districts more control over the length of the school year, day and week, as well as more flexibility when it comes to instruction and classroom configurations. In response to the governor, the Michigan Legislature is developing a comprehensive education reform plan that,

²⁰² Public Act 205 (2009), revisions to Section 380.553 of the Revised School Code; retrieved June 21, 2011, <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-380-553a>

²⁰³ MDE Memorandum July 27, 2011; retrieved August 11, 2011, [http://www.techplan.org/STW/OEII%20STW%20memo%20070711\(4\).pdf](http://www.techplan.org/STW/OEII%20STW%20memo%20070711(4).pdf)

²⁰⁴ Governor Snyder’s Special Message on Education Reform, April 27, 2011; retrieved August 4, 2011, http://www.michigan.gov/documents/snyder/SpecialMessageonEducationReform_351586_7.pdf

among other initiatives, would replace seat time as a primary measure of effectiveness. Until new legislation is enacted, the MDE’s “Streamlined Process for Approving Seat Time Waivers” memo expands the existing process to any district that applies for the 2011-12 school year. Existing seat-time waivers will continue to be recognized. New applications will be accepted from 1) an independent school district-led waiver consortium program; 2) an individual district-designed and operated waiver program; or 3) a blended learning option with certain enrollment caps.

In 2006, the Michigan Legislature was the first in the nation to pass a requirement that students have an “online learning experience” before graduating.²⁰⁵ The MDE’s 2006 guidelines for the online learning experience 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.²⁰⁶ 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.”

The online learning requirement has increased demand for teachers experienced in online instruction. It affords an opportunity to expand Michigan LearnPort®, a collaboration between the MDE and Michigan Virtual University (MVU, the parent organization of MVS). MVU is required by the legislature to offer at least 200 hours of online professional development for classroom teachers free of charge. The LearnPort catalog contains over 380 online courses and professional development modules. LearnPort served 19,718 course enrollments in 2010-11. Through a partnership with MDE’s Office of Special Education Services, LearnPort supports a statewide integrated approach to improvement by providing online courses that address an array of special education services, populations, and issues.

Online programs

Michigan Virtual School (MVS) is a private nonprofit entity funded by annual legislative appropriations, course tuition, and private grants. It had over 17,700 course enrollments in 2010-11, an 11% increase over 2009-10. The legislative appropriation for 2011-12 is approximately \$2.6 million of the total budget of \$6 million. MVS became the first state virtual school in the country to offer an online Mandarin Chinese 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.

MVS continues to work with Cornerstone Charter Schools on the development of a health-focused charter school in Detroit. When the school is launched, students will take many of their core academic courses online. 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. In 2011, the Eaton Intermediate School District established the Relevant Academy, a public school academy dropout recovery program for students ages 16-19. The primary focus is on individual learner success and includes a leadership development component. After an on-campus orientation session, students work at home on laptops, taking online courses through MVS and meeting weekly with mentors.

In 2011, MVS launched an instructor-supported course delivery model featuring highly qualified educators working with one or more students to provide coach-like assistance with online course

²⁰⁵ Public Acts 123 and 124; retrieved June 21, 2011, http://www.michigan.gov/documents/PA_123_and_124_159920_7.pdf

²⁰⁶ Michigan Merit Curriculum; retrieved June 21, 2011, http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Online10.06_final_175750_7.pdf

or learning activities. This model was developed in response to school requests for an instructional format that places an expectation on students to take significant responsibility for their own learning, with the instructor ensuring that students are engaged and making progress. During summer 2011, MVS initiated a pilot online Global Issues and Perspectives course involving schools and students in Michigan and the United Kingdom. The course enables students to have an online global experience and develop a deeper appreciation of other people and cultures.

Serving as a broker of online courses, the GenNET Online Learning portal provides schools with access to various formats of online courses from a list of selected providers, including courses from MVS. GenNET is authorized by the MDE to extend its seat-time waiver to partner districts across Michigan, provided that MDE policies and procedures are followed. Courses must be teacher-led to qualify for the seat-time waiver. The project is funded through course fees, grant awards, and MDE support. It had 11,757 course enrollments in 2010-11.

In 2010, Michigan's first virtual charter schools were chartered by Grand Valley State University and Ferris State University in partnership with K12 Inc. and Connections Academy, respectively. Virtual charters had been prohibited by Michigan legislation, but Public Act 205 (2009) allowed the formation of two full-time online charter schools. As charter school authorizers, public universities in Michigan have the ability to aggregate students from across the state. This is in contrast to school districts and community colleges, which 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.²⁰⁷ After two 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."

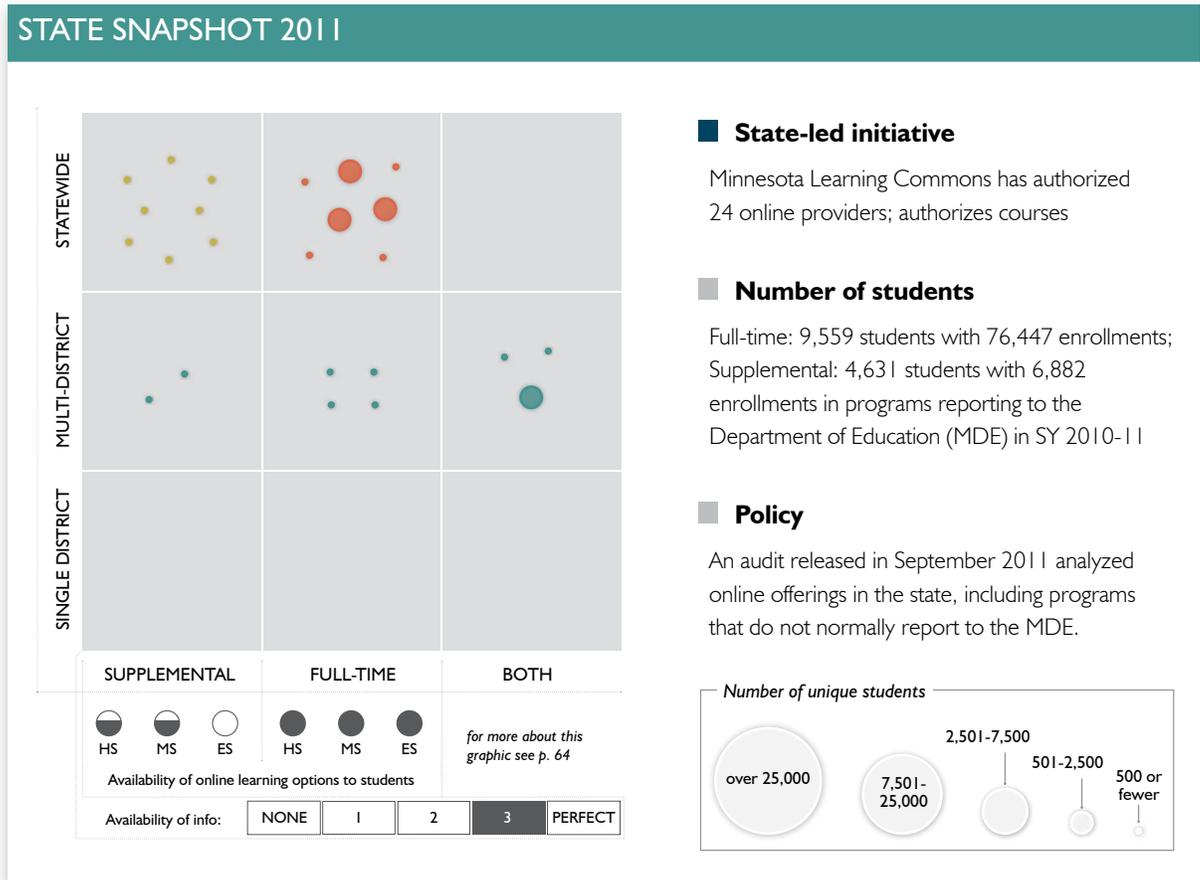
A new educational partnership among local school districts, K12 Inc. and Job Skills Technology Inc., a Michigan-based corporation, provides online courses using K12 Inc. curriculum and teachers. Participating schools have a School of Choice program that allows them to accept and enroll students from the county the school providing the online courses is in or any contiguous counties.²⁰⁸ More than 20 schools are offering online courses through this partnership beginning fall 2011.²⁰⁹ Two other initiatives, the Yes Academy (grades 6-12) and Jenison International Academy (grades 7-10), offer full-time course options.

²⁰⁷ Revised school code, section 380.553; retrieved September 2, 2011, <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-451-of-1976.pdf>

²⁰⁸ Michigan State School Aid Act 1979, Section 388.1705c; retrieved August 6, 2011, [http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(bpugcdzv1rowol45hkq2ws55\)\)/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-94-of-1979.pdf](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(bpugcdzv1rowol45hkq2ws55))/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-94-of-1979.pdf)

²⁰⁹ Michigan Virtual School Programs; retrieved August 4, 2011, <http://mik12learning.com/index.html>

Minnesota



State-led initiative

Minnesota Learning Commons has authorized 24 online providers; authorizes courses

Number of students

Full-time: 9,559 students with 76,447 enrollments; Supplemental: 4,631 students with 6,882 enrollments in programs reporting to the Department of Education (MDE) in SY 2010-11

Policy

An audit released in September 2011 analyzed online offerings in the state, including programs that do not normally report to the MDE.

Minnesota has online charter schools, multi-district programs, single district programs, and intermediate districts and consortia of schools, although no state virtual school. The Omnibus K-12 Education Act of 2003 (amended in 2009)²¹⁰ set forth a number of policies affecting online education. It also directed 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 is the overarching state-level policy activity, covering most online learning programs except district-level programs that offer only supplemental online courses to students enrolled in the district's schools. Minnesota was among the first states to allow students to choose a single online course from among multiple providers. It remains one of the few states to do so.

As of September 2011, there were 24 certified online learning public school providers—eight consortia or intermediate districts, seven charter school programs, and nine multi-district programs serving students statewide.²¹¹ Enrollment data for providers reporting to MDE are shown in Table 15.²¹² The list of 2011 providers is available on the *Keeping Pace* website.²¹³ This does not include

²¹⁰ 124D.09, Minnesota Statutes 2007; retrieved July 7, 2011, http://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/bin/getpub.php?pubtype=STAT_CHAP_SEC&year=curr&rent§ion=124D.09

²¹¹ Certified Online Learning (OLL) Providers as of June 2011, Minnesota Department of Education (MDE); retrieved September 2, 2011, <http://education.state.mn.us/mdprod/groups/Choice/documents/Publication/031616.pdf>

²¹² Annual Report Aggregate Online Learning Certified Program Data, MDE; 2008, 2009, and 2010 reports

²¹³ Minnesota *Keeping Pace* information; retrieved August 25, 2011, <http://kpk12.com/states/minnesota/>

single district programs, which are not required to be approved or report to the MDE (except in aggregate district reports that do not break out online student numbers). The MDE New Provider Online Learning Option Act Provider Application was updated in June 2011.²¹⁴ Providers submit a letter of intent, apply to the MDE, host a site visit, and follow-up with any concerns or outstanding questions. The application includes assurances that all courses meet state standards and all teachers are certified in Minnesota. All providers must renew their application every five years, and the MDE will perform a site visit once every five years, or sooner if a complaint is filed.

	Unique students	Course enrollments	Course completions	Completion percentage
Supplemental (part-time)	4,631	6,882	5,272	77%
Full-time	9,559	76,447	51,713	68%
Total	14,190	83,329	56,985	68%
Credit recovery – supplemental		835	419	50%
Credit recovery – comprehensive		602	359	60%

Table 15: Minnesota 2010-11 enrollment data

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 (ALC) that would be funded at an additional 20% beyond the normal average daily membership (ADM) for students at-risk of not graduating. Three sites (one rural, one intermediate district, and one urban charter) piloted online credit recovery in 2011 without requiring the 20% face-to-face contact time initially recommended. The data they collected indicate a greater percentage of course completions with this approach.²¹⁵

The Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) released the results of a K-12 online learning program audit in September 2011.²¹⁶ The audit is discussed in detail in the Quality and Accountability section of this report. The audit offers a detailed analysis of full-time and supplemental online programs, including single district programs that do not typically report to the MDE.

In March 2011, the MDE sent letters to BlueSky Online School²¹⁷ and its authorizer Novation Opportunities²¹⁸ recommending they terminate their relationship and close the school after determining that the school was graduating students who had not met state curriculum guidelines. BlueSky is primarily a full-time online school that has served students in grades 7-12 since 2000. The school is fighting the closure. As of September 2011, it is enrolling students and offering courses for the 2011-12 school year.

²¹⁴ Online learning option act provider application, retrieved August 12, 2011, http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/Academic_Excellence/School_Choice/Public_School_Choice/Online_Learning/index.html

²¹⁵ Personal communication with Sally Wherry, MDE, September 7, 2011

²¹⁶ Office of the Legislative Auditor, State of Minnesota. Evaluation Report: K-12 Online Learning; retrieved September 26, 2011, <http://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/pecd/2011/k12oll.htm>.

²¹⁷ Letter to Blue Sky Online School sent March 2011; retrieved August 25, 2011, <http://kstp.com/kstpImages/repository/cs/files/LetterBlueSky.pdf>

²¹⁸ Letter to Novation Opportunities sent March 2011; retrieved August 25, 2011, <http://kstp.com/kstpImages/repository/cs/files/EducationOpportunities.pdf>

Online programs

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 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.²¹⁹ Some courses available through the MnLC include fees, while other resources are provided through licenses purchased by the MnLC. MnLC funding is provided through grants and the budgets of member institutions.²²⁰

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

- consortia of schools or intermediate districts: providing supplemental courses to member schools and students across the state
- multi-district programs: providing full-time education and supplemental courses to students statewide
- charter schools: providing full-time education and supplemental online courses to students statewide
- online programs serving special populations and/or school districts

Districts offering supplemental online courses only to their students are not listed on the MDE website.

Students may choose to enroll in online learning programs in one of the following ways:²²¹

- Participate in any approved online learning (OLL) program. No school district or charter school may prohibit a student from participating in online learning.
- Enroll full-time in a comprehensive OLL program through open enrollment, charter school enrollment, or through an agreement between boards.
- Enroll in supplemental OLL courses during a single school year to a maximum of 50% of the student's full schedule of courses per term at the enrolling district.
- Enroll in supplemental courses above 50% of the student's course schedule if the enrolling district grants permission or if an agreement is made between schools for instructional services.
- Students may enroll in more than their 1.0 average daily membership (ADM) for a fee.

Blended learning programs are not specifically authorized by law, however, programs may apply to the Commissioner of Education for a waiver.

State policies

Online learning policy is guided by Minnesota Statutes 124D.095, Online Learning Option Act.²²² Details about funding, accountability, and quality assurance can be found in *Keeping Pace 2010*.

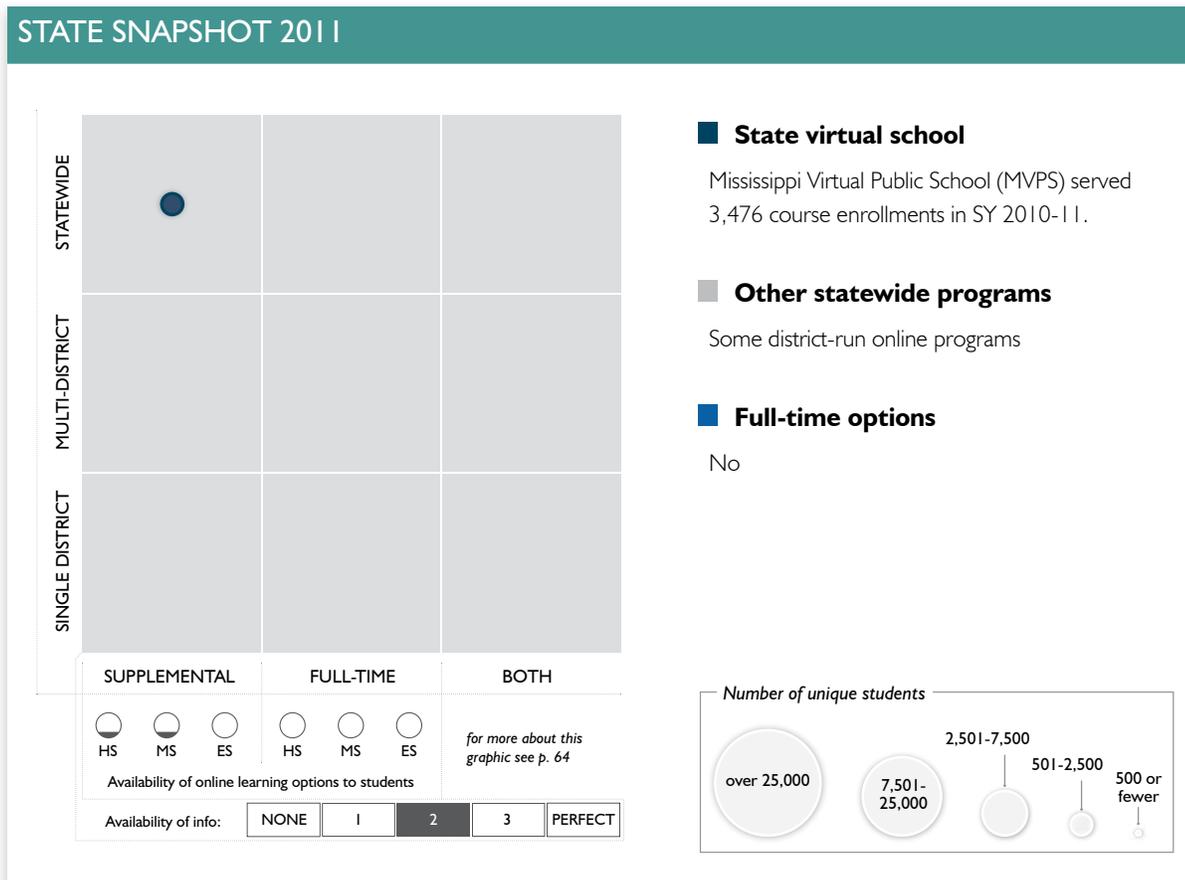
²¹⁹ Minnesota Learning Commons; retrieved July 15, 2011, <http://mnlc.test-hotel.software.umn.edu/about-us.php>

²²⁰ Personal communication with Sally Wherry, MDE, September 22, 2010

²²¹ Minnesota Learning Commons Fast Facts; retrieved July 15, 2011, <http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/groups/Choice/documents/FAQ/021050.pdf>

²²² Minnesota statute 124D.095; retrieved July 7, 2011, <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=124d.095>

Mississippi



The Mississippi Virtual Public School (MVPS), established by legislation in 2006,²²³ is the only major online program in the state. MVPS funding dropped from \$1.8 million in 2009-10 to \$600,000 in 2010-11. MVPS reported 3,476 course enrollments for 2010-11,²²⁴ an annual decrease of 55%.²²⁵ MVPS serves students in grades 9-12, giving preference to juniors and seniors. All students are required to gain approval from their local school district. Private and homeschool students must meet the same requirement, and use the local public school for which they are zoned. HB1056 (2010) authorized the “State Board of Education to select private providers ... to administer, manage, or operate virtual school programs, including operation of the Mississippi Virtual Public School Program.”²²⁶ The Department of Education (MDE) selected Connections Academy to run MVPS. The State Board of Education established policy for virtual schools in 2006 and retains approval authority for all MVPS coursework and policy, and any other programs in the state. It also established a set of guiding principles for virtual schools administered by the MDE.²²⁷ The current charter school law, the New Start School Program and Conversion Charter School Act,²²⁸ allows parents of students of a school that has been failing for three consecutive years to request that the state board turn it into a charter. If 50% of a failing school’s parents are in agreement, they can request the school be converted to charter and seek state board authorization. However, there are no virtual charter schools in Mississippi.

²²³ Mississippi Code 37-161-3 / HB1056; retrieved July 27, 2011, <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/documents/2010/html/HB/1000-1099/HB1056SG.htm>

²²⁴ Personal correspondence with Tina Sellers, Mississippi Department of Education, July 6, 2011

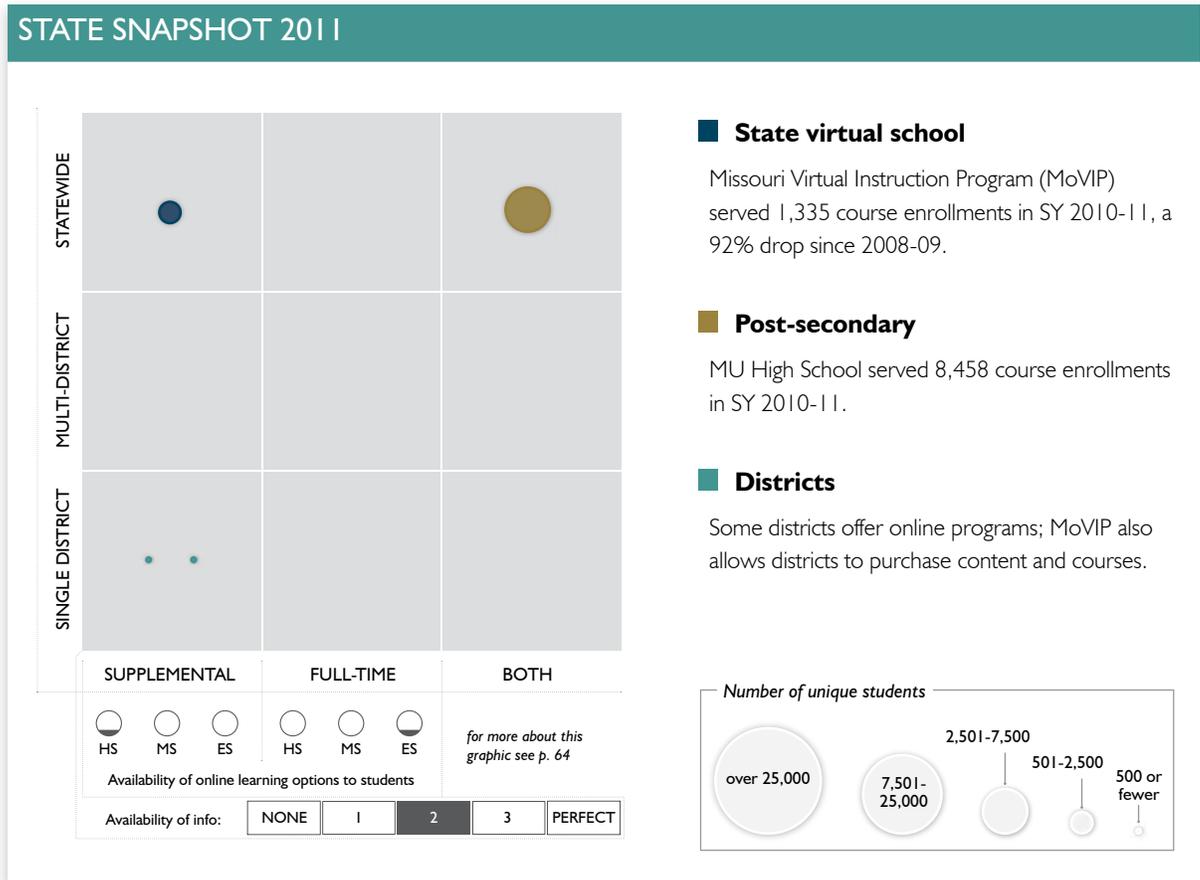
²²⁵ Request for Proposals, Mississippi Virtual School Public School System, Office of Data Management and Reporting, May 18, 2010

²²⁶ HB1056; retrieved July 27, 2011, <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2010/pdf/history/HB/HB1056.xml>

²²⁷ State Board Policy 5400; retrieved July 27, 2011, http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/SBE_policymanual/5400.htm

²²⁸ SB2293 (2010); retrieved September 6, 2011, <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2010/pdf/history/SB/SB2293.xml>

Missouri



State virtual school

Missouri Virtual Instruction Program (MoVIP) served 1,335 course enrollments in SY 2010-11, a 92% drop since 2008-09.

Post-secondary

MU High School served 8,458 course enrollments in SY 2010-11.

Districts

Some districts offer online programs; MoVIP also allows districts to purchase content and courses.

Due to significant statewide budget cuts, the K-12 online learning landscape in Missouri changed dramatically in the middle of the 2009-10 school year, with an overall decline in online learning options for students. The Missouri Virtual School and St. Louis Public Schools Virtual School closed at the end of the 2009-10 school year. The Missouri Virtual Instruction Program (MoVIP) and the University of Missouri-Columbia High School (MU High School) continue to operate, although in the case of MoVIP, with greatly reduced enrollments.

MoVIP is the state virtual school created by SB912²²⁹ and HB1275²³⁰ in 2006; it serves part- and full-time students in grades K-12, although the majority of its enrollments are in high school. MoVIP began the 2009-10 school year with a \$4.8 million appropriation. Funding was severely cut mid-year and is now \$600,000 for the 2011-12 school year. Because very few state-funded seats were available MoVIP course enrollments dropped 82% from 15,810 in 2008-09 to 2,900 in 2009-10, and then another 54% to 1,335 enrollments in 2010-11. Most students must now pay tuition, though students do have a number of options by which their district can pay their tuition. All 115 counties in Missouri have students participating in MoVIP, which offers 172 semester-length courses.

Students have four funding options for attending MoVIP:

- Students may choose to pay tuition directly to the vendor; that amount varies.

²²⁹ SB912 (2006); retrieved June 21, 2011, <http://www.senate.mo.gov/06info/pdf-bill/tat/SB912.pdf>

²³⁰ HB1275 (2006); retrieved June 21, 2011, <http://www.house.mo.gov/content.aspx?info=/bills061/bilsum/perf/sHB1275P.htm>

- Medically fragile students may qualify for free tuition.
- 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 course, except in the instance outlined below.
- SB64 (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.”²³¹

MoVIP started a 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; it simply pays the vendor for the course.

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 asynchronous distance learning courses. It reported 700 full-time students and 8,458 supplemental course enrollments in 2010-11.²³² 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; most classes are offered through the Virtual High School Global Consortium.

State policies

SB291 (2009) eliminated seat-time requirements for virtual education classes offered by Missouri school districts and allowed districts to collect state funds. It stated “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.”²³³

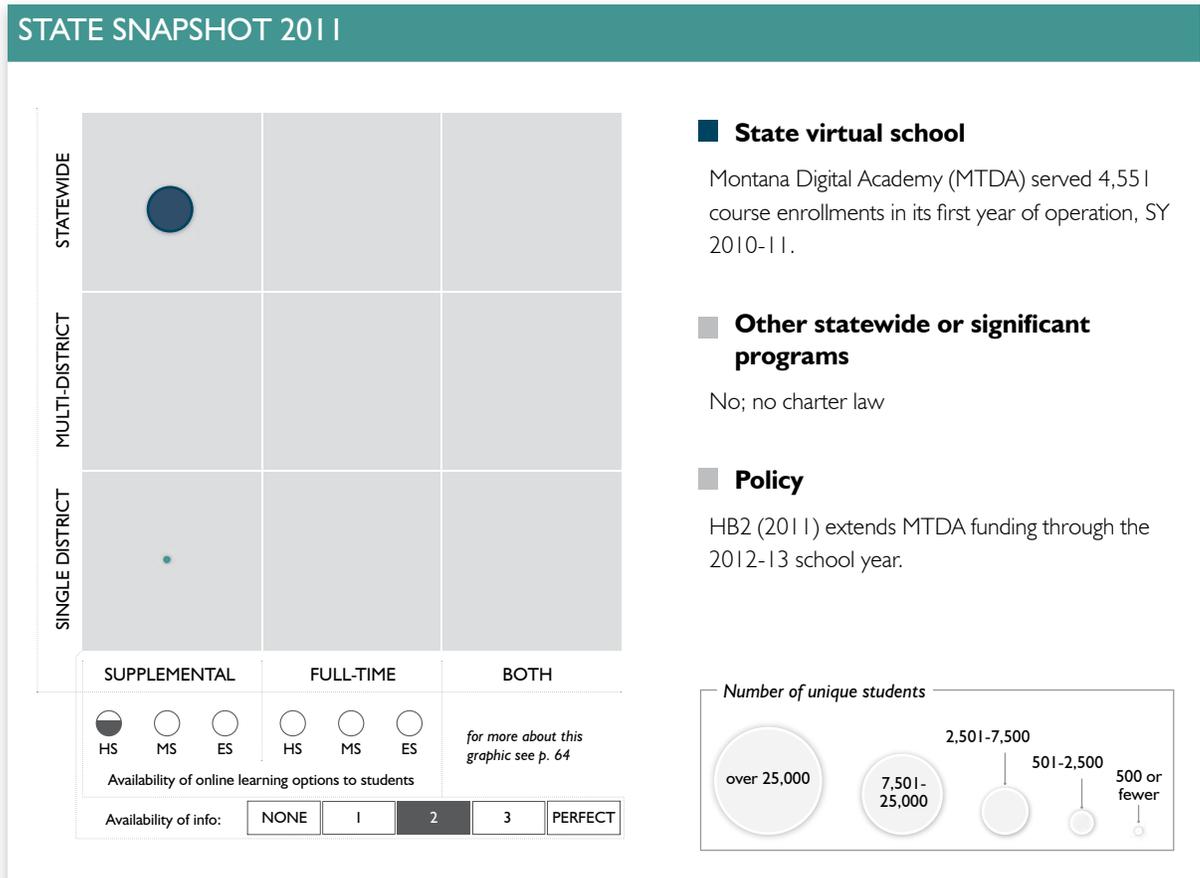
Charter schools receive state funding when providing virtual courses to students. School districts and charter schools must ensure that courses from outside vendors are aligned with state curriculum standards and comply with state requirements for teacher certification.

²³¹ SB64 (2007); retrieved June 21, 2011, http://www.senate.mo.gov/07info/BTS_Web/Bill.aspx?SessionType=r&BillID=136

²³² MU High School enrollments, *Keeping Pace 2011* survey

²³³ SB291(2009); retrieved June 21, 2011, http://www.senate.mo.gov/09info/BTS_Web/Bill.aspx?SessionType=R&BillID=683252

Montana



■ **State virtual school**

Montana Digital Academy (MTDA) served 4,551 course enrollments in its first year of operation, SY 2010-11.

■ **Other statewide or significant programs**

No; no charter law

■ **Policy**

HB2 (2011) extends MTDA funding through the 2012-13 school year.

The Montana Digital Academy (MTDA) opened in fall 2010 and is the first statewide online program. Montana does not have any statewide full-time online schools, nor any major district online programs.

MTDA is the state virtual school, hosted by the University of Montana’s College of Education and Human Sciences. MTDA officially opened in fall 2010; it offered over 50 courses taught by 60 Montana-licensed teachers, and had 4,551 course enrollments in 2010-11.²³⁴ MTDA was established in code (MCA 20-7-1201)²³⁵ in 2009 and funded by HB645 (2009),²³⁶ the Montana Reinvestment Act, which appropriated \$2 million to the Montana higher education system to develop and launch MTDA. In 2011, the governor and legislature approved HB2, which provides a \$2.33 million appropriation for MTDA split equally in 2011-12 and 2012-13.²³⁷ This funding allows MTDA to continue to provide online courses at no cost to public school districts and students.

MTDA classes are taught exclusively by Montana teachers employed by their local districts and trained in online instructional techniques by MTDA. MTDA reimburses each district for the cost of teachers, while also providing districts with teacher professional development to improve local understanding of and skills in online learning.

²³⁴ Course enrollment total reflects 60 enrollments for summer 2010 pilot school program; *Keeping Pace 2011* survey

²³⁵ Montana Code 20-7-1201; retrieved August 28, 2011, <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/mca/20/7/20-7-1201.htm>

²³⁶ HB0645 (2009); retrieved May 13, 2011, <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/2009/billpdf/HB0645.pdf>

²³⁷ HB0002 (2011); retrieved September 2, 2011, <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/2011/billpdf/HB0002.enr2.pdf>

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, 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 have never been any charter schools in Montana.

Online programs

The Montana Digital Academy (MTDA) complements existing district-led initiatives, and state policies covering distance learning providers are in place. Providers of individual courses to school districts must register annually and be approved by the state.²³⁸ Providers 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 distance learning teachers. Despite these reporting requirements, there are no available documents that report on online course enrollments at the district level. The OPI also publishes a set of online course guidelines, although there is no formal process for evaluating online course quality.²³⁹

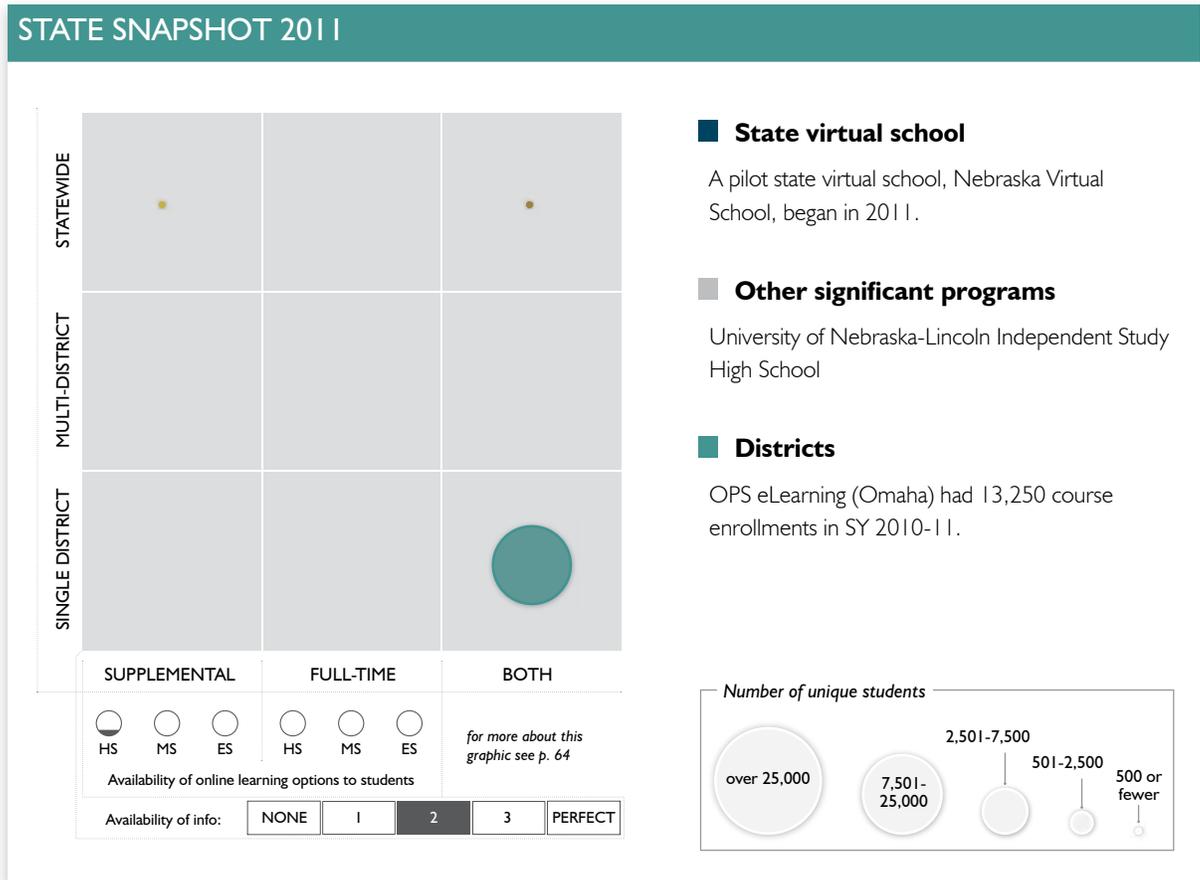
State policies

State policies did not change significantly in 2011 and are available in *Keeping Pace 2010* and at www.kpk12.com.

²³⁸ Montana OPI registered distance learning providers; retrieved May 13, 2011, <http://opi.mt.gov/pdf/Accred/09DLProviders.pdf>

²³⁹ Administrative Rules of Montana, Section 907 Distance, Online, and Technology Delivered Learning; retrieved May 13, 2011, <http://sos.mt.gov/arm/register/archives/MAR2004/MAR04-07.pdf>, and Checklist for Evaluating Online Courses; retrieved May 13, 2011, http://opi.mt.gov/pdf/advplacement/OLC_Checklist.pdf

Nebraska



Nebraska has a large district online and a blended learning program in Omaha, a new state virtual school pilot, and courses provided by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, but no other statewide supplemental or full-time schools.

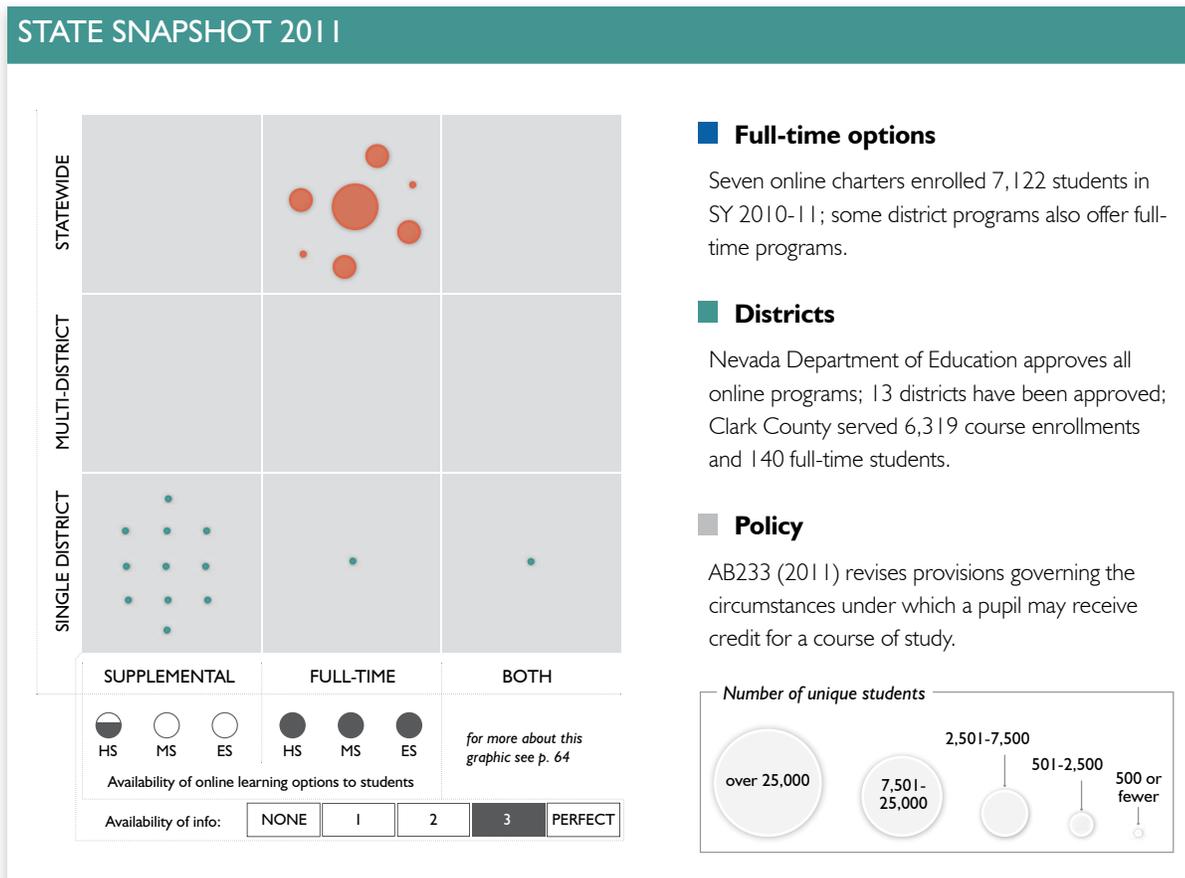
Nebraska proposed creating a state virtual school as part of its Race to the Top (RTTT) application, which was not successful. With no federal funding through RTTT, the state created the pilot Nebraska Virtual School for 2011-12, which is led by the Educational Service Unit Coordinating Council, Nebraska Educational Telecommunications, and the University of Nebraska, which is providing 50 free course seats.²⁴⁰ It is unclear if further funding will become available and allow a significant number of students to participate.

Omaha School District runs a blended program called OPS eLearning, which initially was designed to meet the needs of credit recovery students in grades 9-12. It has evolved into a blended learning program for all students. OPS eLearning had 13,250 course enrollments in 2010-11, an increase of 47%, and offers 82 different courses. Some districts participate in myelearning.org, which provides access to online resources and tools.

State policies created between 2006 and 2009 influenced distance learning across the state and were detailed in *Keeping Pace 2010*.

²⁴⁰ Nebraska State Virtual School; retrieved August 30, 2011, http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/DigitalEducation/2011/08/elearning_update_nebraska_open.html

Nevada



Nevada has seven online charter schools and 13 district online programs approved by the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) as of September 2011. The state is unique in that 72% of its students are in one district, the Clark County School District.²⁴¹ 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. The State Board of Education approved statewide online charters to serve grades K-12.

The State Board of Education is working to identify alternatives to seat-time requirements that have restricted online learning in the past. Previously, all courses approved by the NDE had to meet the requirement that, “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.” It passed temporary resolution 387.193 in August 2010 that changed the attendance requirements of distance programs, providing alternatives so students do not have to report to a physical classroom once a week. The changes provide alternatives to the requirement for a teacher/student weekly meeting and documentation, allowing for either weekly student participation in a real-time class session or evidence of work completed in the learning management system to count for attendance.²⁴² This was followed by Assembly Bill (AB) 233 (2011), which revises provisions governing the circumstances under which a pupil may receive credit for a course of study without attending the course.²⁴³ AB233 was effective as of July 2011, and must be adopted by the State Board of Education by December 2011.

²⁴¹ National Center for Education Statistics; retrieved July 11, 2011

²⁴² State Board of Education June 18, 2010 meeting minutes; retrieved June 27, 2011, http://www.doe.nv.gov/BoardEd/Meetings/2010/2010-06-18_Minutes_BOE_Subcommittee.pdf

²⁴³ AB233; retrieved August 30, 2011, <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/76th2011/Reports/history.cfm?ID=519>

The virtual charter schools had a combined enrollment of 7,122 students in 2010-11; this is a 14% increase from 6,256 enrollments in 2009-10, and a 36% increase from 4,603 students in 2008-09. There are a number of statewide online programs, including the Clark County School District Virtual High School (a district program that is not one of the virtual charters), which launched in fall 2004. It served 6,319 course enrollments and 140 full-time students in 2010-11 and is growing at a rate of 25% annually. There were over 2,000 online enrollments in the summer 2011 term alone, making it the largest summer school provider in the state.²⁴⁴

Silver State Charter Schools also serves students statewide in grades 7-12, although students must attend synchronous courses in a cohort and are required to meet with a teacher at the school once a week.²⁴⁵ Odyssey Charter School serves grades K-12 and has a face-to-face component. WOLF program in Reno, powered by Advanced Academics, was the only school in the Washoe County district to receive exemplary status in NCLB accountability ratings; it served over 1,000 students in 2010-11, when it added grades K-8 to its 9-12 offerings. Nevada Connections Academy also serves student statewide.

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 requirements. These requirements apply to district programs and charter schools. Unless otherwise noted, the following information is taken from Nevada Revised Statutes,²⁴⁶ with quotes from the NDE web page on distance learning.²⁴⁷

Funding

- Students must get permission from their own school district before taking part in another school district's online program when the program is not a charter school. This allows full-time equivalent (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 funds.
- 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, and is the same for virtual students as for brick-and-mortar.

Quality assurance, teaching, and curriculum

- The Nevada Administrative Code allows the acceptance of competency-based instruction in lieu of seat time.²⁴⁸ 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."
- Once districts or charters are approved as online providers, they must submit course outlines to NDE for a review process to ensure the content meets state curriculum standards.²⁴⁹ The approval stands for three years.

²⁴⁴ Personal communication with Kim Loomis, High School Reform / Innovative Projects Coordinator, Clark County Virtual High School; July 7, 2011

²⁴⁵ Enrollment data from <http://www.nevadareportcard.com/>, a new source in *Keeping Pace 2011*

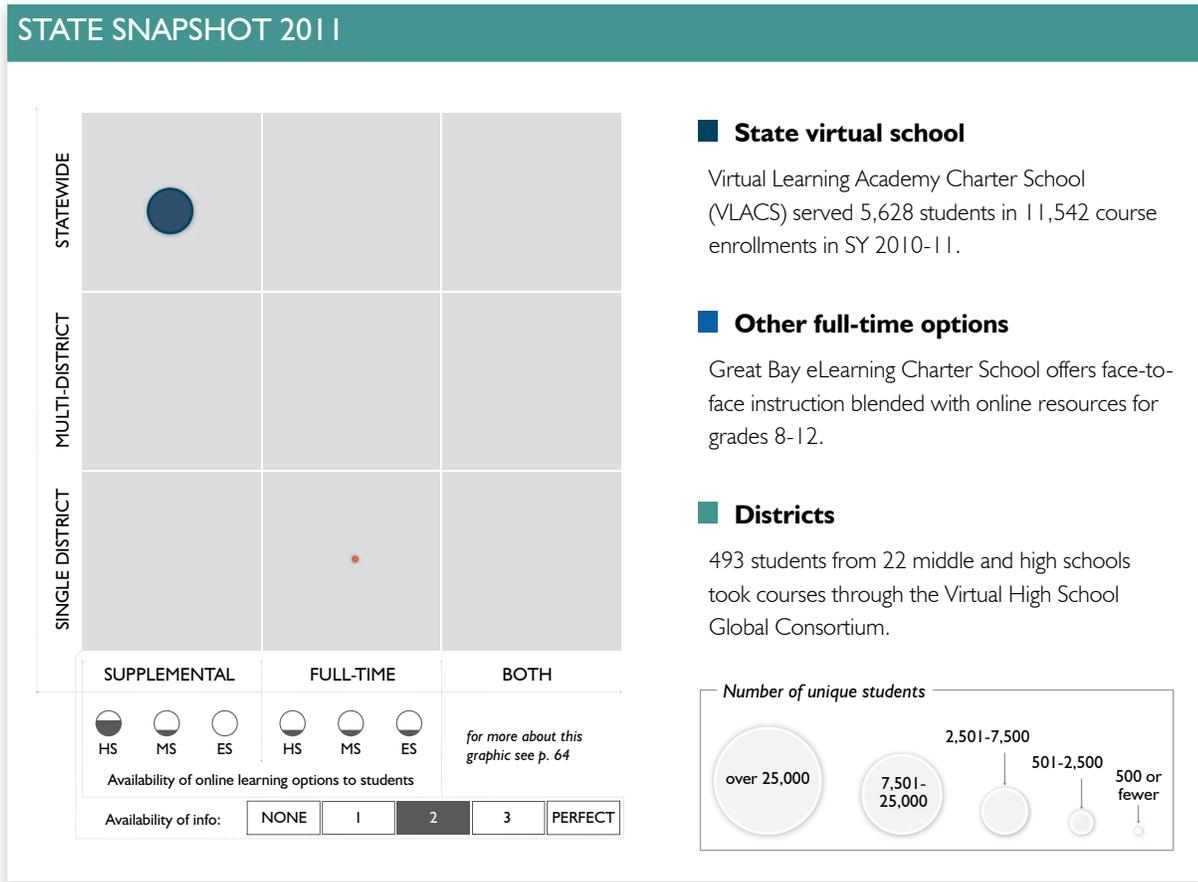
²⁴⁶ Nevada Revised Statutes 388; retrieved June 27, 2011, <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/nrs/NRS-388.html> and Nevada Administrative Code 388.800; retrieved June 27, 2011, <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/NAC/NAC-388.html>

²⁴⁷ Nevada Department of Education; retrieved June 27, 2011, http://www.doe.nv.gov/Tech_DistanceEd.htm

²⁴⁸ NAC 385.404; retrieved June 27, 2011, [http://www.leg.state.nv.us/register/RegsReviewed/\\$R134-07A.pdf](http://www.leg.state.nv.us/register/RegsReviewed/$R134-07A.pdf)

²⁴⁹ Nevada Department of Education new course approval process details and approved distance learning course provider list; retrieved June 27, 2011, http://www.doe.nv.gov/Tech_DistanceEd.htm

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 8-12. In addition, 493 students from 22 middle and high schools (20% of the schools in the state) took courses through the Virtual High School Global Consortium. The Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS), New Hampshire’s first statewide online high school, was approved in May 2007 to serve grades 7-12. VLACS is predominantly supplemental, unusual for a virtual charter school, with about 5,628 individual students accounting for 11,542 course enrollments in 2010-11, a 44% increase from the previous year. 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.²⁵⁰ VLACS was established under the pilot program and approved by the State Board of Education. It receives state-funded tuition through New Hampshire’s Education Trust Fund, which benefits public schools. Local schools are funded by the same fund plus local property taxes. Currently, all charter schools, including VLACS, receive \$5,450 for each FTE.

In 2009, HB688²⁵¹ amended existing charter school law to streamline the local approval process by removing a town vote requirement. It clarified 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

²⁵⁰ Title XV education, Section 194-B:3-a; retrieved August 23, 2011, <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/XV/194-B/194-B-mrg.htm>

²⁵¹ HB688 (2009); retrieved August 23, 2011, <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2009/HB0688.html>

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.”

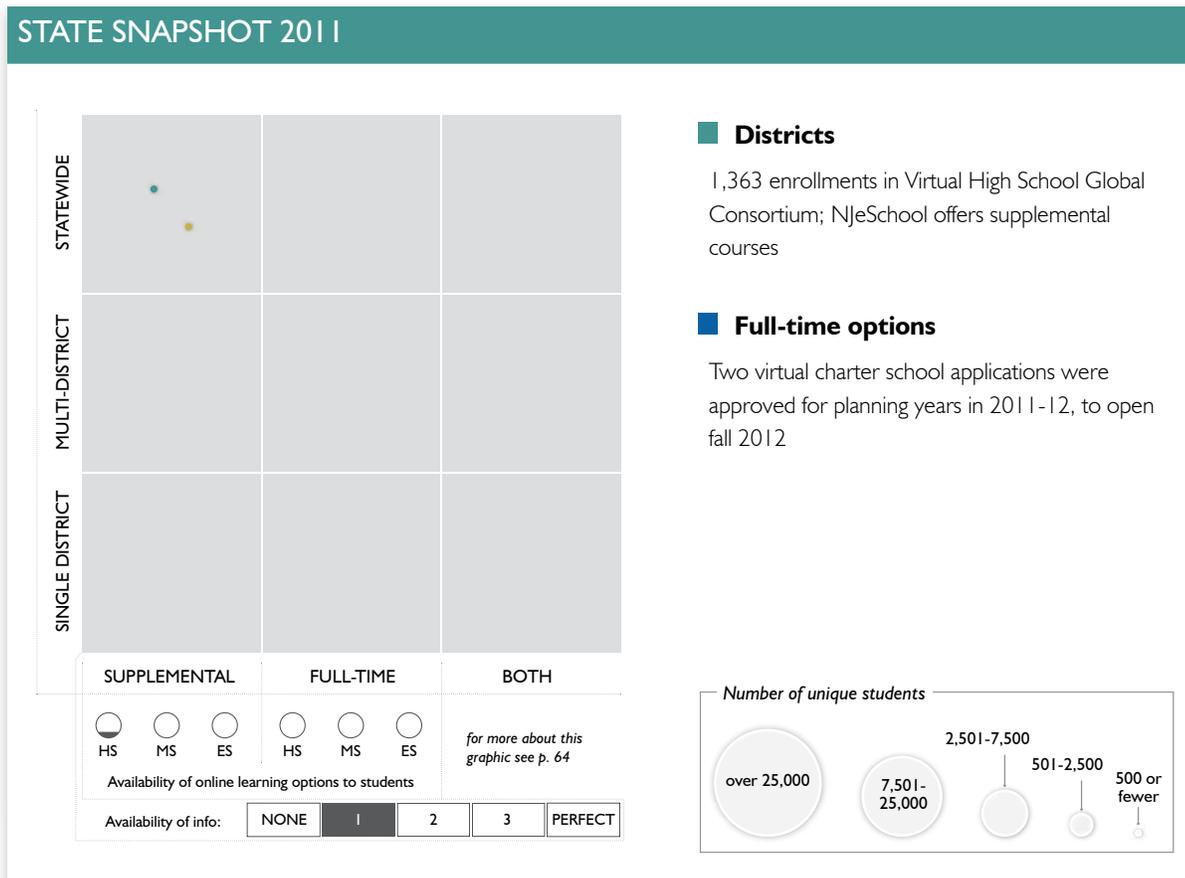
A dual enrollment program, eStart, is a collaboration between the New Hampshire community college system and VLACS. Credits earned through eStart will transfer to one of New Hampshire’s community colleges or to other colleges and universities in the state.²⁵² For the 2010-11 school year, VLACS added three dual credit courses, with two in development, 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 start courses anytime between September and February), courses are self-paced, and they must be completed by June 30. The courses are taught by VLACS instructors who have the qualifications to become SNHU adjunct faculty.

New Hampshire does not have policies that govern online courses specifically, but its state rules on distance learning have been in effect since July 2005.²⁵³ Most of the rules describe policies local school boards must set for distance learning, without going into much detail. One provision states that school boards 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.”

²⁵² Community College System of New Hampshire news release; retrieved August 13, 2011, <http://www.ccsnh.edu/news/estart.html>

²⁵³ Section 306.22; retrieved August 23, 2011, <http://www.education.nh.gov/legislation/documents/ed306.pdf>

New Jersey



New Jersey has no state virtual school or statewide online programs. Some school districts contract with online learning providers, including 43 middle and high schools (11% of schools) that are members of the Virtual High School Global Consortium, with a total of 1,363 course enrollments. The New Jersey Virtual School, run by the Monmouth Ocean Educational Services Commission (MOESC), has been operating since 2002, offering tuition-based supplemental courses to students in grades 6-12.

In 2011, two virtual charter school applicants were approved for a planning year: the New Jersey Virtual School and the New Jersey Virtual Academy Charter School. The applications were submitted under the New Jersey charter school law enacted in 1995. It required applications “be submitted to the commissioner and the local board of education or State superintendent ... in the school year preceding the school year in which the charter school will be established.”²⁵⁴ Approval for a planning year does not guarantee final authorization or that the school will go into operation. The planning year is designed to give school leadership “additional time to develop the academic and operational components of the school.”²⁵⁵ The schools must pass “an additional ‘preparedness review’ [in 2012] to show that they have ... met all regulatory requirements to open.”

²⁵⁴ New Jersey Department of Education (NJ DOE) and the Charter School Program Act of 1995; retrieved August 4, 2011, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/chartsch/cspa95.htm>

²⁵⁵ NJ DOE press release; retrieved August 26, 2011, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/news/2011/0715chart.htm>

Previous attempts at chartering virtual schools have been stymied by two requirements of the charter school law: 90% of the enrollment of a new school must be from the home district or contiguous counties; and the application must include a description of the “physical facility in which the charter school will be located.” Both virtual charters that were granted a planning year are focused on students from multiple, contiguous counties. The underlying law in New Jersey has not changed, but the interpretation of the existing law has changed, with the administration of Governor Chris Christie and the legislature focusing on innovative schools. There is limited state statute in place to define how the charters will operate or what oversight the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) will provide.

The New Jersey Virtual School (NJVS) application was made by MOESC, which currently operates the fee-based virtual school of the same name. NJVS plans to serve students in grades 10-12 from Camden, Paterson, Perth Amboy, and Neptune counties in partnership with Rutgers University and area community colleges. It plans to open in 2012 with 150 students. The second virtual charter, the New Jersey Virtual Academy Charter School, plans to open in 2012 with about 850 students, mostly in the middle school grades, with curriculum developed by K12 Inc.

The Educational Technology Plan for New Jersey, a report from the NJDOE published by the state board in December 2007, noted that the NJDOE will provide research and policy support for the development and use of online courses and virtual schools.

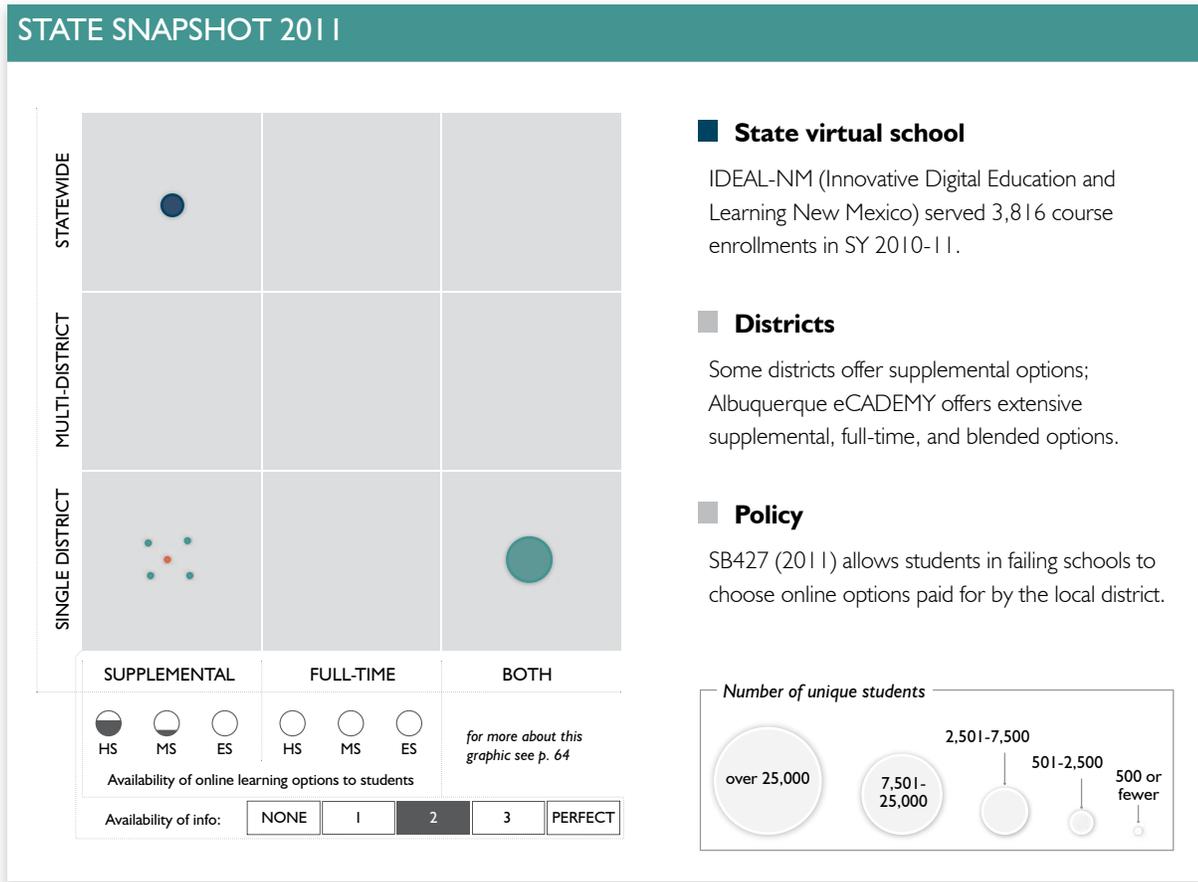
The NJDOE revised its Core Curriculum Content Standards for 2009 to reflect strong integration of technology in all core content areas,²⁵⁶ and the state adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2010. New Jersey is a member of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills initiative and is committed to increasing student achievement using 21st Century technologies.

The NJDOE approves supplemental education services (SES) providers, which may include online learning options for students.²⁵⁷ The SES office monitors those who apply to provide SES, but does not review online schools.

²⁵⁶ Core Curriculum Content Standards; retrieved September 1, 2011, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/>

²⁵⁷ Approved SES list for 2009-10; retrieved August 4, 2011, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/title1/program/ss/providers/apprv-0910/index.html>

New Mexico



New Mexico has a state virtual school, IDEAL-NM (Innovative Digital Education and Learning New Mexico), and a few district programs, but no other online schools operating statewide. Albuquerque Public School’s eCADEMY is the largest district program with 3,819 students in 2010-11, serving both supplemental and full-time enrollments.

Distance learning rules approved in 2008²⁵⁸ set requirements for IDEAL-NM; the rules also allow 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.²⁵⁹ The local school where the student is enrolled approves and registers students for online courses and pays course fees. The distance learning rules allow for creation of full-time, multi-district online schools. A number of districts have applied for approval in partnership with education management companies, but as of fall 2011, none has been approved by the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED). A statewide virtual charter proposal brought before the Farmington Municipal Schools Board in August 2011 was not approved.

SB427 (2011) provides students in failing schools the option to choose online alternatives, with funding for those courses coming from the underperforming districts. “The parent of a student enrolled in a public school rated F for two of the last four years has the right to transfer the student in the same grade to any public school in the state not rated F or the right to have the student continue schooling by means of distance learning offered through the statewide or a local

²⁵⁸ SB209 Bill Analysis; retrieved August 29, 2011, <http://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/07%20Regular/LESCAnalysis/senate/SB0209%20%20Cyber%20Academy%20Act.pdf>
²⁵⁹ Title 6, Chapter 30, Part 8; retrieved August 29, 2011, <http://www.nmcpr.state.nm.us/nmac/parts/title06/06.030.0008.htm>

cyber academy. The school district or charter school in which the student is enrolled is responsible for the cost of distance learning.”²⁶⁰ The law defines criteria for rating schools, including adequate yearly progress (AYP), student growth, graduation rates, and other academic factors. Ratings are to be assigned by the State Department of Education beginning with the 2011-12 school year. Although AYP is only one criteria for the school rating, 634 of the state’s 827 schools (77%) did not meet AYP²⁶¹ in 2010, and 68% failed to meet AYP the previous year, indicating a significant number of New Mexico students may have greater choice. However, online choices for students in grades K-5 will remain limited even for those in failing schools since IDEAL-NM and district online programs offer online courses only for grades 6-12. There currently are no online providers for K-5 courses, and no full-time virtual charter programs have been approved as of fall 2011.

In 2009-10 several provisions of the 2007 High School Redesign bill (SB0561)²⁶² came into effect 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

IDEAL-NM was created by the 2007 Statewide Cyber Academy Act (SB209). IDEAL-NM had 3,816 course enrollments in 2010-11, an 85% increase over 2009-10 enrollments after experiencing a 36% increase the previous year. Of IDEAL-NM’s total course enrollment in 2010-09, 1,360 (36%) were from the Graduate New Mexico initiative, established in 2009 to address the nearly 50% dropout rate in the state. With a newly elected state administration in 2011, Graduate New Mexico has been eliminated, along with funding for 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 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 year 2011-12 is the fourth year of the statewide LMS initiative. School districts may use the LMS to create their own courses, or use content developed by IDEAL-NM to teach their own online and/or blended courses. As of August 2011, 62 of New Mexico’s 85 school districts (73%) use the LMS to create branded web portals to access all of the courses offered by IDEAL-NM at no cost, as well as shared community resources and professional development services. In addition, a statewide eLearning Service Center supports the LMS for all the education and training entities.²⁶³ IDEAL-NM also provides an eLearning portal that acts as a clearinghouse for online courses and programs offered by New Mexico higher education institutions, K-12, and state agencies.

School districts offering online programs include Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, Hobbs, Taos, and Roy, as well as the Gilbert L. Sena Charter High School. Sena Charter High School switched from a commercial online provider to the IDEAL-NM portal, LMS, and courses. Albuquerque Public Schools’ eCADEMY is an alternative school with a comprehensive blended learning program serving K-12 students using IDEAL-NM, the National Repository for Online Courses (NROC), and self-developed content.²⁶⁴

State policies did not change significantly in 2011 and are available in *Keeping Pace 2010* and at www.kpk12.com.

²⁶⁰ SB427; retrieved June 19, 2011, <http://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/11%20Regular/final/SB0427.pdf>

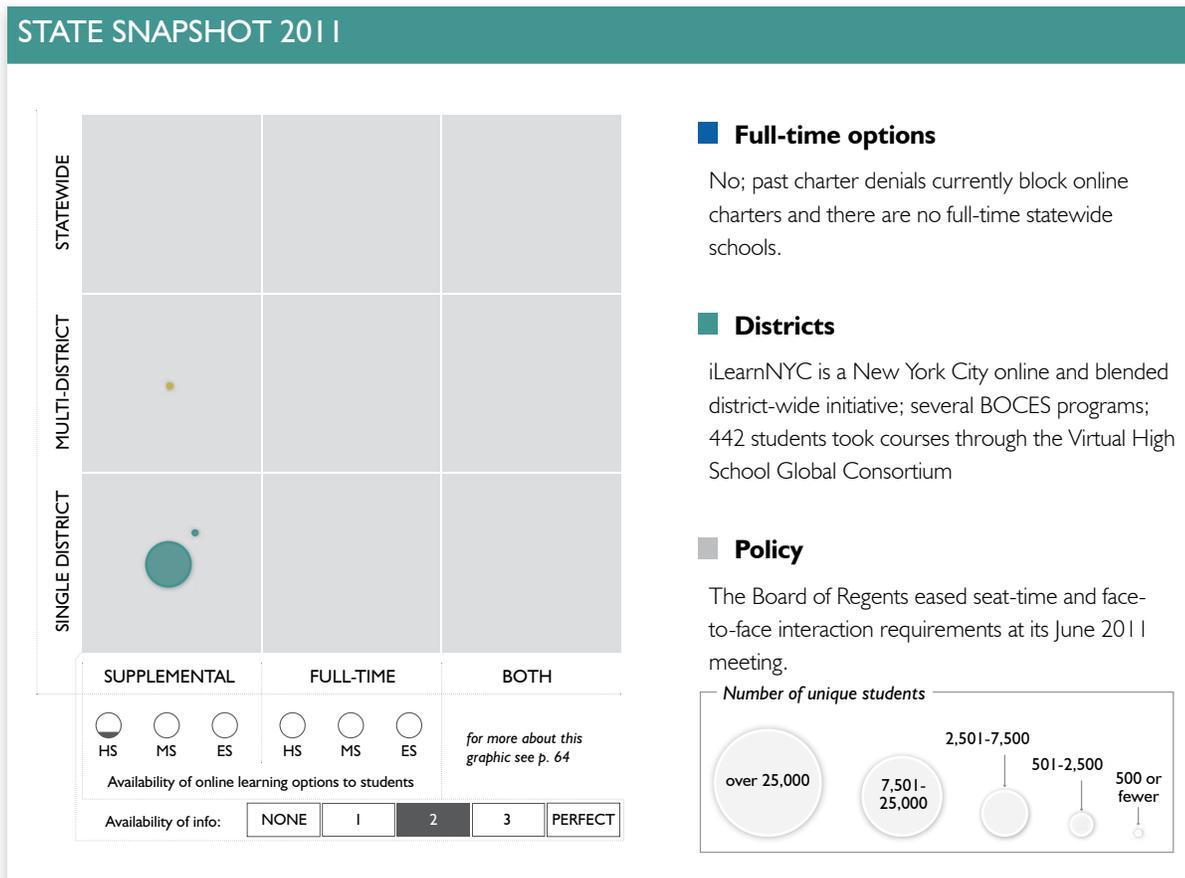
²⁶¹ NM State Department of Education; retrieved July 22, 2011, <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/ayp2010/Quick%20Facts%202010%20Post%20Appeals.pdf>

²⁶² SB0561; retrieved June 19, 2011, <http://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/07%20Regular/final/SB0561.pdf>

²⁶³ IDEAL-NM; retrieved June 19, 2011, http://www.ideal-nm.org/home/get-content/content/about_ideal-nm

²⁶⁴ *The Rise of K-12 Blended Learning*, Heather Staker and Michael B. Horn, Innosight Institute and Charter School Growth Fund, May 2011, pp 60-63, <http://www.innosightinstitute.org/media-room/publications/education-publications/the-rise-of-k-12-blended-learning/>

New York



New York has relatively little online learning activity, with some activity happening in districts—including New York City—and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) throughout the state. The state is addressing its lack of state-level online learning policy and initiatives through discussions with the Board of Regents and the New York State Education Department (NYSED), as well as memos that provide clarification on existing legislation. At its June 2011 meeting, the Board of Regents modified state diploma requirements to prescribe requirements for earning credit for online and blended coursework.²⁶⁵ At the same meeting, it approved new rules easing “seat-time” requirements that spell out face-to-face and virtual interactions between students and teachers in order for a student to earn credit. The regulations also lessen requirements for face-to-face interactions between students and teachers.²⁶⁶ In addition, the Commissioner of Education has expanded online offerings for credit recovery (CR100.5(d)(8))²⁶⁷ and independent study (CR100.5(d)(9)).²⁶⁸ Students may now use online courses that include “regular and substantive interaction with the teacher” to make up failed credits. Students are also now eligible to earn three credits by completing independent study and showing mastery of content.

²⁶⁵ New York State Education Department Diploma Requirements; Online and Blended Learning, Commissioner’s Regulations section 100.5(d)(10); retrieved September 1, 2011, <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/part100/pages/1005.html#Credit> and June 2011 meeting approval <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2011Meetings/July2011/711bra2.pdf>

²⁶⁶ Personal communication with Ken Slentz, NYSED; September 2, 2011

²⁶⁷ Commissioner’s Regulations section 100.5 (d)(8); retrieved June 20, 2011, <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/part100/pages/1005.html#makeupcredit>

²⁶⁸ Commissioner’s Regulations section 100.5 (d)(9); retrieved June 20, 2011, <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/part100/pages/1005.html#d9>

Online programs

iLearnNYC is the online and blended learning program run by the New York City Department of Education. In 2010-11, the initiative piloted online learning in three different forms to students in over 40 schools. More than 300 students participated in Advanced Placement courses; 500 students participated in credit recovery programs for overage, under-credited students; and 2,000 students participated in blended learning programs with a mix of online and face-to-face settings. In subsequent years, 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. iLearnNYC is part of the New York City iZone, a community of schools using innovative approaches to improve outcomes. Initial funding for iZone came from the Race to the Top (RTTT) competition. In 2010-11, 81 schools across all five boroughs joined the iZone community. iZone complements existing initiatives in New York City—the largest school district in the country, with more than one million students—including the School of One. In addition to district-level efforts in New York City, several small-scale efforts are happening in school districts and BOCES around the state. For example, Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES has created Project Accelerate and AccelerateU, which provide online courses for students, as well as 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. Courses are now funded by an enrollment fee paid by districts or students. Districts that meet certain state requirements receive aid from the state in the following fiscal year, ranging from 50-75% of the amount paid. New York has 38 middle and high schools (4% of the schools in the state) participating in online courses through the Virtual High School Global Consortium in 2010-11.

State policies

NYSED released a comprehensive state educational technology plan,²⁶⁹ approved in February 2010, which includes a provision for opening a statewide virtual high school.²⁷⁰ The Board of Regents discussed a possible framework for an online high school (November 2009 and February 2010),²⁷¹ though discussions appear to have stalled.

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 lifted the cap on charter schools to 460 (from 200), specified a new charter school approval process, prohibited new schools from contracting a majority of their operations or services with for-profit management companies, and mandated an annual report from each charter school.

²⁶⁹ New York Statewide Educational Technology Plan; retrieved June 20, 2011, <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/technology/>

²⁷⁰ Virtual High School framework; retrieved June 20, 2011, <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2010Meetings/February2010/0210emscd1.htm>

²⁷¹ Board of Regents meeting minutes; retrieved June 20, 2011, <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/archived-2010.html>

North Carolina

STATE SNAPSHOT 2011

STATEWIDE	[Bubble chart showing large blue bubble in top-left, smaller teal bubbles in top-left and top-right]		
	[Bubble chart showing two small orange bubbles in top-right]		
	[Empty bubble chart]		
MULTI-DISTRICT	[Empty bubble chart]		
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SINGLE DISTRICT	[Empty bubble chart]		
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	Availability of online learning options to students		
	Availability of info: NONE 1 2 3 PERFECT		

for more about this graphic see p. 64

Number of unique students

State virtual school

North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS) is the second largest state virtual school in the country. It served 88,716 course enrollments in SY 2010-11.

Other programs

Legislation prohibits any state-funded entity from offering “elearning opportunities” without the approval of NCVPS.

Policy

Session Law 2011-145 (2011) repeals the previous funding formula for NCVPS (SB897, 2010) and replaces it with a new formula.

North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS) is the state virtual school. Legislation prohibits any state-funded entity from offering “elearning 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.”²⁷² 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.”²⁷³ 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 in summer 2007, and now offers courses in grades 9-12, with 88,716 course enrollments in 2010-11, an increase of 20% from 2009-10.²⁷⁴

The NCVPS funding model has recently changed. SB897 (2010)²⁷⁵ established an allotment formula to “create a sustainable source of funding that increases commensurate with student enrollment” and recognized “the extent to which projected enrollment in e-learning courses affects funding

²⁷² SB897, 2010-31; retrieved June 16, 2011, <http://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2009/Bills/Senate/PDF/S897v8.pdf>

²⁷³ State Board Policy GCS-M-001. Section 10; retrieved June 16, 2011, <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/policies/general>

²⁷⁴ *Keeping Pace 2010* correctly reported a 300% increase in course NCVPS course enrollments between 2008-09 and 2009-10. The 2009-10 enrollment spike was created by the adjustment to the method of calculation in 2010.

²⁷⁵ SB897, 2010-31; retrieved June 16, 2011, <http://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2009/Bills/Senate/PDF/S897v8.pdf>

required for other allotments that are based on ADM [average daily membership].” The State Board of Education implemented an initial NCVPS allotment formula in 2010 based on forward-funding; the funding was reallocated from school districts to NCVPS based on NCVPS course enrollments from the previous year with an adjustment for projected enrollment growth. The formula created controversy and was revisited in 2011 to rectify inequities between larger and smaller districts. The new formula reduces school district teacher allocations to cover NCVPS instructional costs, resulting in a teacher pay reduction.

The legislation provides two additional sources of funds to operate NCVPS. The first is a reduction to school districts’ per pupil allotment to create funding of \$2,866,923 for operation of NCVPS. The second is a \$2 million reduction in the per-pupil allotment for an enrollment reserve. This reserve fund covers school district enrollments in NCVPS courses that exceed projections. The funds carry into the next fiscal year and are replenished annually by a school system allocation reduction up to the original \$2 million level.

Session Law 2011-145 removes the cap on operating costs for NCVPS and removes prohibitions against offering physical education and offering courses to grades K-8. It also confirms that NCVPS will use funds generated by the new formula to provide online courses to all public school students at no cost to the student. Students must get permission to enroll in NCVPS courses from their school district. The new legislation also directs NCVPS to develop a plan to offer courses to non-public schools and out-of-state educational entities. It also provides an exemption from G.S. 66-58(c) that prohibits state-funded entities from competing with commercial companies.

The NCVPS 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 local district and state virtual school funds). 2010-11 was the first year districts knew they would be paying for NCVPS courses, and enrollments still went up by 20%, making North Carolina the only state where district administrators are choosing to pay for online supplemental courses from a state virtual school at a relatively high rate. The NCVPS formula 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—therefore funding to FLVS is not limited either.

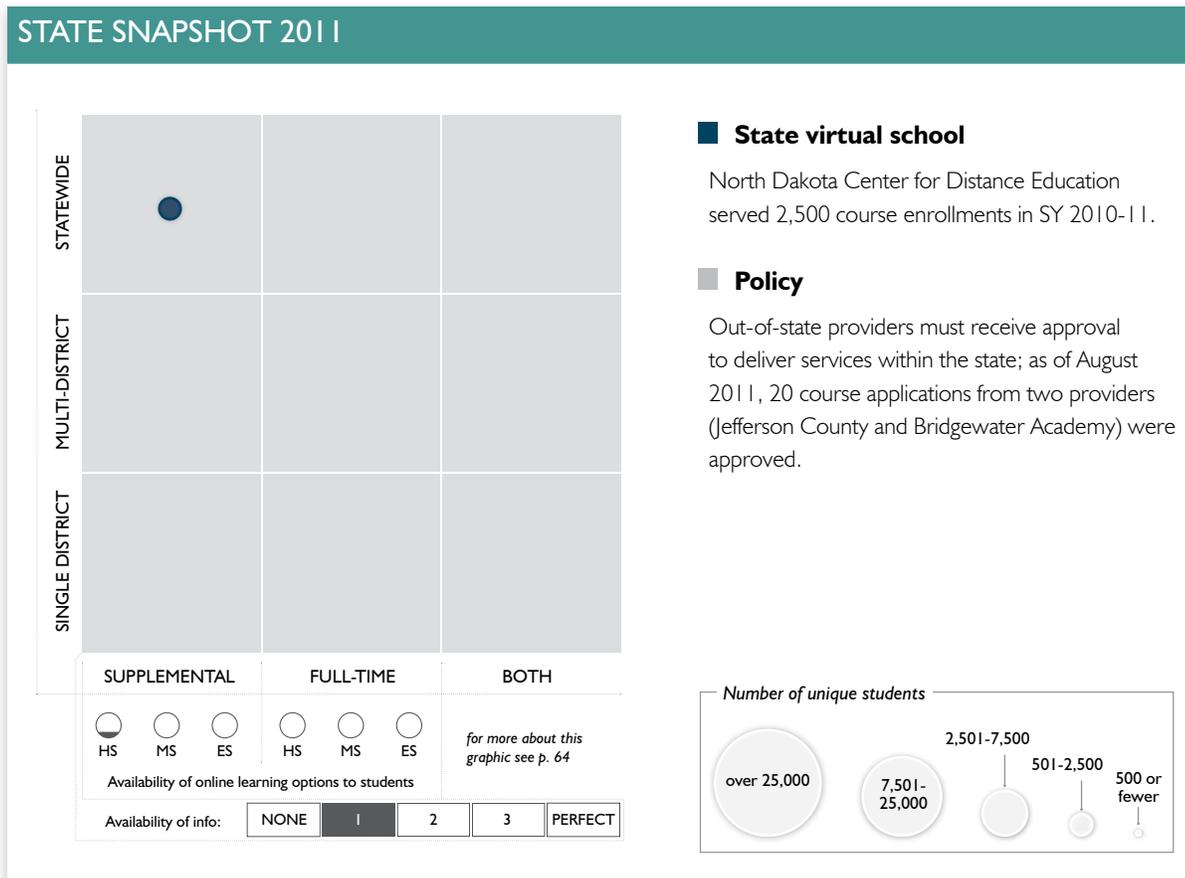
In 2011, SB8 significantly revised charter school law in North Carolina, but it did not specifically address virtual charter schools.

In late 2010, North Carolina received a Race to the Top (RTTT) grant to improve teacher capacity. NCVPS received \$6.4 million in RTTT funds to develop eight project-based online blended courses that are science, technology, engineering and math (STEM)-themed courses for at-risk students. The courses will use mobile devices to engage and motivate students. Three school districts have volunteered to partner with NCVPS to develop the courses.

The Learn and Earn Online (LEO) program, a dual enrollment program that allows public high school students to earn college credits, has been coordinated by NCVPS since 2008. Students in grades 9-12 can take dual-enrollment courses for college credit free of charge at 45 participating community colleges regardless of the college service areas in which they reside. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-G) iSchool also had participated in LEO, but ceased operations for fall 2011 due to state budget cuts. In 2011, NCVPS relinquished operation of LEO to the North Carolina Community College System.

The North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics (NCSSM) is a public, residential high school for gifted, high-performing juniors and seniors. It offers a combination of online and face-to-face courses. NCVPS has a Memorandum of Agreement with NCSSM that authorizes it to offer courses to qualified students who cannot be accommodated in the residential program.

North Dakota



The only statewide online program in North Dakota is the North Dakota Center for Distance Education (ND CDE), which offers 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 2010-11 the program had 2,500 online course enrollments, a 6% increase from 2009-10 when the program reported 2,350 online course enrollments. Of the 2010-11 enrollments, 1,700 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.

ND CDE 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 for ND CDE courses.

Apart from the legislation that created the North Dakota Division of Independent Study²⁷⁶ and the law that changed the name to the Center of Distance Education, North Dakota has little legislation related to online activity. Most recently, in 2007, North Dakota passed a law²⁷⁷ requiring the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to set up a process for approving online courses. The

²⁷⁶ Chapter 15-19; retrieved August 4, 2011, www.legis.nd.gov/cencode/t15c19.pdf

²⁷⁷ HB1491; retrieved August 4, 2011, <http://www.legis.nd.gov/assembly/60-2007/bill-text/HBIR0400.pdf>

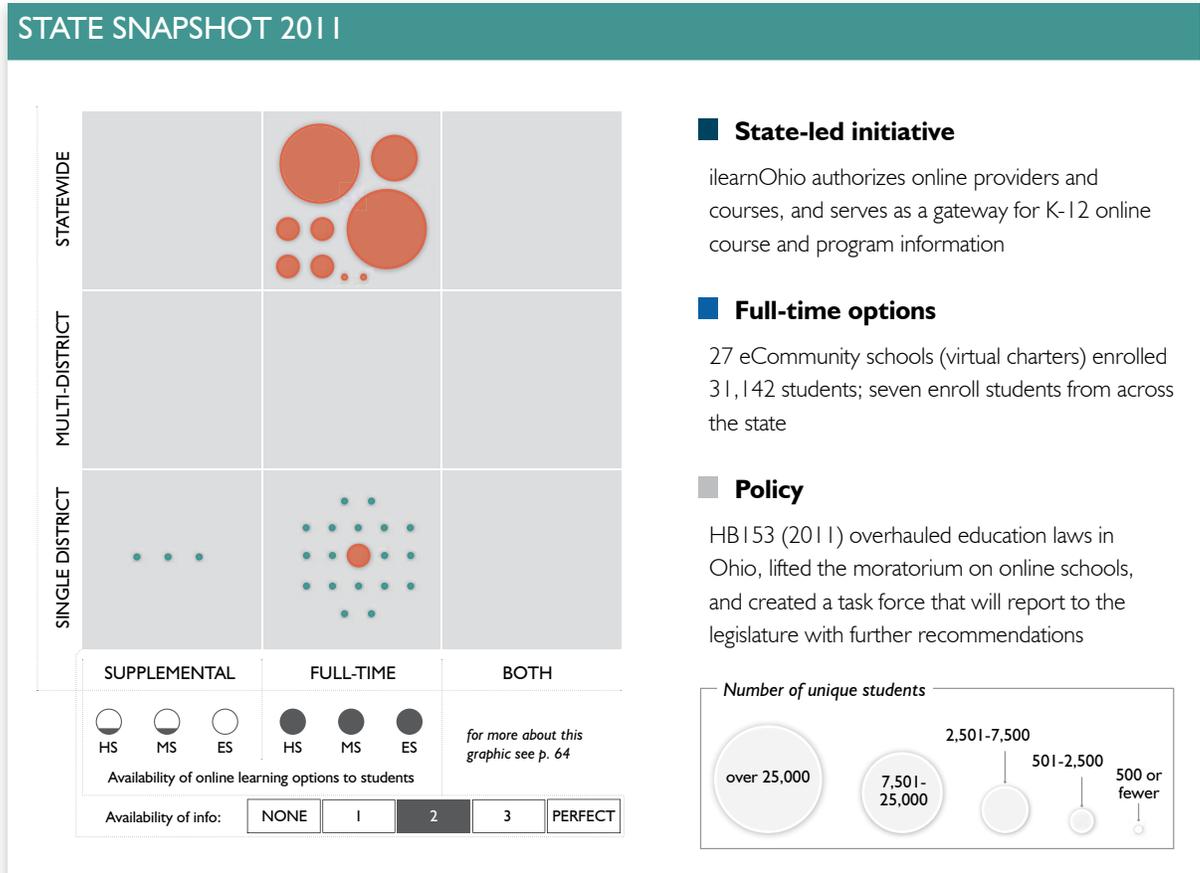
approval process does not “apply to a course provided electronically between approved schools in North Dakota.” The approval process required that “courses ... are aligned with state content and performance standards ... if standards do not exist ... the course content must be sufficiently challenging 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 process²⁷⁸ for North Dakota schools to provide academic services through the use of out-of-state electronic course 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 annual approval by the DPI School Approval & Accreditation Unit. Only providers that have received approval may deliver services within the state. The application asks the provider to describe the following for each course:

- the cost to the student, grade level, and type of course credit which will be awarded
- a timeline for the course, including expectation of time to be devoted to the course
- 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, and how progress is assessed for quality

As of August 2011, 21 course applications had been submitted and 20 approved. All applications came from two providers: Jefferson County and Bridgewater Academy.

Ohio



²⁷⁸ North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, school and provider application forms, instructions and rubrics; retrieved August 4, 2011, <http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/approve/electronic.shtml>

Ohio has extensive online learning activity in 27 full-time online schools (some of which have been open since 2000); ilearnOhio, a state-led initiative; and new legislation that intends to expand student online options over time.

Ohio passed HB153 in 2011,²⁷⁹ which has the following provisions:²⁸⁰

- Terminates the moratorium on new Internet- or computer-based community schools (e-schools) on January 1, 2013, but limits the number of new e-schools that may open to five per year. If more than five e-schools wish to open the five will be selected by lottery.
- Directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop operational standards for e-schools for possible enactment by the General Assembly. Requires e-schools to comply with the legislative standards, if they are enacted by January 1, 2013, or iNACOL's standards, if legislative standards are not enacted by that date. Schools must comply by July 2013.
- Specifies that, for state funding purposes, an e-school student is considered automatically re-enrolled the following school year until the student's enrollment in the school is formally terminated or the student fails to participate in the first 105 hours of learning opportunities offered that year.
- Repeals the requirement that e-schools spend a specified minimum amount per pupil on instruction. Requires the State Board of Education to adopt standards for determining the amount of operating expenditures for classroom instruction and for non-classroom purposes spent by an e-school (and other schools as well), by July 2012. Also requires the Department of Education to use the expenditure reporting standards and existing data to rank each district, community school, e-school, and STEM school according to percentage of operating expenditures for classroom instruction.
- Requires the Department to denote, within the classroom expenditure rankings, districts and schools that are (1) among the lowest 20% statewide in total operating expenditures per pupil or (2) among the highest 20% statewide in academic performance index or career-technical performance measures. Also requires the Department, annually, to report each district's e-school's rank (among other schools) according to (1) performance index score, (2) student performance growth, (3) career-technical performance measures, (4) expenditures per pupil, (5) percentage of expenditures for classroom instruction, and (6) performance of, and opportunities for, identified gifted students.

The legislation also requires that the Board of Regents create a clearinghouse of online courses based on principles including "Students may earn an unlimited number of academic credits through distance learning courses" and "Student advancement to higher coursework shall be based on a demonstration of subject area competency instead of completion of any particular number of hours of instruction." ilearnOhio launches as a dedicated online course resource for K-12 students, replacing the OhioLearns! Gateway. The new site is located at the Ohio Resource Center for Mathematics, Science, and Reading, and is administered by the College of Education and Human Ecology at Ohio State University. School districts still have the final say on the amount of credit awarded. The state has appropriated \$675,000 per fiscal year to support the provider and course approval processes managed through ilearnOhio.

Finally, the law creates and funds a Digital Learning Task Force to "develop a strategy for the expansion of digital learning that enables students to customize their education, produces cost

²⁷⁹ HB153 (2011); retrieved August 30, 2011, http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/BillText129/129_HB_153_EN_N.html. Provisions specific to online learning can be found in sections discussing distance learning, digital learning, online instruction, "internet- or computer-based community school," and the "clearinghouse."

²⁸⁰ Details about legislation are from the Ohio Legislative Service Commission analysis of the bill found at <http://www.lsc.state.oh.us/analyses129/11-hb153-129.pdf>; search for "e-school" for provisions specific to online learning. Many of the bullet points are direct quotes from the analysis. In addition, the Education Commission of the States analysis was used; found at <http://www.ecs.org/ecs/ecscat.nsf/WebTopicView?OpenView&count=1&RestrictToCategory=Distance+Learning/Virtual+University>

savings, and meets the needs of Ohio's economy." Specific tasks are outlined; a final report is due to the legislature in March 2012, and then the task force will cease to exist.

Online programs

Ohio has 27 eCommunity schools. Seven serve students statewide, and 22 serve students in grades K-12.²⁸¹ 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. Ohio eCommunity schools (also called eschools and e-schools in legislation) served 31,142 students in 2010-11, a 2% drop from 31,852 students in 2009-10, which was an 18% increase from 2008-09.²⁸² Ohio also has a number of district programs in pockets across the state, and iLearnOhio, previously Ohio Learns!, is a state-led initiative that acts as an online resource for K-12 students and provides an online catalog of 305 online courses for high school students; its eventual goal is to serve students in K-12. As of September 2011, the provider and course approval processes have not yet been updated to reflect the new legislation.²⁸³ There are nine approved providers as of September 2011.

A July 2009 report by the Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools²⁸⁴ suggested that the eCommunity schools have achieved better results than comparable traditional school districts, especially when looking at year-to-year student improvement. In addition, Education Sector posted a blog series in spring 2011 analyzing e-schools in Ohio.²⁸⁵ It offers an in-depth analysis of the 27 eCommunity schools based on Adequate Yearly Progress, size, regional versus statewide student draw, student demographics, and online student mobility. It raises concerns about the accountability of eCommunity schools, especially for those that receive waivers from standard accountability measures, such as alternative schools.

State policies

Ohio has had online policy for many years, much of which is affected by HB153. The history is reviewed in previous *Keeping Pace* reports. Ohio law does not yet explicitly define "blended" brick-and-mortar schools.

Community schools, including eCommunity schools, receive state funds directly from the state; these funds have been transferred from school district allocations.²⁸⁶ eCommunity schools are funded at the same per-pupil formula as traditional districts, including special education students. eCommunity schools previously received funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, state fiscal stabilization funds, EduJobs funding when available, and other federal funds.²⁸⁷ As those funding sources were temporary, HB153 provides for bridge funding until a sustainable funding plan is developed.

²⁸¹ List of eCommunity schools; retrieved August 30, 2011, <http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/DocumentManagement/DocumentDownload.aspx?DocumentID=59539>

²⁸² School enrollment data retrieved from Ohio Department of Education, Interactive Local Report Card; retrieved August 30, 2011, <http://ilrc.ode.state.oh.us/>

²⁸³ iLearnOhio Provider Guidelines; retrieved September 19, 2011, <http://ilearnohio.org/pdf/CourseProviderGuidelines.pdf>

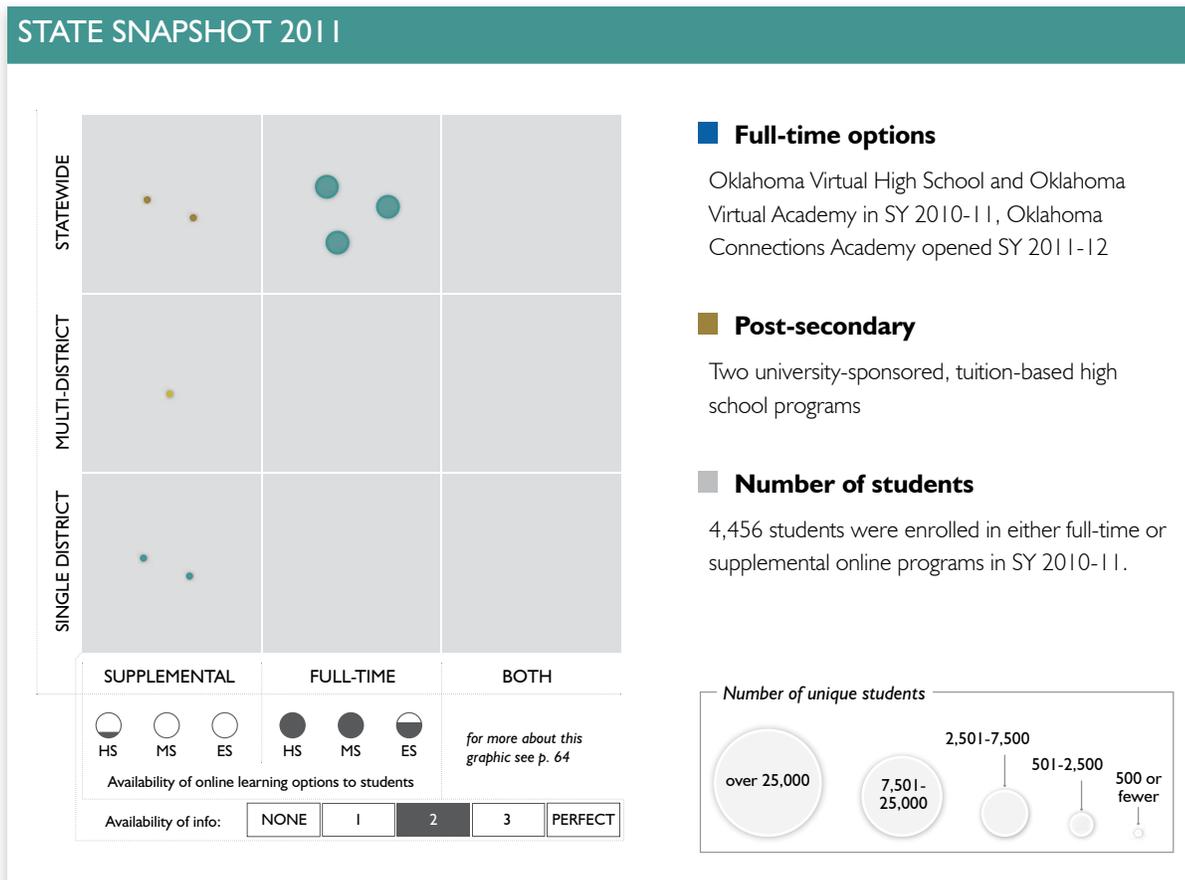
²⁸⁴ The Ohio Alliance for Public Charter Schools study, E-schools Show Superior Results; retrieved August 27, 2011, http://www.oapcs.org/files/EschoolStudy_final6-24-09.pdf

²⁸⁵ Education Sector blog series on Ohio eSchools; retrieved September 12, 2011, <http://www.quickanded.com/tag/ohio-e-schools-blog-series>

²⁸⁶ Ohio Revised Code ORC3314.08(C); retrieved August 27, 2011, <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/3314.08>

²⁸⁷ Community school funding information; retrieved August 27, 2011, <http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=998&ContentID=2305&Content=107123>

Oklahoma



Oklahoma has both full-time and supplemental online programs operating statewide, and several district programs as well. Two full-time online programs were open in school year 2010-11, the Oklahoma Virtual High School and Oklahoma Virtual Academy. Oklahoma Connections Academy, another full-time school, opened in fall 2011. Supplemental online programs include the University of Oklahoma Independent Learning High School and Oklahoma State University K-12 Distance Learning Academy. The University of Oklahoma had a diploma-granting arm known as OU High School, which closed in 2011. Students can transfer across districts 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.

The Oklahoma Department of Education reports 4,456 unique students took online courses in school year 2010-11. It believes most of these are full-time online students but does not know how many are full-time.²⁸⁸ According to the state Legislature’s Internet-Based Instruction Task Force, “over 1,100 students were enrolled in full-time online programs 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.” It is unclear if the year-to-year numbers are measuring the same online schools and programs.

²⁸⁸ Oklahoma Department of Education, personal communication September 12, 2011

State policies

SB2319 (2010) confirmed that students should be counted by their school for attendance when students are participating in online courses approved by the district board of education. The law also directed 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. 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).”

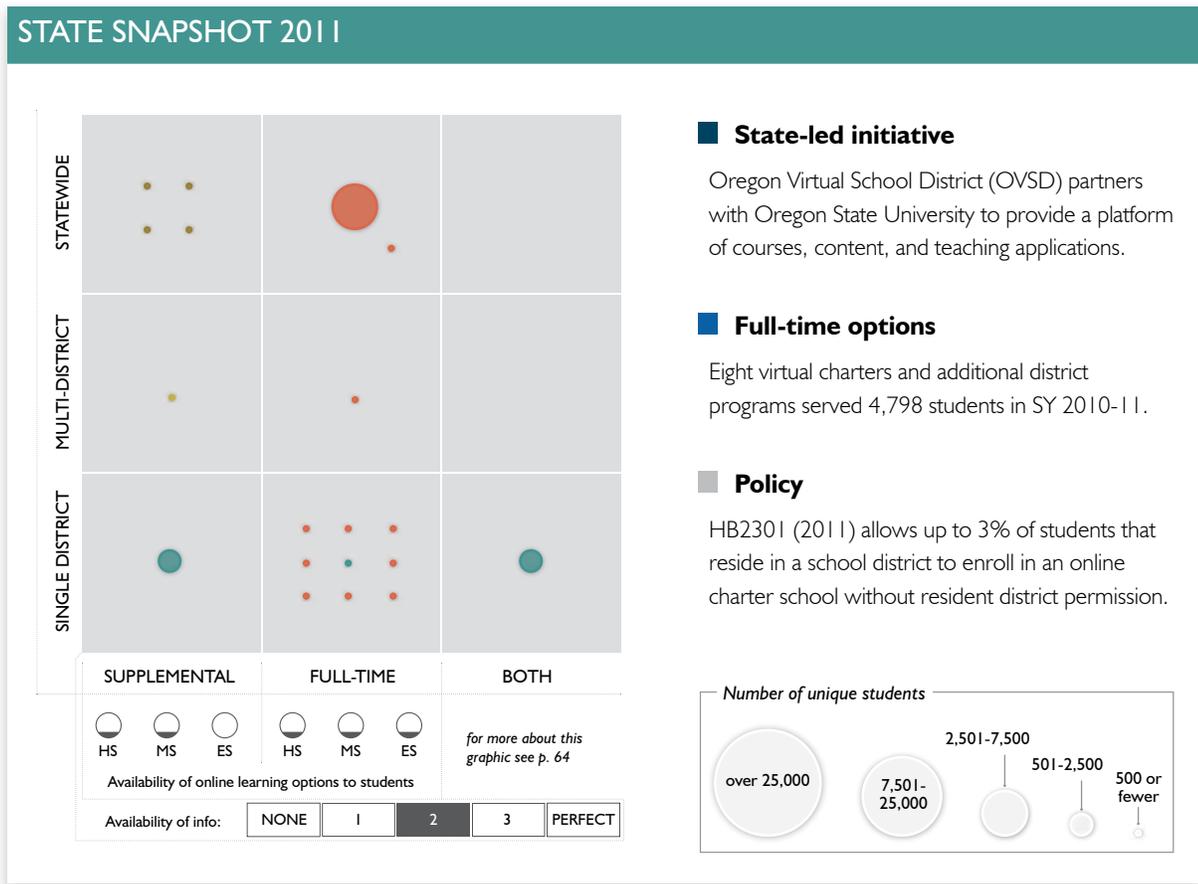
SB604 (2009) created a seven-member legislative task force “to study the efficiency and accountability of the state’s Internet-based instruction program.” The Report of the Internet- Based Instruction Task Force was submitted on November 5, 2009. A follow-up state study by the Statewide Virtual School Task Force was authorized in the 2010 legislative session in SB2129 and planned to report to the Legislature in December 2010, but was only partially presented due to an administrative change.

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.” SB2318 (effective November 1, 2010) allowed 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.

Oregon



Oregon has a state-led initiative in the Oregon Virtual School District (OVSD), full-time online charter schools, and district-level programs. With the passage of HB2301 (2011), students now have more flexibility in online learning options. HB2301²⁸⁹ took effect July 1, 2011 and allows:

- Students to choose at the course level.
- Students to enroll in virtual charter schools without approval of the school district where the student resides prior, unless more than 3% of the students who reside in the district are enrolled in virtual charter schools. If more than 3% of a district’s students enroll in a virtual charter not sponsored by the district, then the student must receive permission from the district. While that permission is not guaranteed, the student can appeal to the State Board of Education.
- Up to 5% of a virtual charter school’s instructional hours to be taught by teachers who are not licensed in Oregon.

SB994 also passed in 2011, creating the Task Force on Virtual School Governance to make recommendations to the 2012 legislature on new governance standards for online schools.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁹ HB2301; retrieved September 8, 2011, <http://www.leg.state.or.us/11reg/measpdf/hb2300.dir/hb2301.intro.pdf>

²⁹⁰ SB994; retrieved October 3, 2011, <http://gov.oregonlive.com/bill/2011/SB994/>

Online programs

OVSD is a state-led initiative that provides a platform of courses, content, and teaching applications to schools across Oregon.²⁹¹ Oregon State University (OSU) partners with the (OVSD) by developing online courses and hosting the OVSD open source course management system through the OSU Open Source Lab. It does not offer courses directly, but sources them from private providers. 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. Teachers have used the portal to create 6,500 customized teaching units to supplement their curriculum. OVSD received \$970,000 from the State School Fund to fund operations and teacher training.

Oregon Virtual Education (ORVED) began offering supplemental courses (with teachers) to all Oregon students in fall 2010 with a catalog of six core courses, serving 440 students. It is offering 11 courses for the 2011-12 school year using the OVSD platform.²⁹² ORVED is run out of the Northwest Regional Education Services District (ESD); 17 of the 20 education service districts (ESD) in Oregon are paying membership fees to participate in ORVED.

There are eight full-time online charter schools that served 4,798 students statewide.²⁹³ These include Oregon Connections Academy with 2,529 students and Oregon Virtual Academy with 563. The Molalla Online High School is a district-based full-time virtual school that opened in fall 2010-11 with curriculum provided by Aventa Learning. Insight School of Oregon, now part of the K12 Inc. network of schools, operates as a private alternative school; this allows it to contract with approximately 40 districts to serve 350 alternative education students from throughout the state.²⁹⁴

Many district and ESD programs such as Oregon Online, a program of Southern Oregon Education Service District; Salem-Keizer Online; and Corvallis Online (Corvallis Public Schools) served approximately 4,200 students in 2009-10. OSU Extension, Portland State University Independent Study, and Chemeketa Community College Early College offer dual credit early college programs for high school students.

State policies

Oregon has an extensive online learning policy history, following discussion at the state level. Much of the history is covered in previous *Keeping Pace* reports.

- HB3660 (2010)²⁹⁵ implemented the recommendations of the Online Learning Task Force, which directed the State Board of Education to develop a proposed governance model for virtual public schools and virtual charter schools; to review appropriate levels and methods of funding for such schools; to identify which virtual public schools and virtual public charter schools enrolled students with disabilities; and to review participation rates of students with disabilities. HB3660 also contained the following provisions:
 - Required 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.
 - Outlined record-keeping requirements when a student transfers.

²⁹¹ Personal communication with Steve Nelson, June 28, 2011

²⁹² ORVED; retrieved October 3, 2011, <http://www.orved.org/>

²⁹³ Enrollment numbers retrieved from Oregon Department of Education Fall Membership Reports 2010-11, <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?=3225>; this is a new source in *Keeping Pace 2011*, which may explain the decrease from 2009-10 reported numbers.

²⁹⁴ Insight School of Oregon; retrieved June 29, 2011, <http://www.insightschools.net/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=usfBdwsJcg8%3D&tabid=611>

²⁹⁵ HB3660; retrieved June 29, 2011, <http://www.leg.state.or.us/10ss1/measpdf/hb3600.dir/hb3660.intro.pdf>

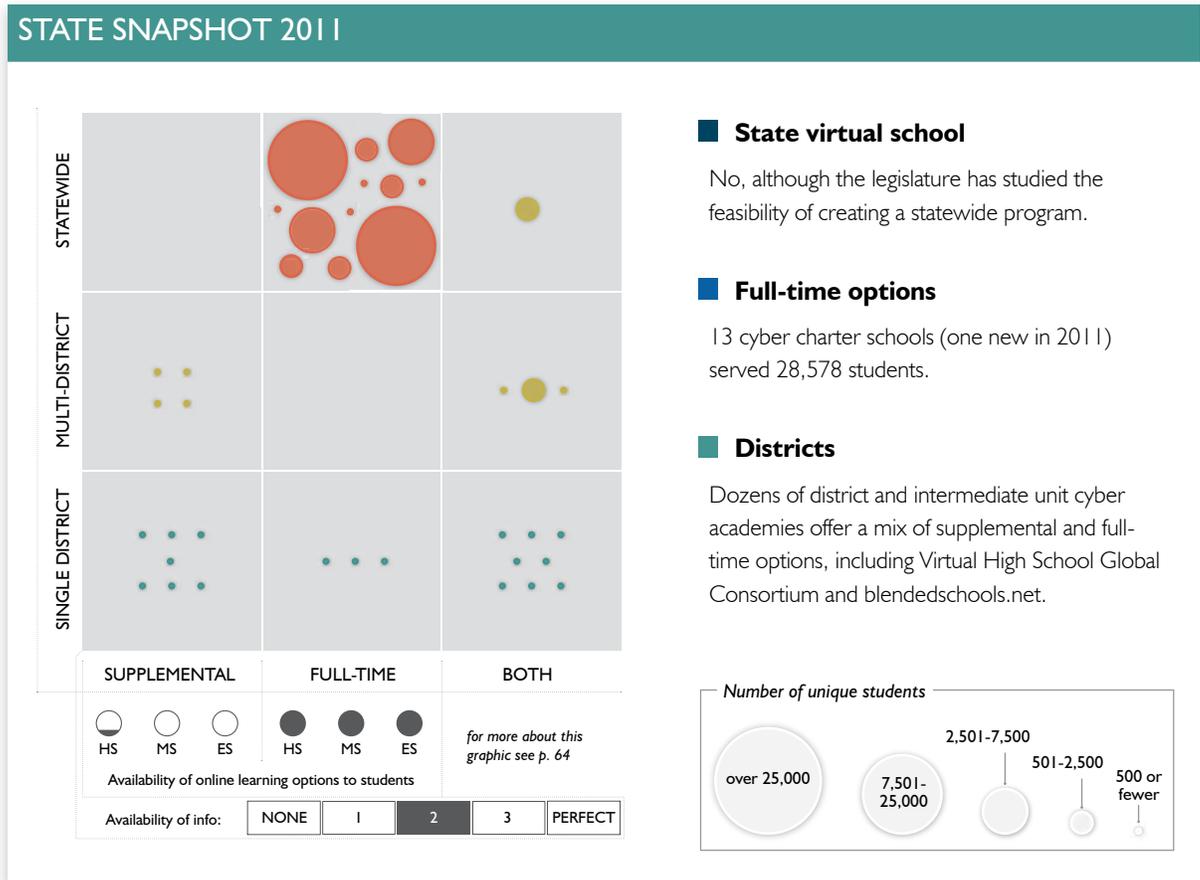
- Required that online schools must use budget and accounting systems compatible with their physical counterparts in the sponsoring district.
- HB2301 (2011):
 - Repeals the SB767 enrollment cap and 50% residency requirement.
 - Requires that at least 95% of instructional hours be taught by Oregon-licensed teachers.
 - Requires the online charter school to notify a student's resident district of the enrollment.
 - Prohibits an online charter school board from having a school employee or third-party entity with which the school contracts.
 - Requires that a school district release up to 3% of students to online charter schools.
 - Provides student assessments in a manner that ensures that an individual student is being assessed and that the assessment is valid.
 - Requires a plan to provide equitable access to the education program of the school by ensuring that each student enrolled in the school has access to and use of computer and printer equipment as needed; is offered an Internet service cost reimbursement arrangement under which the school reimburses the parent or guardian of the student, at a rate set by the school, for the costs of obtaining Internet service at the minimum connection speed required to effectively access the education program provided by the school; or has access to and use of computer and printer equipment and is offered Internet service cost reimbursement.²⁹⁶

Quality assurance, teaching, and curriculum

ESB767 (2009) Section 8, HB3660, HB2301, and ORS 342.173 provide guidance around quality assurance in online programs; details from legislation from previous years can be found in *Keeping Pace 2010*. In addition to details discussed above, virtual charter schools must have performance criteria used to measure the progress of the school in meeting the academic performance goals set by the school for its first five years of operation. The plan must directly and significantly involve parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school and involving the professional employees of the school. Finally, schools must have a plan for academic achievement that addresses how the school will improve student learning and meet academic content standards.

²⁹⁶ Oregon online learning legislative summary pulled largely from HB2301 staff measure summary; retrieved June 30, 2011, <http://www.leg.state.or.us/comm/sms/sms11/hb2301ajwm06-17-2011.pdf>

Pennsylvania



State virtual school

No, although the legislature has studied the feasibility of creating a statewide program.

Full-time options

13 cyber charter schools (one new in 2011) served 28,578 students.

Districts

Dozens of district and intermediate unit cyber academies offer a mix of supplemental and full-time options, including Virtual High School Global Consortium and blendedschools.net.

Pennsylvania had 12 cyber charter schools²⁹⁷ serving 28,578 students in grades K-12 in SY 2010-11,²⁹⁸ a 16% increase (and two additional schools) from SY 2009-10. A growing number of districts, independent units (IU), and consortia are providing online courses for area students in an attempt to draw students back from cyber charters.

Cyber charters have dominated the K-12 online options in Pennsylvania since SusQ-Cyber Charter School first opened in 1998. Enrollments have grown steadily; the largest schools are Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School with 8,539 students and Agora Cyber Charter with 7,727 students; all but two of the 12 cyber charters showed enrollment growth in 2010-11.

Until SY 2011-12, when a student left a district for a charter or cyber charter, the district would receive a bill for the cost of that student; the amount varied based on the home district, but averaged around \$12,808.²⁹⁹ The state would then partially reimburse the district at the end of the school year for the cost of the student; in 2010-11 the reimbursement dropped to an average

²⁹⁷ Cyber charter school listing 2010-11; retrieved June 27, 2011, http://www.education.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/charter_schools/7356/charter_schools___where_we_re_located/508152

²⁹⁸ Enrollment public school 2010-11, Pennsylvania Department of Education; retrieved July 20, 2011, http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/enrollment/7407/public_school_enrollment_reports/620541

²⁹⁹ Special report: The Commonwealth should revise its charter and cyber charter school funding mechanisms, September 2010, Auditor General Jack Wagner; retrieved September 21, 2011, <http://www.auditorgen.state.pa.us/reports/performance/special/speCharterFundingReport100510.pdf>

of 25%, and it was completely eliminated in Governor Corbett's 2011-12 budget.³⁰⁰ The situation was analyzed in a report from the state auditor general,³⁰¹ which recommended a moratorium on new cyber charters until it could be resolved (a moratorium was not implemented). Districts are responding by opening their own cyber academies and working to bring students back. IUs are also opening cyber service programs that serve students in their districts. These programs typically offer supplemental courses (although some offer a full-time option); do not have to be authorized by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE); and do not require separate reporting as they simply roll into overall district accountability. As a result, the total number of new cyber academies and cyber service programs is unknown. An analysis of the Pennsylvania K-12 online landscape, "Cost and Funding of State-led Virtual Learning Program Models,"³⁰² estimates that "at least 158 of Pennsylvania's 501 school districts are under contract with a nonprofit or for-profit vendor of online courses."

State policies and accountability

With the passage of Act 88 (2002), the General Assembly allowed for the establishment of cyber charter schools in Pennsylvania. Cyber charter school oversight is regulated by a combination of charter school laws that oversee all charter schools, as well as regulations specific to cyber charters. Pennsylvania System of Cyber Charter Review (PASCRR), 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. Additional details about charter authorization, reporting, funding, and requirements can be found in *Keeping Pace 2010*.

Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) released a report in April 2011 titled "Charter School Performance in Pennsylvania."³⁰³ While the report looks at student performance among all charter schools, it also looks specifically at eight cyber charter schools from 2007-10. It found that cyber students were more likely to be white, ineligible for subsidized meals, and repeating a grade than the general student population. However, the starting score on state achievement tests for cyber students is significantly higher than for brick-and-mortar charter students in both reading and math. The report found that "cyber charter students have significantly smaller gains in reading and math than those of their traditional public school peers."

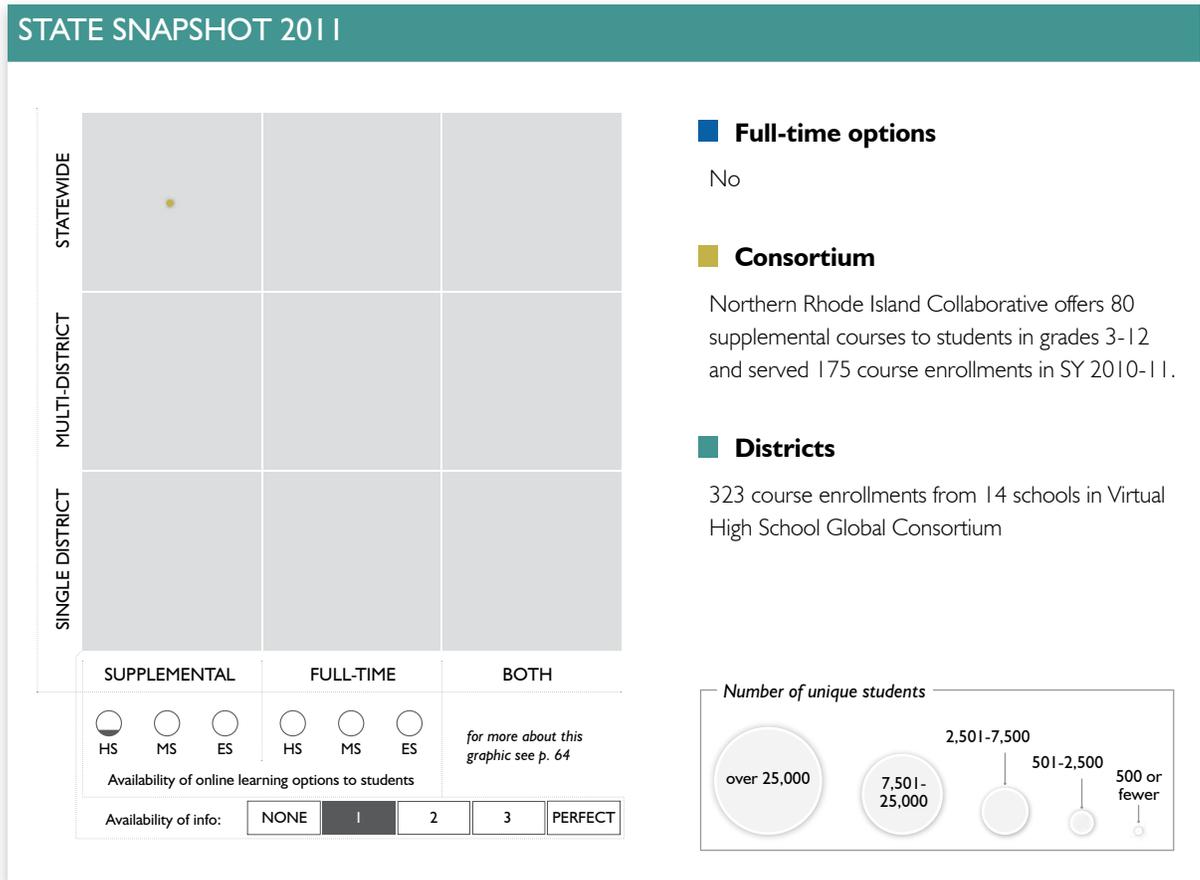
³⁰⁰ Pennsylvania budget analysis, The Education Policy and Leadership Center; retrieved September 21, 2011, <http://www.eplc.org/notebook2011/July1.html>

³⁰¹ Ibid

³⁰² Cost and Funding of State-led Virtual Learning Programs; retrieved September 6, 2011, <http://lbfc.legis.state.pa.us/reports/2011/52.PDF>

³⁰³ Charter School Performance in Pennsylvania 2007-2010, Center for Research on Education Outcomes; retrieved July 20, 2011, http://credo.stanford.edu/reports/PA%20State%20Report_20110404_FINAL.pdf

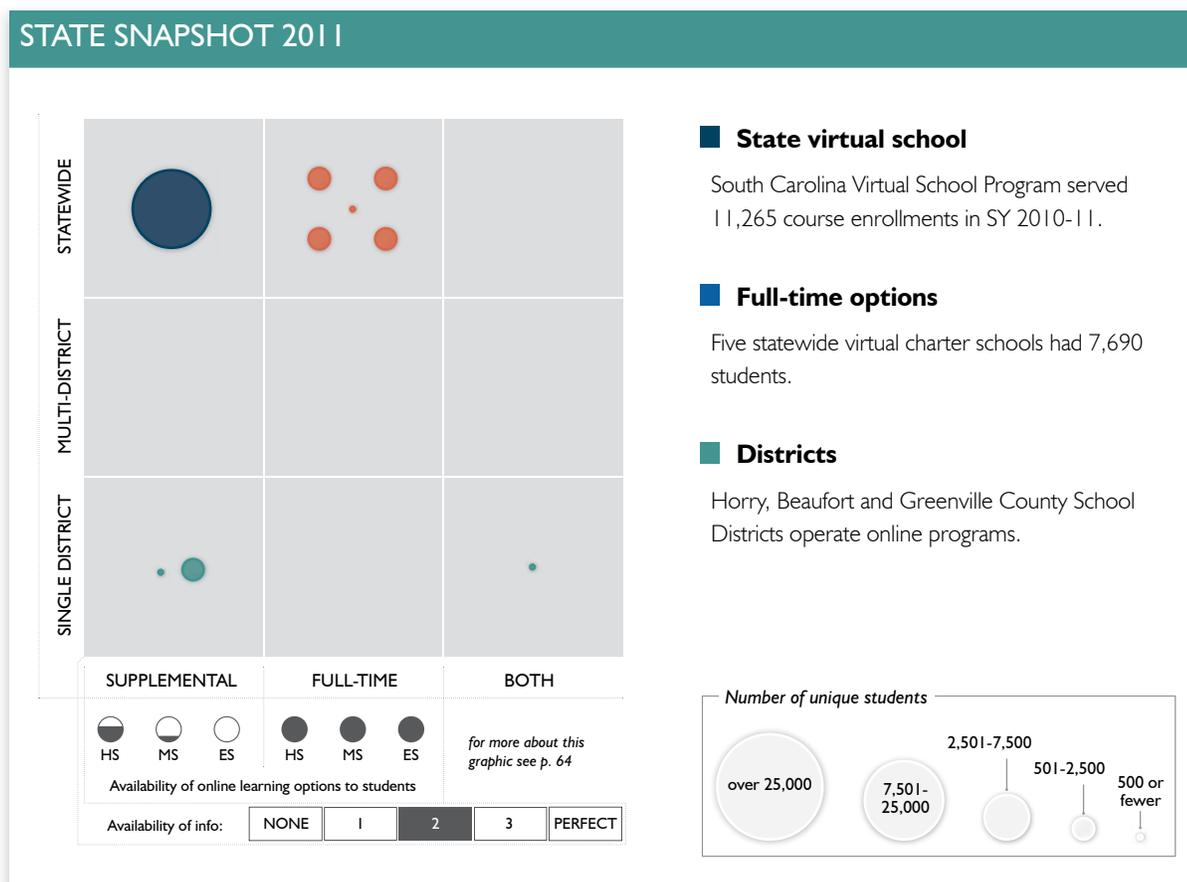
Rhode Island



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 is expecting 175 course enrollments in fall 2011, a 22% decline from fall 2010. Other virtual learning opportunities are being investigated and used by some school districts, including Virtual High School Global Consortium (VHS) and Pearson’s NovaNet. VHS reported 323 course enrollments from 14 schools³⁰⁴ (12% of the total number of middle and high schools in the state) through the Virtual High School Global Consortium in SY 2010-11.

³⁰⁴ Virtual High School Consortium; retrieved August 9, 2011, <http://www.govhs.org/Pages/AboutUs-ParticipatingSchools>

South Carolina



South Carolina has a state virtual school, five online charter schools, and at least two significant district programs. The five online charter schools—Palmetto State E-cademy, South Carolina Connections Academy, South Carolina Virtual Charter School (operated by K12 Inc.), South Carolina Calvert Academy, and Provost Academy South Carolina—had a total of 7,690 students enrolled as of June 2010, a 38% increase from SY 2009-10.³⁰⁵ The South Carolina Virtual School Program (SCVSP; the state virtual school) had 11,265 enrollments in school year 2010-11, a 20% decrease from the 14,022 enrollments in the school year 2009-10.³⁰⁶

Act 26 (2007) formally established the SCVSP.³⁰⁷ 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) that includes Adult Education students; it had a budget of \$3.2 million in 2010-11.

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

³⁰⁵ Connecting with South Carolina Students Report, retrieved September 26, 2011, <http://www.scpolicycouncil.com/research-and-publications-/education/1478-online-learning-connecting-with-sc-students>
³⁰⁶ The annual change is based on a revised number of enrollments from school year 2009-10 that is slightly different than the number reported in *Keeping Pace 2010*.
³⁰⁷ Act 26 (2007) and H3097; retrieved October 3, 2011, http://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess117_2007-2008/bills/3097.htm

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 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.³⁰⁸ 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

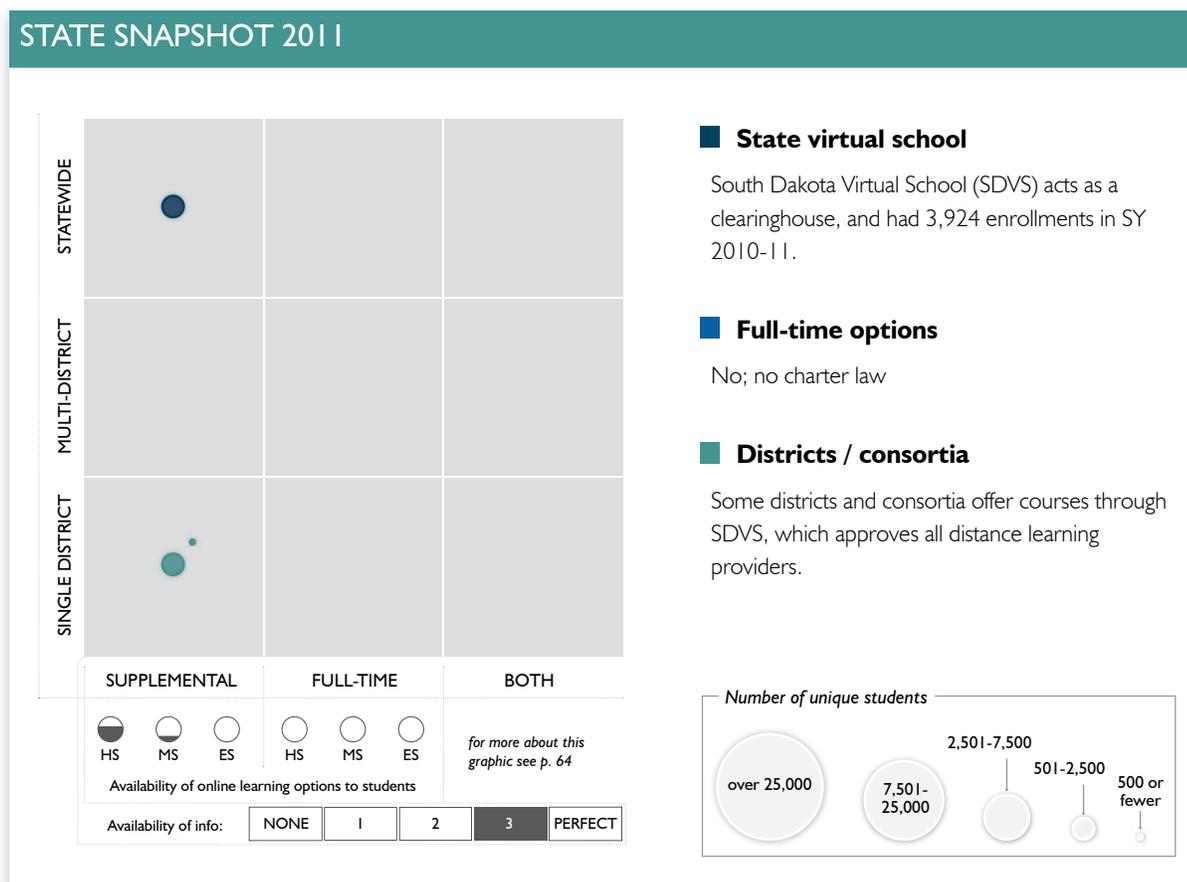
Following are some of the requirements specific to virtual charter school applicants per Act 26: “If the governing body of a charter school offers as part of its curriculum a program of online or computer instruction, this information shall be included in the application and the governing body shall 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;”
 - “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.”
 - “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.

³⁰⁸ South Carolina Charter School Application Review Guide (Start-Up Charter Schools); retrieved July 27, 2011, 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 set the course fees and are paid directly by school districts, which have the right to refuse students' requests for an online course. SDVS had 410 semester course offerings as of July 2011, with new courses constantly in the approval process. It served 3,924 course enrollments in 2010-11, a 35% increase from 2009-10.

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 offering. HB1113 (2007) restricts districts from putting a grade on a student transcript unless the course was from an approved DLP.³⁰⁹ This is intended to centralize quality control and will effectively limit any other programs.

Online programs and resources in South Dakota include:

- Dakota Interactive Academic Link (DIAL) Virtual School is an initiative of the DIAL consortium of schools.

³⁰⁹ A list of approved providers; retrieved July 27, 2011, <http://www.sdvs.k12.sd.us/Providers/About.aspx>

- The E-learning Center provides distance delivery of Digital Dakota Network and Internet-based college-prep and Advanced Placement (AP) high school courses. Priority is given to small, rural schools.
- The Sioux Falls School District has implemented online courses in all three traditional high schools and its alternative high school; students also take courses through SDVS.
- 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 2010-11 school year, a total of 197 districts, tribal schools, and private schools had students enrolled in a SDVS course; of those 197 entities, 65 have student populations of less than 300.

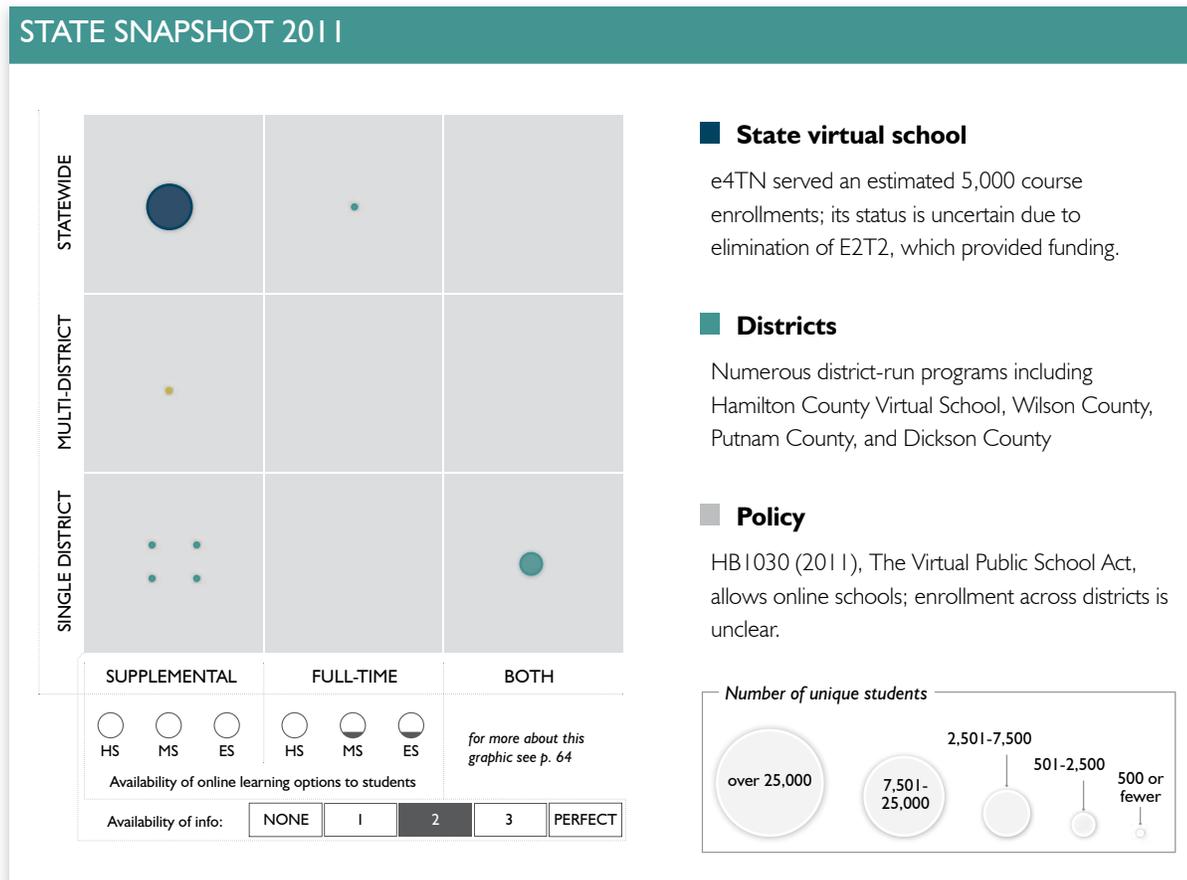
State policies

The following policies are detailed in state administrative rules.³¹⁰

- “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 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.

³¹⁰ From South Dakota administrative rules specific to distance learning and the virtual school; retrieved October 3, 2011, <http://legis.state.sd.us/rules/DisplayRule.aspx?Rule=24:43:12>

Tennessee



Tennessee has a full-time, statewide K-8 school (Tennessee Virtual Academy, authorized by the Union County School District and operated by K12, Inc.), several district-run programs, including Hamilton County Virtual School, and a state virtual school, e4TN, which lost most of its funding in 2011.

e4TN had been funded through Enhancing Education Through Technology (E2T2) funds. These were originally awarded to the program in partnership with Hamilton County Department of Education in 2005 and have been renewed annually. Funding for the 2008-09 school year, for example, was \$1.76 million, of which \$1.6 million was from E2T2. As of 2011, E2T2 has been discontinued, leaving e4TN unfunded. e4TN estimated 5,000 course enrollments for SY 2010-11.

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 iTunesU with podcasts for students. The ELC also has a Governor’s Study Partner Program (GSPP), which contains curriculum standards and professional development information for teachers and administrators as well as resources for parents and students.

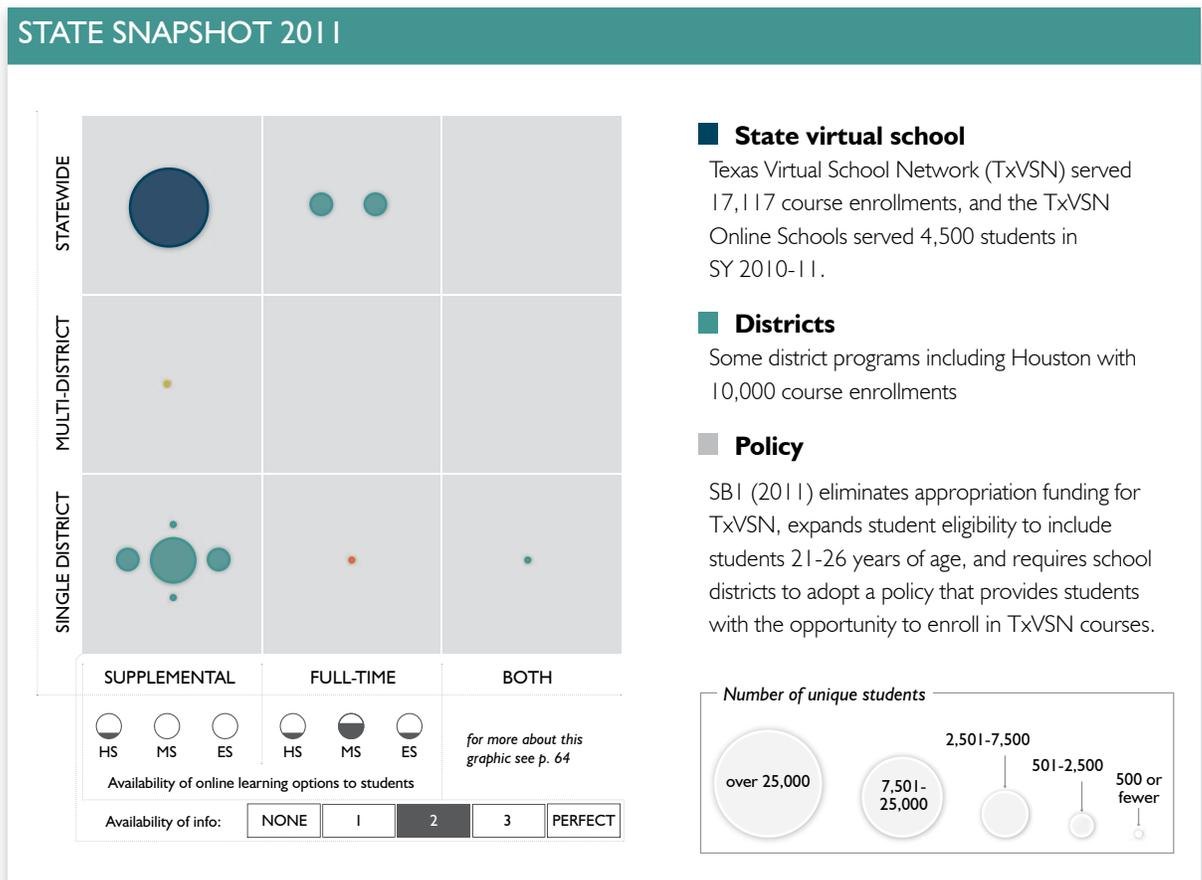
State policies

The Tennessee Legislature passed House Bill 1030³¹¹, The Virtual Public School Act, in July 2011, allowing online schools. The bill's key provisions include:

- “Each virtual school student shall be required to have nine hundred (900) hours of learning opportunities per academic year, unless such student has demonstrated mastery or completion of appropriate subject areas.”
- “A virtual school shall maintain an administrative office within the state.”
- “Virtual schools shall not be required to comply with maximum class size requirements.”
- “Participation in a virtual education program by a student shall be at the discretion of the [local education agency] LEA in which the student is enrolled or zoned to attend.”

Previous policy was based on SB2008 and was reviewed in *Keeping Pace 2010*.

Texas



Online learning in Texas is led by its state virtual school administered by the Texas Education Agency (TEA): the Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN) and the full-time virtual TxVSN Online

³¹¹ House Bill 1030, retrieved August 21, 2011; <http://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/107/Bill/HB1030.pdf>

Schools (formerly known as the Electronic Course Program, or eCP). In addition, there are some district programs and consortia.

SB1788, passed by the 80th Texas Legislature in 2007, established a state virtual network to provide supplemental online courses for Texas students. Grades 9-12 courses offered through the TxVSN statewide course catalog are provided by Texas school districts, open enrollment charter schools, Education Service Centers, and institutions of higher education. TxVSN³¹² began offering courses through its statewide course catalog in January 2009. Course enrollments have grown dramatically from 1,806 course enrollments between summer 2009 and spring 2010, to 17,117 course enrollments between summer 2010 and spring 2011 (see Table 16).³¹³

SB1 from the 82nd Texas Legislature, First Called Session, 2011 introduced changes to funding for students taking online courses through the TxVSN.³¹⁴ Separate TxVSN allotment funding is no longer available. Districts may earn state funding for students enrolled in TxVSN courses in the same manner as a student enrolled in a traditional classroom setting, regardless of whether or not the student is physically present at the school, provided that the student successfully completes the course.

Enrollments	Summer 2009	Fall 2009	Spring 2010	Summer 2009 – Spring 2010	Summer 2010	Fall 2010	Spring 2011	Summer 2010 – Spring 2011
High School	189	234	419	842	2,197	3,623	7,176	12,996
Dual Enrollment	0	237	727	964	473	1,855	1,793	4,121
Total	189	471	1,146	1,806	2,670	5,478	8,969	17,117

Table 16: TxVSN course enrollment data

SB1 also created an instructional materials allotment (IMA) for districts for the purchase of instructional materials, technological equipment, and technology-related services. Beginning with the 2011-12 school year, the Commissioner of Education will establish a per student allotment each year for every district and open enrollment charter school based on the amount of money available in the state instructional materials fund to fund the allotment. Allotment funds are transferred from the state instructional materials fund to the credit of the district's instructional materials account. New legislation also transfers ownership of instructional materials from the state to the local district.

Online programs

The TEA provides state-supported online learning opportunities to students across the state through the TxVSN statewide course catalog 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.

³¹² TxVSN overview; retrieved July 30, 2011, http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=4840&menu_id=2147483665

³¹³ Enrollment numbers as of August 24, 2011. Final 2009-10 numbers differ from what was reported in *Keeping Pace 2010*.

³¹⁴ SB1; retrieved September 7, 2011, <http://www.journals.senate.state.tx.us/sjrn/821/pdf/82S106-28-F.PDF#page=35>

- 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, coordinates data needed for state reporting requirements, and reviews online courses submitted by potential Provider Districts.
- 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 statewide course catalog and are responsible for instruction.
- TxVSN Receiver 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.

In 2009-10, TxVSN began offering courses through which students can earn both high school and college credit (dual credit). TxVSN dual credit courses served a total of 4,121 course enrollments between summer 2010 and spring 2011, an increase of 30% from summer 2009 through spring 2010.

In addition to courses offered through the TxVSN, the TEA administers a full-time virtual program for grades 3-11 that is now called TxVSN Online Schools. The full-time program launched in 2006 as the Electronic Course Program (eCP). HB3646 (2009)³¹⁵ repealed the separate statute which created the eCP Texas Education Code (TEC Section 29.909)³¹⁶ and incorporated the eCP as a program under TEC Chapter 30A, which established the TxVSN. The eCP was phased into TEC Chapter 30A beginning with the 2009-10 school year.

TxVSN Online Schools allows participating public school districts and open enrollment charter schools to earn state funding based on successful completions. Interested districts and charters apply to TEA and must meet eligibility requirements. Three schools are currently authorized by TEA to offer full-time online programs through the TxVSN Online Schools program—one charter school, Responsive Education Solutions (iQ Academy); and two independent school districts, Houston Independent School District (ISD; Texas Connections Academy @ Houston) and Texarkana ISD (Texarkana ISD Virtual Academy). Approximately 4,500 students in grades 3-10 were served through TxVSN Online Schools in the 2010-11 instructional year. The TxVSN Online Schools program expanded to include grade 11 in the 2011-12 school year and plans to add grade 12 in 2012-13.

³¹⁵ HB3646; retrieved July 30, 2011, <http://www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/81R/billtext/pdf/HB03646F.pdf>

³¹⁶ Texas Education Code 29.909 Electronic Courses; retrieved July 30, 2011 <http://law.onecle.com/texas/education/29.909.00.html>

State policies

TxVSN

- TxVSN courses have been reviewed by the state against Texas curriculum standards; therefore districts are not required to determine alignment prior to granting credit.
- Funding for TxVSN courses is based on successful completion; districts are eligible to earn this state funding for TxVSN courses regardless of the location of the student at the time of instruction. A student may generate either part-time or full-time funding.
- A student who has begun enrollment in a course offered through the TxVSN and transfers from one educational setting to another is entitled to continue enrollment in the course.
- In addition to state policies for distance learning, there are specific program requirements and policies for districts participating in the TxVSN statewide course catalog and the TxVSN Online Schools.

Outside the TxVSN

- Texas authorizes all public schools to offer online courses to their students from the provider of their choice. Districts may grant credit for a course taken outside the TxVSN 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 be in attendance at school and meet the normal attendance accounting rules of the state. A student may generate either part-time or full-time funding.

Funding

Courses offered through the TxVSN statewide course catalog were previously funded through a separate legislative allotment which is no longer available. Historical funding details can be found in *Keeping Pace 2010*. Districts and open enrollment charter schools are responsible for the course cost beginning in fall 2011. Schools may use a variety of sources of funds such as Foundation School Program (FSP) and applicable local, state, federal, and grant funds.

Grades 9-12: If an eligible student participates in courses offered through the TxVSN and meets the requirements for full-time enrollment in a Texas school district or charter school, the student is eligible to generate state FSP funding under TEC Chapter 42 in the same manner as a student who receives instruction in a traditional classroom, provided that the student successfully completes the course. Successful completion is defined as earning credit for the online semester course. The district is eligible to earn this FSP funding regardless of whether or not the student is physically present at the school when taking the TxVSN online course.

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 course through the TxVSN course catalog (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.

Grades 3-8, TxVSN Online Schools: Students in grades 3-8 who participate in the TxVSN Online Schools full-time 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.

Governance, tracking, and accountability

- The Commissioner of Education is responsible for the TxVSN and TxVSN Online Schools, with staff at the TEA serving as the administering authority.
- The TxVSN statewide course catalog 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.
- Schools in the TxVSN Online Schools full-time program must apply and be approved by the TEA.

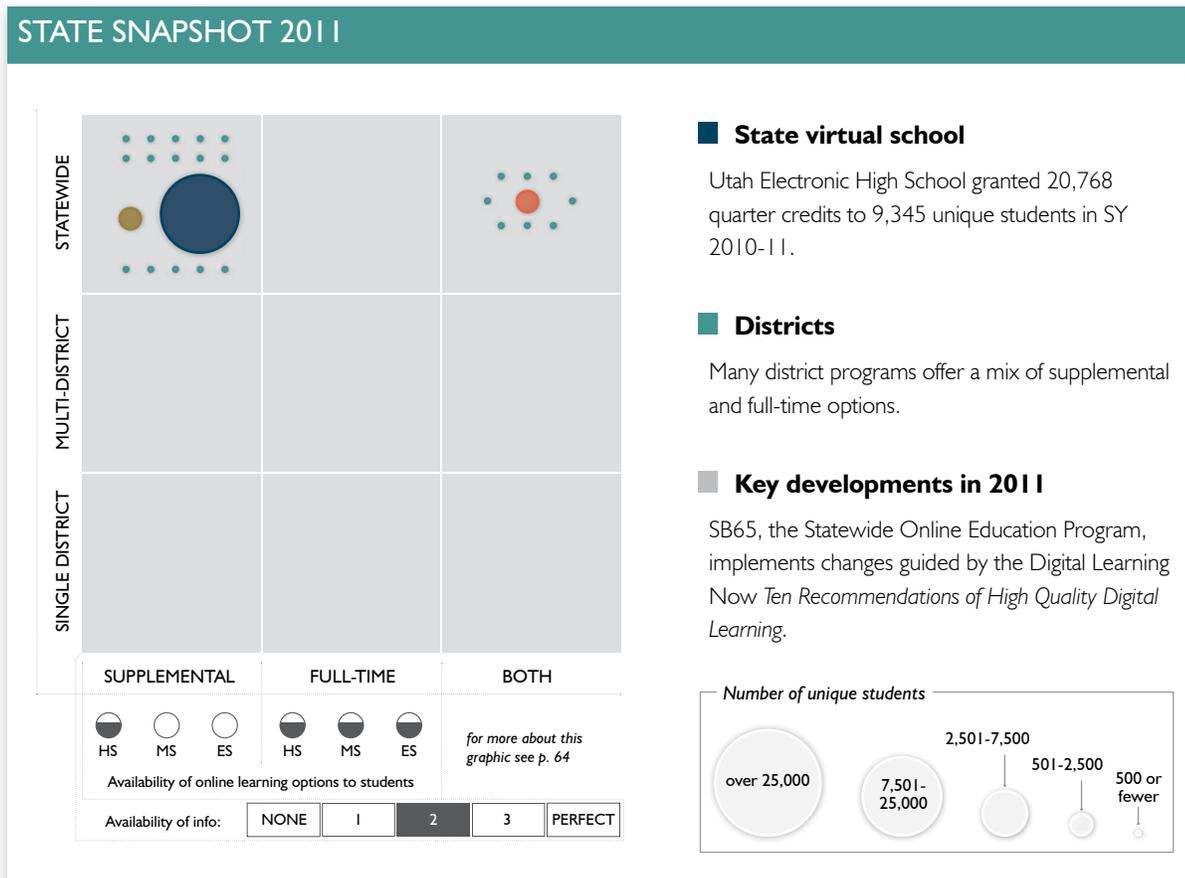
Quality assurance, teaching, and curriculum

Online courses submitted to the TxVSN are reviewed to ensure they meet the state curriculum standards, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), as well as the iNACOL *National Standards of Quality for Online Courses*.³¹⁷ All courses offered through the TxVSN statewide courses catalog are reviewed prior to inclusion in the catalog. TxVSN Online Schools' courses in grades 9 and 10 were initially reviewed prior to being offered in 2009-10; grade 11 was reviewed 2010-11, and grade 12 will be reviewed prior to being offered in 2012-13. At the lower grade levels, grades 6-8 courses were reviewed beginning in summer 2010 and grades 3-5 will be reviewed in the future.

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.

³¹⁷ iNACOL *National Standards of Quality for Online Courses and National Standards for Quality Online Teaching*; retrieved August 31, 2011 <http://www.inacol.org/research/nationalstandards/index.php>

Utah



SB65, the Statewide Online Education Program,³¹⁸ was signed into law on March 30, 2011, and went into effect on July 1, 2011, making Utah the first state in the nation to turn the Digital Learning Now *Ten Elements of High Quality Digital Learning*³¹⁹ into a comprehensive state policy. The ten elements served as the roadmap for creating the state’s online learning policy, including the following elements:

- Students can supplement their brick-and-mortar education with online courses.
 - Students / parents choose the courses and course providers; the student’s primary school of enrollment does not have control. Course selection is tied to the counselor-led Student Education Occupation Plan (SEOP), and must be aligned to graduation requirements.
 - Subject mastery replaces seat time, which allows students to advance based on competency.
 - Homeschool and private students will be eligible for the Statewide Online Education Program in year three.
- Funding follows the student down to the course level; from “Primary Local Education Agency (LEA) of enrollment” to “Provider LEA.”

³¹⁸ SB65; retrieved August 21, 2011, <http://le.utah.gov/~2011/bills/sbillint/sb0065s01.htm>

³¹⁹ Digital Learning Now, Ten Elements of High Quality Digital Learning; retrieved October 3, 2011, http://www.digitalllearningnow.com/?page_id=20

- Funding is based upon successful completion; the provider receives 50% (25% per semester) up front and the remaining 50% upon credit earned.
- Providers are incented to offer credit recovery courses, as they can receive 30% of the final 50% funding payment outside of the designated timeline for completion if the student earns the course credit prior to graduation.
- Multiple providers are being authorized.
 - The State Board of Education shall develop a report on the performance of online course providers.
 - Course providers may not limit the class size of an online course.
 - Open-entry, open-exit online courses are permitted if offered by the provider.
 - Each provider administers state assessments; the state is required to make assessments available upon course completion.
 - Any LEA—charter or district—can be an online provider.
 - Any LEA can contract with private providers to offer an online program.
 - Any online course provider can apply to offer courses directly to students starting with the 2012-13 school year.
- All LEAs must distribute information about online programs during registration, and publish information on their website.
- The bill provides \$250,000 for the administration of the program for the 2011-12 school year.

Online programs

As of SY2010-11, Utah had a state virtual school—the Utah Electronic High School (EHS)—and two statewide online charter schools. EHS, accredited by the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools since 2001, is primarily a supplemental program that works with local school districts, but is able to grant diplomas to restricted groups 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 each year from 2007 through 2011. EHS does not receive per-pupil state funding allocations with resident school districts. EHS will continue to offer courses in 2011; the SB65 Education Interim Committee will make recommendations to the 2012 legislature as to the future role and funding of EHS.

Between July 1, 2010 and June 30, 2011, EHS granted 20,768 quarter credits to 9,345 individual students, a 32% increase from the previous year. To put this into perspective with similar programs, this is roughly the equivalent of 10,384 individual semester course completions. 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 iTunesU.

The Utah Virtual Academy is the largest of Utah's online charter schools; it served 1,345³²⁰ K-12 students in 2010-11, an increase of 9% from 1,238³²¹ students in 2009-10. The Open High School of Utah, an open source online charter school initiated by a university professor, enrolled 127

³²⁰ 2010-11 enrollment number from Utah State Office of Education; retrieved September 5, 2011, <http://schools.utah.gov/data/Educational-Data/Student-Enrollment-and-Membership.aspx>

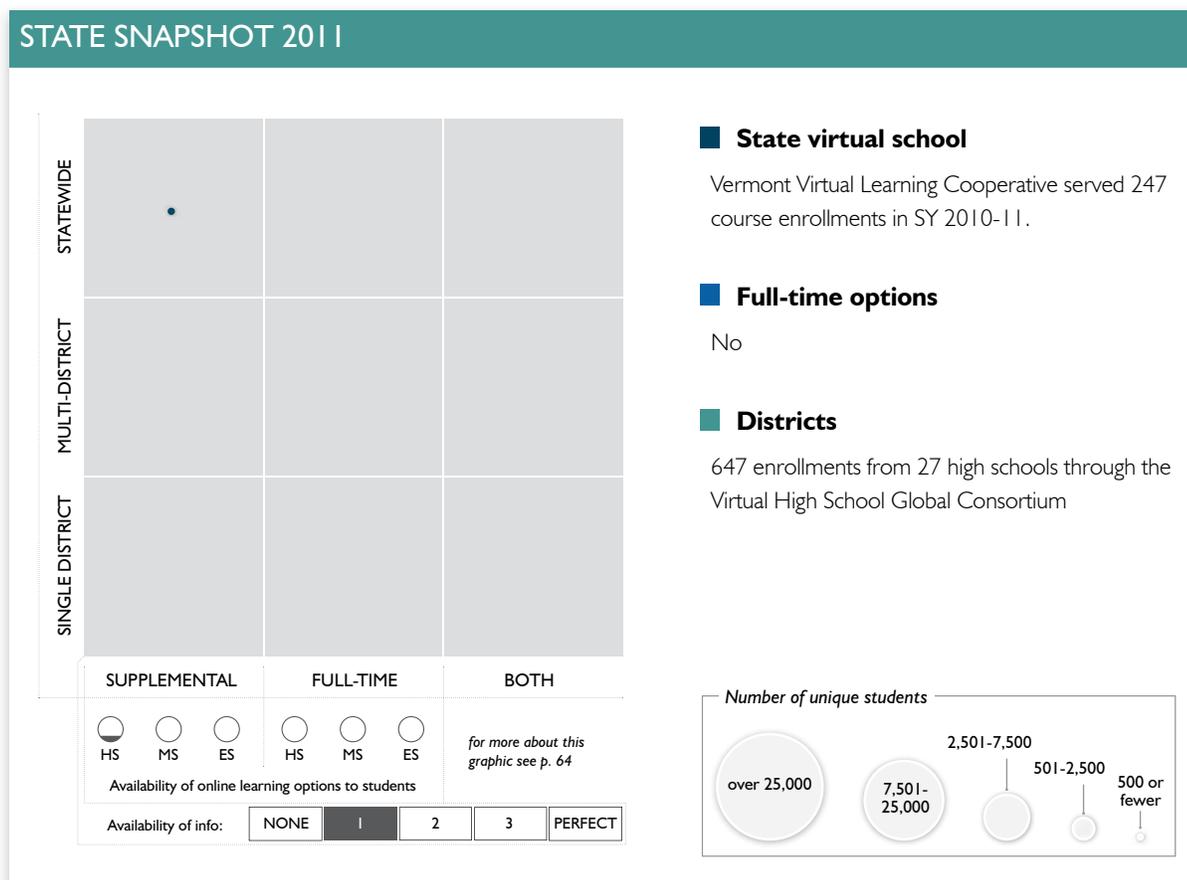
³²¹ 2009-10 enrollment number from the National Center for Education Statistics; retrieved September 5, 2011, http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/ipedssearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&InstName=utah+virtual+academy&SchoolType=1&SchoolType=2&SchoolType=3&SchoolType=4&SpecificSchlTypes=all&IncGrade=-1&LoGrade=-1&HiGrade=-1&ID=490013001196

students in school year 2009-10 (exceeding its cap), and 227 in 2010-11. Two online charter schools, Utah Connections Academy and Aspire Online Charter School, have been approved to open in 2011. With the recent passage of SB65, virtual charters are authorized to offer supplemental courses to students statewide in addition to their full-time curriculum.

Multiple Utah districts are offering online programs or creating online schools to provide services to students across the state for a per course fee set at the state level.³²² Some online schools or programs are contracting with vendors such as APEX, K12 Inc., or Education2020 for curriculum and services, while others are creating their own curriculum. An extensive list of districts is available on the *Keeping Pace* website.

Brigham Young University (BYU) 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). It allows credits earned through BYU Independent Study to transfer to other educational institutions outside of Utah that share NAAS accreditation.³²³ As of August 2011 the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) will not accept online credits from BYU.

Vermont



Vermont started a state virtual school in 2010, the Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative (VTVLC), which in 2011 reported partnering with 32 schools in Vermont (34% of the high schools in the state). The Virtual High School Global Consortium (VHS) also delivers online classes to 27 high

³²² Approved providers; retrieved October 3, 2011, <http://www.schools.utah.gov/edonline/Students-and-Parents.aspx>

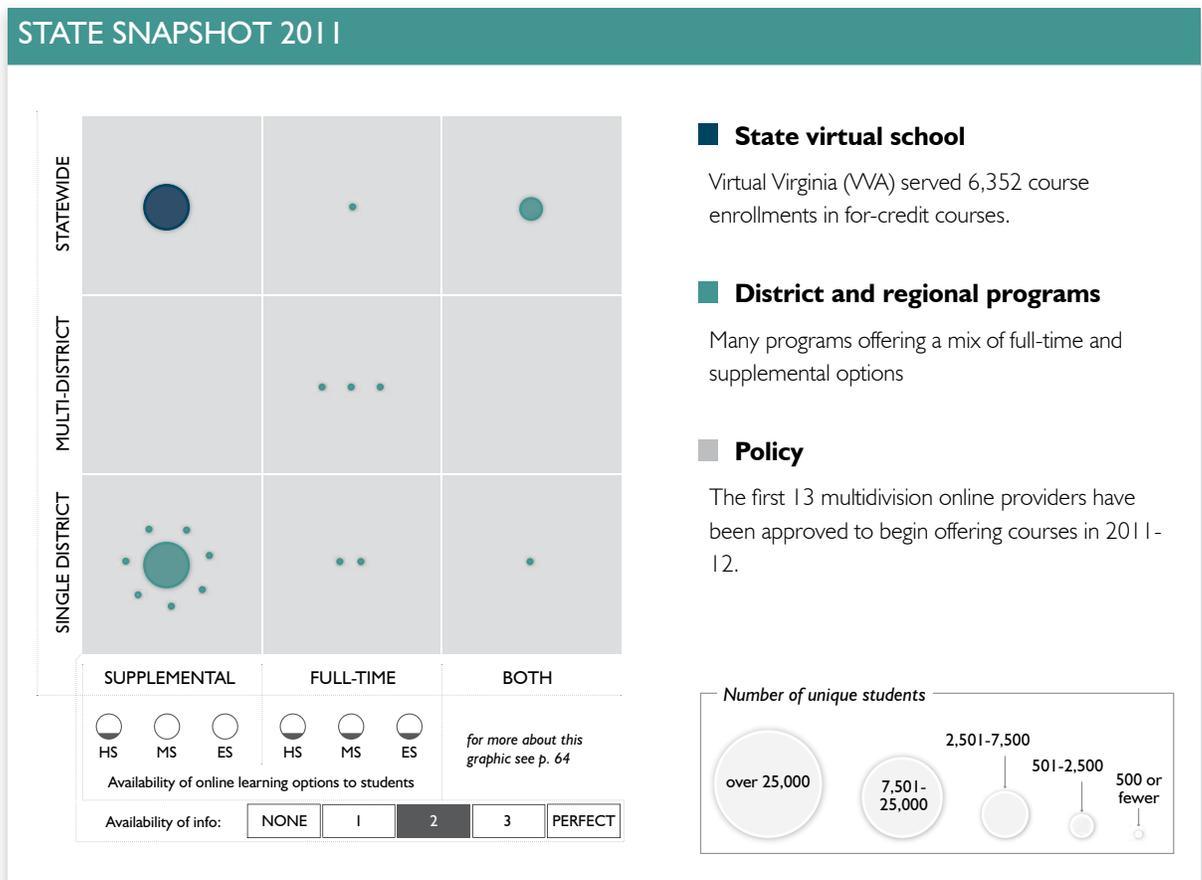
³²³ Brigham Young University Independent Study program; retrieved August 23, 2011, <http://ce.byu.edu/is/site/aboutus/accreditation.cfm>

schools (29%) as of August 2011. Aside from the VTVLC and VHS, there are no major district online programs, and no full-time online schools in the state.

VTVLC is an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act / Title IID-funded initiative run by the Vermont Department of Education (VDOE); it served 247 enrollments in 51 courses in SY 2010-11. The VTVLC received \$400,000 initially, and approximately \$235,000 for SY 2010-11. The VTVLC is 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, Florida Virtual School, Global Classroom, 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 DOE, Managed Statewide Network for Distance Learning, strongly supported the creation of a “Statewide Education Network” as it would improve equity of distribution, improve the 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.³²⁴ 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” and using 21st Century tools as key components of providing Vermont students with 21st Century Skills.³²⁵

Virginia



³²⁴ Act 66, Section 21, Statewide Network for Distance Learning; retrieved August 2, 2011, http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/laws/legislative_reports/07/act_66_sec_21_distance_learning.pdf

³²⁵ Learning with 21st Century Tools, Vermont State Board of Education; retrieved August 2, 2011, http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/pgm_edtech/state_plan/educ_edtech_plan_2012_part_1.pdf

Online learning in Virginia has been dominated by its state virtual school, Virtual Virginia, however, that is changing with the approval of 13 multidivision online providers now able to serve students in grades K-12 with both supplemental and full-time online programs. There are also many district and regional programs.

Virginia's first statewide online learning policy, SB738 (2010),³²⁶ allowed local school boards to contract with approved "multidivision online providers" to provide district online learning programs to grades K-12. Criteria for approving and monitoring multidivision online providers were approved by the Board of Education on November 18, 2010, and the first 13 providers have been approved.³²⁷ The 2010 legislation defined "online course," "virtual school program," and "multidivision online provider" for the first time. 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." A student's local education agency (LEA) must contract with each provider separately in order for a student to enroll in courses outside his or her district; this may or may not include an additional course-level approval process. 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.

SB738 does not provide any additional funding for districts enrolling students for online courses, nor does the legislation establish a uniform per student cost, per course cost, or funding formula. Local school districts are free to negotiate contract prices with approved multidivision providers. The legislation states, "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."

A searchable list of the multidivision providers approved for the 2011-12 school year is available on the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) website. A provider summary details what grade levels are served (including some elementary), whether the program is supplemental or full-time, and the target student populations.³²⁸ York County Division, Chesterfield County Division, and 11 commercial providers are approved for the 2011-12 school year. The approval application defined requirements for the organization, staffing, data, accountability, curriculum and instruction, and technology.³²⁹

Online program Virtual Virginia (VVA), the state virtual school operated out of the VDOE, has offered online courses to students across the state since 2005. VVA reported 6,352 enrollments in for-credit courses in 2010-11, up 1% from 2009-10, which was a nearly 30% increase over the prior year.³³⁰ For the last two years demand has exceeded funding, and over 400 students were put on waitlists in 2010-11. VVA limits enrollments to 15 students per course from an individual school.

VVA funding is largely based on state appropriations, with a small amount of funding coming through course fees charged to out-of-state and non-public school students. Appropriation funding dropped from \$3 million in 2009-10 to just over \$2 million in both 2010-11 and 2011-12. VVA also receives other support including grants, tuition, and other fees collected. 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 Advanced Placement® 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.

³²⁶ SB738 (2010); retrieved July 7, 2011, <http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?101+sum+SB738>

³²⁷ Multidivision online provider approval process; retrieved July 7, 2011, http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/virtual_learning/virtual_schools/providers/application/index.shtml

³²⁸ Approved multidivision providers; retrieved July 7, 2011, https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/amop_public/

³²⁹ Criteria for approval of multidivision online programs; retrieved July 14, 2011, http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/virtual_learning/virtual_schools/providers/application/criteria_for_multidivision_provider.pdf

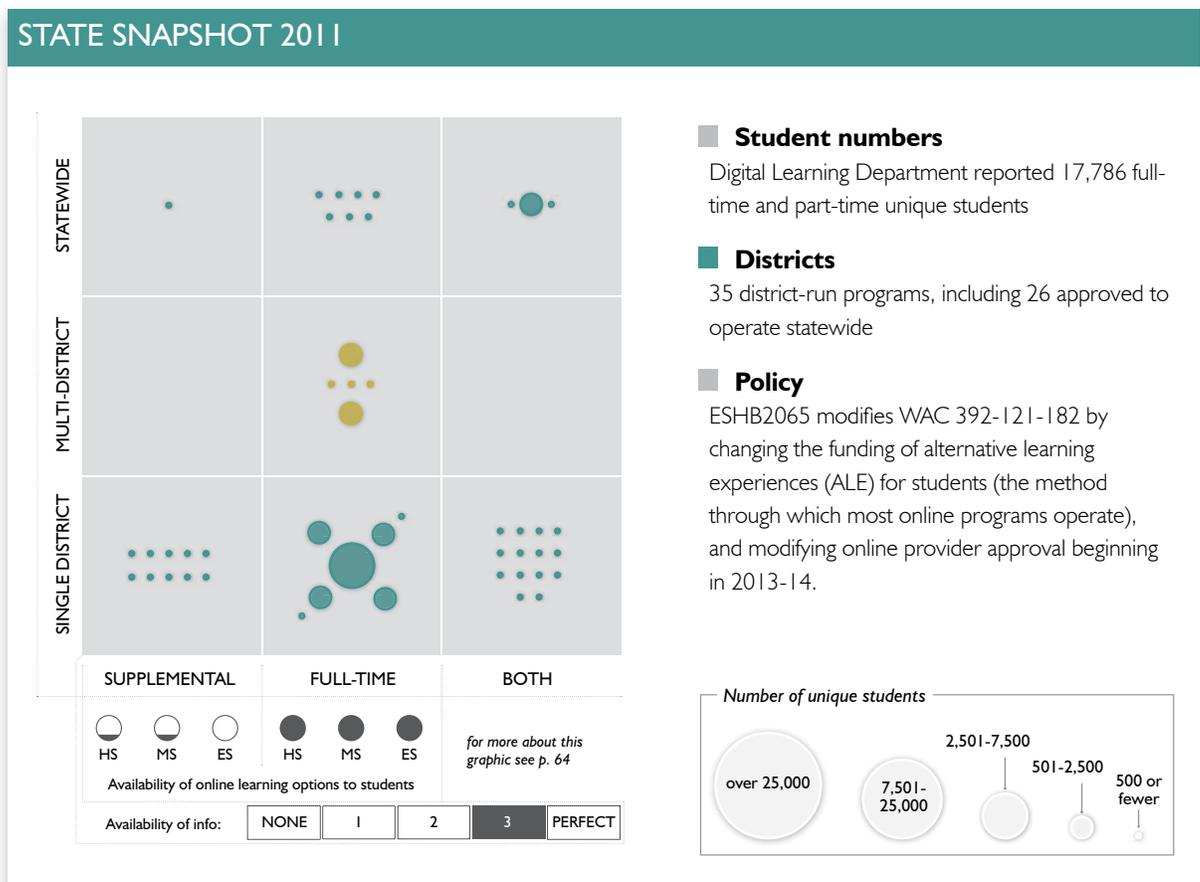
³³⁰ Personal communication with Dr. Tammy McGraw, July 22, 2011

In addition to the state virtual school, a significant number of supplemental district and regional online programs exist. One of the larger district programs is Fairfax Public Schools Online Campus, which reported 5,054 supplemental course enrollments in 2010-11. K12 Inc. opened its first full-time school in Virginia in 2010-11, serving 400 students at Virtual Virginia Academy in Carroll County.³³¹ 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 is available at the *Keeping Pace* website.

State policies

Distance learning courses are governed by the Virginia Standards of Accrediting Public Schools and SB738; details can be found in *Keeping Pace 2010*.

Washington



Washington has many single-district and multi-district online schools, serving students with full-time online schools and supplemental courses. Most state-level activity is tied to administering policies that govern the online schools. Presently, the Digital Learning Department (DLD) must approve all multi-district online schools, course providers, and program providers in the state; there are 14 online school programs managed by districts, 13 online course providers, and 12 online program providers approved by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)

³³¹ Enrollment numbers reported in the *Keeping Pace 2011* survey

as of summer 2011.³³² Washington does not have a charter school law, and all of these programs are run by school districts. Many districts have partnered with private online learning providers to operate these schools. Single-district programs serving only students within their district do not have to be approved.

Washington's online learning policies are based on Substitute Senate Bill (SSB) 5410 (2009)³³³ and Engrossed Substitute House Bill (ESHB) 2065 (2011).³³⁴ SSB5410 created the DLD within the OSPI, and developed initial approval and reporting requirements. The DLD has roles in both reviewing and approving online providers, while also offering online courses from approved course providers to districts.

ESHB2065 modifies WAC 392-121-182 by changing the funding of alternative learning experiences (ALE) for students (the method through which most online programs operate), and modifying online provider approval beginning in 2013-14. It also includes new ALE definitions, restrictions on purchasing, and a prohibition against compensating staff as an incentive to increase ALE enrolments.³³⁵ The OSPI filed an emergency rule adoption (CR-103E)³³⁶ in an effort to implement ESB2065 quickly. The most significant changes to online learning are in regards to funding:

- A new sub-section on differential funding is added which administers a 20% cut to general apportionment for all ALE programs, unless an ALE program provides face-to-face teacher / student contact for each student for an average of one hour per week during each month the student is enrolled in the ALE program. An exception is allowed for online ALE programs, allowing for synchronous digital contact for students with learning plans that include only online courses. Programs that meet these contact time requirements will receive a 10% cut to general apportionment.
- A requirement is added to approve both multidistrict and single-district online school programs using ALE funding beginning in 2013-14. If a single-district program is not using the ALE funding, it does not have to seek state approval.
- Districts are now required to accept all course credits earned from approved providers.

Online programs

While the DLD has been collecting enrollment data in recent years, its reporting abilities are improving as programs comply with the new reporting requirements, and with increased access to the state's student information system (CEDARS) and other data sources. Data from 2009-10 and 2010-11 was compiled from multiple sources, and while not comprehensive, it still provides a useful picture of online learning activity in the state. There were 17,786 unique students enrolled in online courses in 2010-11, which is an 11% increase over 2009-10.³³⁷ This includes both full-time and part-time. More extensive data from the 2009-10 school year became available in February 2011, including an analysis of student achievement (where possible) and the following statistics:³³⁸

- 16,003 students registered for a total of 57,303 online course enrollments; students came from 87 schools in 59 districts.
- At least 41 online school programs operated in the state; 10 of those programs enrolled 77.5% of the online students listed in CEDARS.

³³² Approved online providers; retrieved July 6, 2011, <http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/approval/providers/>. The Glossary located at <http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/approval/glossary.php> provides helpful definitions of the different types of providers and programs.

³³³ SSB5410 (2009); retrieved July 6, 2011, <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=5410&year=2009>

³³⁴ ESHB2065 (2011); retrieved July 6, 2011, <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2011-12/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Law%202011/2065-S.SL.pdf>

³³⁵ Modifications pulled from Digital Learning Department website; retrieved July 6, 2011, <http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/ale/>

³³⁶ CR-103E, Emergency rule adoption amending WAC 392-121-182; retrieved July 14, 2011, <http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/ale/OTS-4098.1final.pdf>

³³⁷ Personal communication with Leslie St. Pierre, July 20, 2011

³³⁸ Online Learning Annual Report 2009-10; retrieved July 21, 2011, http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/about/reports/Online_Learning_Annual_Report_2009-10.pdf

- Approximately 2/3 of online students are in grades 9-12, with the remaining 1/3 in K-8.
- Of the 50,829 online courses where CEDARS has grade history data, 92.2% were completed. As a comparison, 98.3% of the 3,152,733 courses offered statewide for which CEDARS has grade histories were listed as completed.
- An analysis of the grades given shows that the distribution for online students looks dramatically different from the state as a whole, with a significantly higher number of students failing online courses in comparison to the state as a whole.
- 60 schools enrolled 569 students for a total of 1,210 online enrollments in DLD-offered courses.

Beginning with the 2011-12 school year, reporting requirements will be much more comprehensive. As a result, Washington is becoming one of best examples of online student data reporting and analysis in the country.

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, and when the school district will and will not pay course fees and other costs, 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 DLD created a process and set of criteria for approving multidistrict online providers (RCW 28A.250.020).³³⁹ All grandfathered-approved providers³⁴⁰ are exempt from the initial approval process until August 31, 2012, but must comply with the process for renewal of approvals and approval requirements. ESHB2065 changes the process by requiring that with the 2013-14 school year all programs seeking ALE funding, not just those serving students from multiple districts, be approved.

Funding

Some changes from ESHB2065 (2011) are enacted with the 2011-12 school year, while others begin with the 2013-14 school year; other guidelines were included in SSB5410 and are going into effect this year. Starting with the 2011-12 school year, districts will receive ALE funding for students in online courses or programs only if the course/program meets one of these criteria:

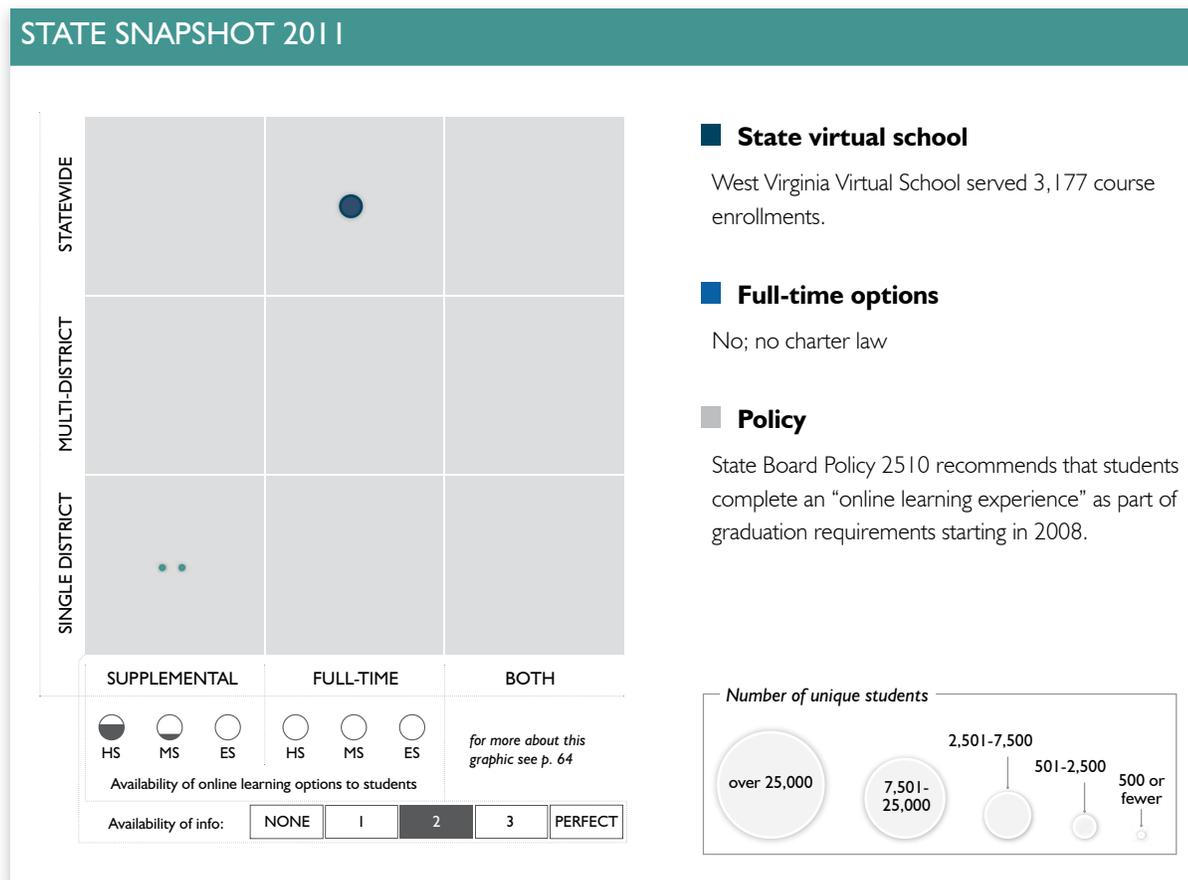
- Offered by a multidistrict online provider approved under RCW28A.250.020 or by the OSPI.
- Offered by a single district online provider where fewer than 10% of the program's students reside outside the school district's geographic boundaries.
- Offered by a regional online learning provider operating under an interdistrict cooperative agreement.

Beginning with the 2013-14 school year, school districts may claim state funding, to the extent otherwise allowed by state law, for students enrolled in online courses or programs only if the online courses or programs are offered by an OSPI-approved online provider. School districts can also claim funding for online students using either the ALE or basic education funding rules, depending on the circumstances. Funding varies by district regardless of whether the student is enrolled online or in an on-ground school.

³³⁹ RCW 28A.250.020, Multidistrict provider approval process; retrieved July 6, 2011, <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.250.020>

³⁴⁰ List of grandfathered providers; retrieved July 12, 2011, <http://digitalllearning.k12.wa.us/approval/process/grandfathered.php>

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 2450.³⁴¹ It offers approximately 270 courses. Third-party providers supply all courses, or work with WVVS to develop the courses. The WVVS budget, \$650,000 for the 2010-11 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 3,177 half credit enrollments in 2010-11, an increase of 7% from the previous year.³⁴² A pilot program for credit recovery courses called onTargetWV, part of WVVS, reported 331 course enrollments in fall 2010. 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.

³⁴¹ Title 126, Legislative Rule, State Board of Education, Series 48, Distance Learning and the West Virginia Virtual School (2450); retrieved October 3, 2011, <http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/p2450.html>

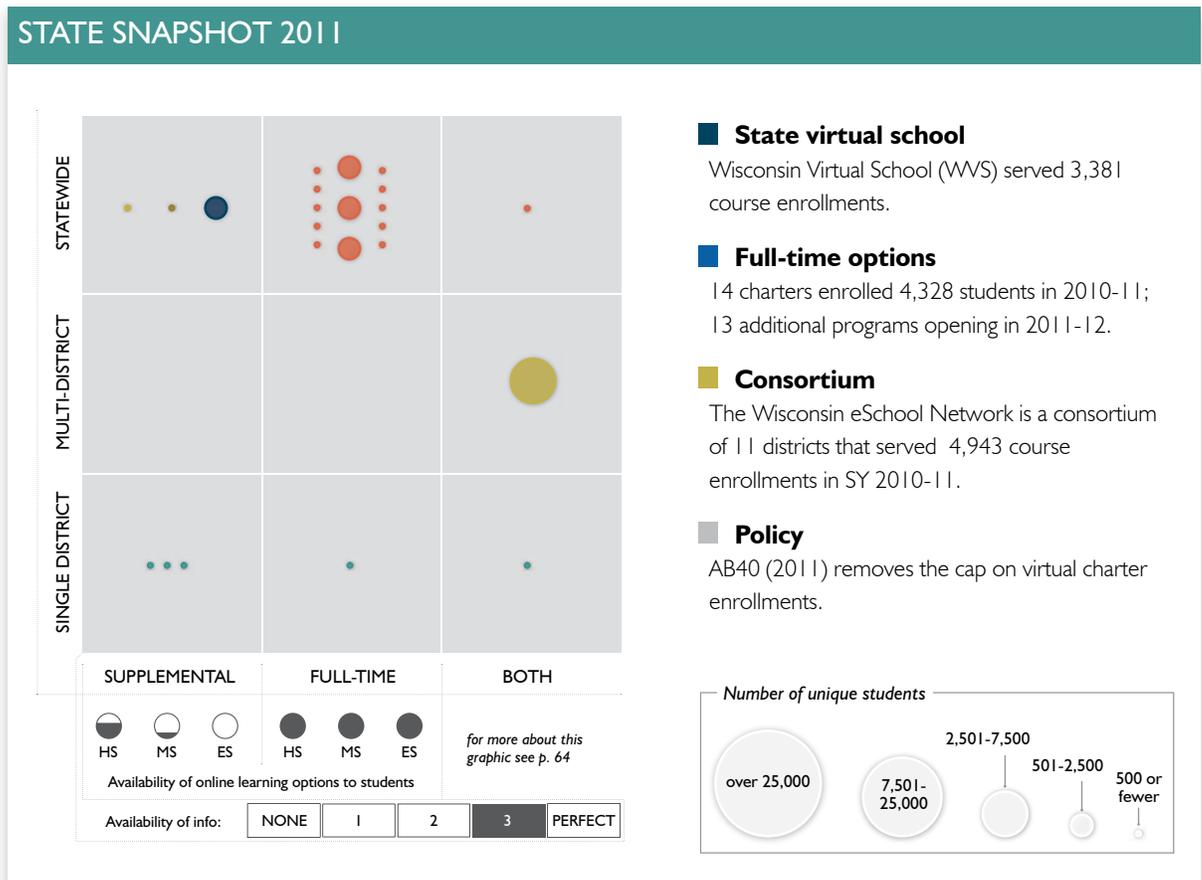
³⁴² The increase is based on a revised number of enrollments from school year 2009-10 that is slightly different than the number reported in *Keeping Pace 2010*

In April 2011, the State Board of Education unanimously adopted a resolution³⁴³ for the Digital Learning Now! *Ten Elements of High-Quality Digital Learning*.³⁴⁴ SB516, which would have put many of the Digital Learning Now elements into law, did not pass.

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.³⁴⁵ The Office of Instructional Technology in the Department of Education has developed guidance for districts and counties for the online learning experience recommendation.³⁴⁶ The guidance lists acceptable options including online courses from the WVVS and blended courses from the WVLearns elearning platform, among others.

The West Virginia Department of Education launched Learn21³⁴⁷ in December 2010 as a way to allow K-12 students to continue to learn when classes are cancelled, and to supplement what students learn in class.

Wisconsin



³⁴³ West Virginia State Board of Education April 13, 2011 meeting minutes; retrieved July 5, 2011, <http://wvde.state.wv.us/boe-minutes/>

³⁴⁴ Digital Learning Now, Ten Elements of High Quality Digital Learning; retrieved October 3, 2011, http://www.digitallearningnow.com/?page_id=20

³⁴⁵ Title 126, Legislative Rule, State Board of Education, Series 42, Assuring the Quality of Education: Regulations for Education Programs (2510), page 19; retrieved October 3, 2011, <http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/p2510.pdf>

³⁴⁶ West Virginia Virtual School Online Experiences; retrieved October 3, 2011, <http://virtualschool.k12.wv.us/vschool/documents/OnlineVirtualExperienceone-sheet.pdf>

³⁴⁷ Learn21; retrieved July 5, 2011, <http://wvde.state.wv.us/learn21/>

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 three supplemental online programs, including Wisconsin Virtual School (WVS) and Wisconsin eSchool Network, as well as 27 virtual charter schools operating in 2011-12.³⁴⁸ The Wisconsin eSchool Network is a consortium of 11 school districts, seven of which are among the 10 largest districts in the state;³⁴⁹ the Network served 4,943 course enrollments in 2010-11, a 7% increase over the previous year, including 211 full-time students. 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 (2008).³⁵⁰ WVS offers 170 courses for students in grades 6-12 and had 3,381 course enrollments in 2010-11, an increase of 53% from the previous year. WVS also had an increase of approximately 23% in summer school enrollments after a 70% increase in 2010.³⁵¹ WVS/ WWA has an annual budget of \$594,851 and is funded largely through course fees; both middle and high school courses cost \$325 per semester course. The third program recognized by the DPI, the Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth, is a group of district co-ops that "combine online instruction and face-to-face workshops to allow academically talented students from throughout a region or across a school district to learn together."³⁵²

In June 2011, the cap on student enrollments in full-time online charter schools, in place since 2008, was removed as part of state budget bill AB40.³⁵³ The cap had limited enrollment to 5,250 students. The elimination of the enrollment cap concludes a long battle over the operation of online public charter schools that included two lawsuits to stop virtual school operations in the state. The enrollment cap was the result of a legislative compromise that allowed the schools to operate, pending a review by the Legislative Audit Bureau.³⁵⁴ That audit, released in 2010, found that online charter schools in Wisconsin were operating near capacity and had more than a 90% satisfaction rate among parents, teachers, and students. The audit also showed that "virtual charter school teachers were licensed ... and taught subjects and grade levels that were appropriately authorized by their ... teaching licenses."³⁵⁵ Approximately one-third of the 4,328 Wisconsin students taking online courses in 2010-11 were enrolled in full-time programs, an increase of about 10% over 2009-10. That number is likely to rise with the removal of the cap on virtual charter enrollments, as the number of virtual charter schools has already increased from 14 in 2010-11 to 27 for 2011-12. Although other 2011 legislative initiatives proposed a removal of the cap on virtual charter school enrollments, it was the state budget bill (AB40) that was used to repeal the cap.

Keeping Pace 2010 discussed the lawsuit and audit in more detail.

In 2011, the State Superintendent's Digital Learning Advisory Committee³⁵⁶ was formed to "Develop a comprehensive strategy for digital learning in Wisconsin ... and provide recommendations to the State Superintendent on initiatives that promote and advance digital learning." The resulting strategic plan and recommendations will address professional development, infrastructure and hardware, policies and procedures, curriculum and assessment, pedagogy and instruction, and data and information systems, and is expected to be completed by the end of 2011.

³⁴⁸ Department of Public Instruction; retrieved August 10, 2011, http://www.dpi.wi.gov/sms/pdf/cs_2012VirtualSchs.xps

³⁴⁹ The 7 districts are Appleton, Green Bay, Janesville, Kenosha, Madison, Racine, and Sheboygan

³⁵⁰ Act 222; retrieved June 19, 2011, <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/2007/data/acts/07act222.pdf>

³⁵¹ Enrollment numbers are for summer 2009 through spring 2010; they do not include summer 2010.

³⁵² Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth; retrieved June 20, 2011, <http://about.wcatyweb.com/>

³⁵³ Wisconsin AB40, "SECTION 2507. 118.40 (8) (h) of the statutes is repealed," section 2507 on p. 377; retrieved July 29, 2011, <http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2011/related/proposals/ab40>

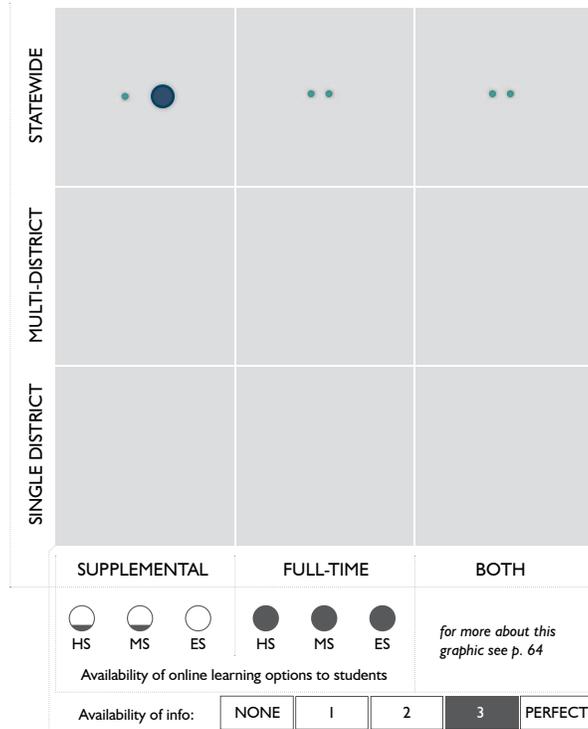
³⁵⁴ An Evaluation: Virtual Charter Schools, February 2010; retrieved August 28, 2011, <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lab/reports/10-3highlights.htm>

³⁵⁵ Ibid

³⁵⁶ State Superintendent's Digital Learning Advisory Committee, retrieved July 13, 2011, <https://sites.google.com/site/widigitalllearning/>

Wyoming

STATE SNAPSHOT 2011



State-led initiative

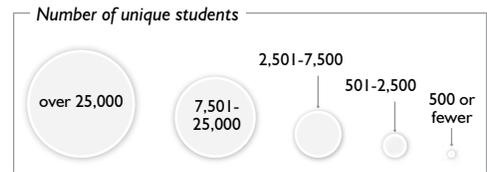
An estimated 1,476 students and 8,480 course enrollments in the Wyoming Switchboard Network (WSN)

Districts

Five Wyoming school districts operate statewide online programs that offer a mix of full-time and supplemental options, and there are some small single-district programs.

Policy

\$250,000 is available annually to assist providers with the development and maintenance of courses through the Wyoming Distance Education Grant (DEG) Program, which is open to all members of the WSN.



The Wyoming Switchboard Network (WSN) is a collection of distance education providers that delivers coursework to K-12 students. The Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) established the WSN in 2008-09 in response to SB0070³⁵⁷ based on recommendations from the Wyoming K-12 Distance Education Task Force convened in 2007. Statewide, the WDE estimates there were 1,476 students and 8,480 course enrollments in 2010-11 in full-time and supplemental programs, increases of 28% and 18% respectively from the 2009-10 school year (see Table 16).³⁵⁸

	2010-11 Unique Students				2010-11 Course Enrollments			
	K-6	7-9	10-12	Total	K-6	7-9	10-12	Total
Full-time	417	314	233	964	2,836	2,386	2,358	7,580
Supplemental	1	44	467	512	4	72	824	900
Total	418	358	700	1,476	2,840	2,458	3,182	8,480

Table 16: WDE online student and enrollment estimates in the WSN for 2010-11

³⁵⁷ SB0070; retrieved July 5, 2011, <http://legisweb.state.wy.us/2008/Bills/SF0070.pdf>

³⁵⁸ Personal communication with Scott Bullock, WDE; September 27, 2011. Numbers given are estimates, and do not necessarily reflect completions.

The Wyoming Switchboard's website acts as the central collection of distance education resources. The site provides access to curriculum mapping for over 600 DE courses available statewide; detailed information about the various DE program providers; and Wyoming's key policy documents and DE information.

In accordance with two DE statutes,³⁵⁹ online learning in Wyoming is overseen at the state level through the implementation of the Chapter 41³⁶⁰ Distance Education Rules. The WSN Resident District Handbook³⁶¹ is a guide for K-12 distance education in Wyoming.

Five Wyoming school districts operate statewide online programs. Fremont County School District #21's Wyoming "e" Academy of Virtual Education (WeAVE) offers a full-time curriculum to in-district students and supplemental courses to high school students statewide. Campbell County Virtual School (CCVS) serves students full-time in grades K-6; Evanston Virtual High School in Uinta County School District #1 offers supplemental high school courses; Jackson Hole Connections Academy in Teton County School District #1 serves full-time K-12 students; and the Wyoming Virtual Academy from Niobrara County School District #1 offers both full-time and supplemental curricula to students in grades K-12.

State policies

During the 2008-09 school year, the WDE promulgated the Chapter 41 Rules and Regulations that govern the processes and procedures of DE within the state. Wyoming Statute 21-2-202(a)(xxxi) charged the WDE with establishing a state network of distance education courses that meet state standards for course content and delivery by Wyoming-certified teachers. The WDE 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 WDE 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 have a variety of responsibilities including completing a distance learning plan for each student, monitoring progress, supporting the student, and ensuring students are enrolled in programs approved by the WDE. Full details about local district responsibilities are included in *Keeping Pace 2010*.

Funding

Wyoming Statute 21-13-330 and the Chapter 41 Distance Education Rules establish policies for funding distance education course enrollments. The statute allows school districts to include distance education courses in its average daily membership (ADM) calculations, and to make an agreement to release students to participate full-time in distance education in a non-resident district. Additional funding details can be found in *Keeping Pace 2010*.

\$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.

Additional information about Wyoming policies, particularly around governance and tracking, is available in *Keeping Pace 2010*.

³⁵⁹ Statutes 21-2-202(a)(xxxi) and 21-13-330; retrieved July 5, 2011, <http://legisweb.state.wy.us/titles/statutes.htm>

³⁶⁰ Chapter 41 Distance Education Rules; retrieved July 5, 2011, <http://soswy.state.wy.us/Rules/RULES/7334.pdf>

³⁶¹ WSN Resident District Handbook; retrieved July 5, 2011, <http://wyomingswitchboard.net/Docs/WSNRDHB.pdf>

Appendix A: Methodology

The information found in *Keeping Pace 2011* came from two primary data-gathering efforts: a web-based program survey, and a combination of Internet research, emails, and phone interviews with personnel from state education agencies, online programs, and other sources.

For state profiles, research and reviews of state laws were combined with phone interviews and emails. For states with little new activity in 2011, in many cases personnel reviewed and made minor changes to state profiles presented in *Keeping Pace 2010*. In most cases, the state education agency reviewed the final version of the profile for accuracy. In a field that is growing and changing as rapidly as online education, timeliness of information is imperative, and indeed timeliness has been one of the drivers of interest in *Keeping Pace*. Research for this year's report was conducted from May through mid-September of 2011, and every effort has been made to ensure currency of information as of October 1, 2011.

In addition to the methods discussed above, the sponsoring organizations for *Keeping Pace* provided extensive expertise and knowledge of the state of online learning across the country. This report would not be possible without their thoughtful contributions, and expertise. Any errors or omissions, however, are fully the responsibility of the Evergreen Education Group.

The 2011 survey was designed to gather information from a variety of K-12 online and blended learning programs, including state virtual schools, full-time and supplemental programs, charter schools, and district-level programs. It was distributed through the *Keeping Pace* sponsors, to the iNACOL members on its message board and through its email list, on message boards and newsletters, and through the *Keeping Pace* blog and website. The survey was shortened in 2011 in an effort to increase the response rate, although it included questions about blended learning for the first time. While the results are not broad or deep enough to provide a representative sample across all types of online programs, it helps us identify programs of which we are not aware, and learn more about a variety of programs. There were 117 total respondents, representing 38 states.

In addition to the survey, *Keeping Pace* researchers received data from the three largest education management organizations operating nationwide, and most state virtual schools. We believe that our research and survey efforts are reaching the schools and programs that account for well over 50% of online and blended learning students, although nowhere close to 50% of the online and blended programs in the country, because of the long tail of distribution that represents many online programs serving a small number of students, individually and collectively.

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