2005

KEEPING PACE WITH K–12 ONLINE LEARNING

A Review of State-Level Policy and Practice

Written by:
John Watson

Research supported by:
Clark County School District
Florida Virtual School
Illinois Virtual High School
Virtual High School

LEARNING POINT Associates™
North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

1120 East Diehl Road, Suite 200
Naperville, IL 60563-1486
800-356-2735 • 630-649-6500
www.learningpt.org

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A Review of State-Level Policy and Practices

Written by:
John F. Watson
Evergreen Consulting Associates

Additional writing by:
Stevan Kalmon

Additional research by:
Linda Passamaneck, eLearning Architects

Research supported by:
Clark County School District
Florida Virtual School
Illinois Virtual High School
Virtual High School

Produced by:
North Central Regional Educational Laboratory at Learning Point Associates

OCTOBER 2005

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Clark County School District

Florida Virtual School

Illinois Virtual High School

Virtual High School

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the following people:

Directed by:
Jhone Ebert, Clark County School District
Liz Pape, Virtual High School
Matthew Wicks, Illinois Virtual High School
Julie Young, Florida Virtual School

Additional direction by:
Kathy Jo Gillan, Florida Virtual School
Kimberly Loomis, Clark County School District

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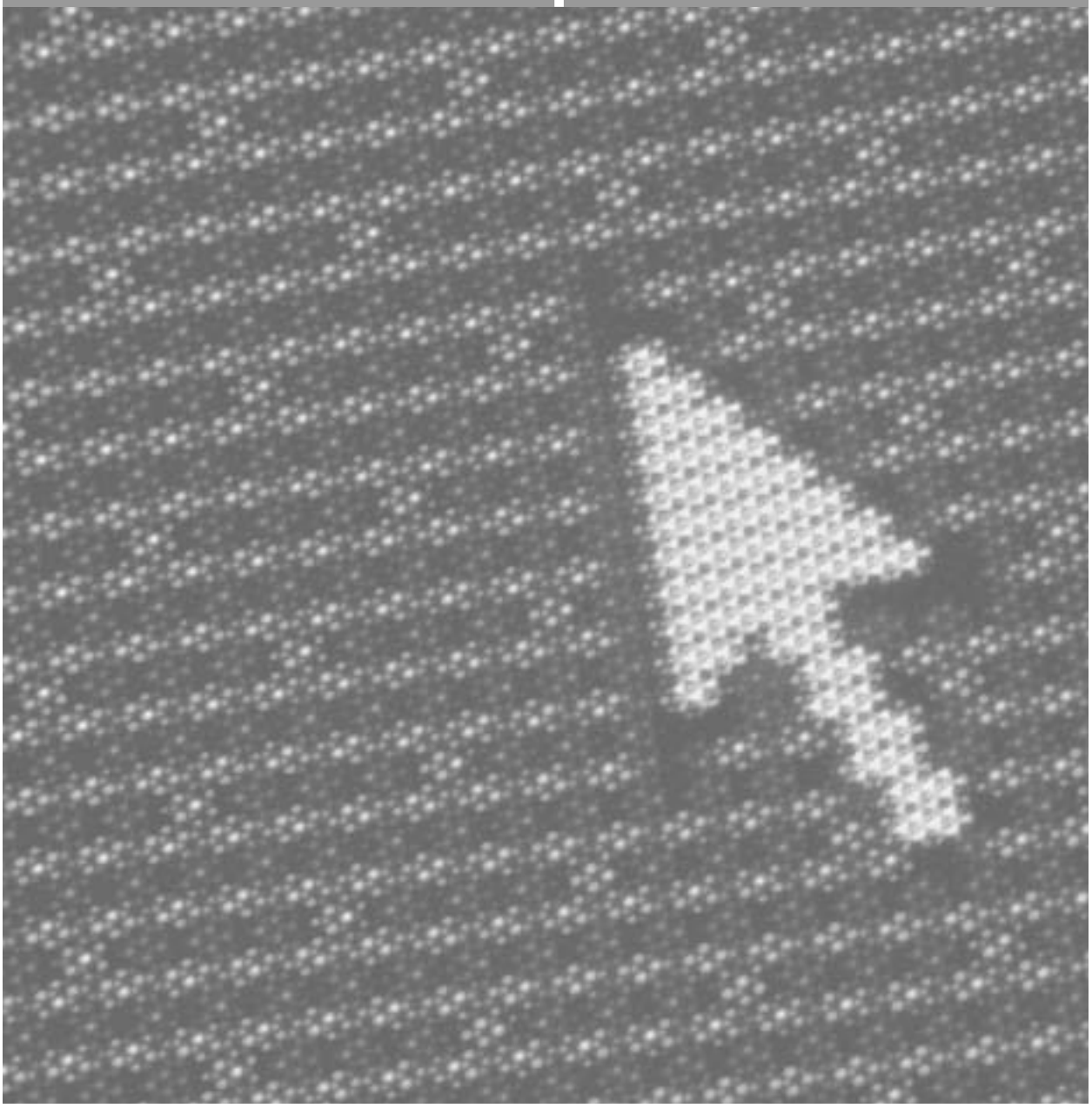


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

Online learning has developed explosively over the past five years. As of July 2005, 21 states have statewide online learning programs, and cyberschools and/or district-level online programs operate in almost every state. Both statewide programs and cyberschools report rapid growth, with registrations and enrollments typically experiencing double-digit percentage annual increases.

Despite the explosive growth, relatively little is known about the programs that conduct online learning. What percentage of students passes the courses they take? What is the quality of their learning experience? How much does it cost to provide online courses, and what are the best methods for paying that cost? Questions like these raise complex issues of policy, practice, and philosophy. While online-learning practitioners have been grappling with such issues for years, state policymakers have moved much more slowly; and the concern raised four years ago by the National Association of State Boards of Education—that online learning developments would outpace the capacity of policymakers to shape these developments in constructive ways—has turned into an increasingly accurate prediction.

In 2004, four leading education organizations joined together to publish *Keeping Pace with K–12 Online Learning: A Snapshot of State-Level Policy and Practice*. That report identified the growth of online education programs and discussed how online education practices are being developed in the absence of clear state-level guidance, and that the window for proactively developing such guidance ahead of practice is closing. The strong reception that *Keeping Pace* received suggests that many educators recognize the validity and timeliness of the issues raised in the report. In light of the continued need for this type of policy research, in early 2005 five organizations—Clark County School District (Nevada), Florida Virtual School, Illinois Virtual High School, Learning Point Associates, and Virtual High School—joined to fund and guide a second phase of the research.

This report builds on *Keeping Pace* and adds new research in three primary areas:

1. Extending that original study of 11 states to all 50 states.
2. Following the continuing trends and developments in the original 11 states.
3. Exploring ways in which laws and policies may proactively shape online education.

As with *Keeping Pace*, this report explores policies and practices governing online education with a particular focus on policies aiming to provide students with high-quality online learning experiences. The report looks specifically at two areas: state-level policies governing online education, and statewide online programs (i.e., programs created by legislation or by a state-level agency, and/or funded or administered by a state department of education or another state-level agency to provide online learning opportunities across the state). Examples of statewide online programs include the Florida Virtual School, Illinois Virtual High School, and University of California College Preparatory Initiative.

2. Issues Analysis: Statewide Programs

Twenty-one statewide programs exist as of summer 2005, and they have many features in common. All are primarily or entirely supplemental; all of them operate primarily at the high school level; almost all of them rely, in whole or in part, on local schools or districts to provide support for the online students; and most are experiencing rapid growth. The extent of these common features suggests that a strong and largely successful educational model has emerged. The differences, however, suggest important areas for considering how to diversify and/or refine that model as it continues to mature.

Models of Statewide Programs: Four common mechanisms for the establishment of statewide programs were identified:

1. Established by the state department of education or other state entity.
2. Established by state legislation.
3. Created by a local education agency (LEA)—a school district or regional service agency, or a consortium of LEAs.
4. Evolved out of distance-education programs that originally used channels other than the Internet.

Program Size and Growth Trends: The number of course registrations and number of individual students taking courses from statewide programs are growing rapidly in almost all statewide programs, with programs experiencing consistent growth of 50 percent to 100 percent per year. The largest statewide programs are Utah's Electronic School (more than 35,000 students) and Florida Virtual School (more than 33,000 course registrations and 21,000 students). The next largest programs have about 6,000 students (e.g., Clark County School District and Michigan Virtual High School). Smaller programs register from one to three thousand students annually.

Student Populations Served: All statewide programs provide courses primarily or exclusively to high school students; some serve smaller numbers of middle school students as well. Collectively they serve a wide variety of student types and often reach students whose needs are not being completely met by their brick-and-mortar schools, such as students unable to take a physical school course due to lack of availability or a scheduling conflict. The mission statements for some programs target particular student populations, such as rural students, students from high-poverty districts, or students from low-performing schools.

Funding: Funding for online courses continues to be one of the major issues facing statewide programs. The two common funding sources are state appropriations or grants, and course fees. Uncommon funding sources include state full-time equivalent (FTE) funding, federal grant funds, private grants, and subscription memberships paid by schools or districts. Funding will remain a significant challenge for the foreseeable future. Course fees are limited by what schools or districts are willing to pay, and often are set below the marginal cost of delivering an online course. Programs that have instituted or significantly increased course fees have seen a drop in course registrations. Sustainability aside, there is also the question of whether course fees are appropriate given the financial disincentive they create and given public education's equity and access goals.

Curriculum: Collectively, statewide and individual programs offer a wide variety of types of courses (e.g., core, elective, and specialized). Most statewide programs develop all or most all of their own courses; only three programs license the majority of their courses from a third party. Most programs offer one model of course—usually semester-based and highly interactive with a teacher. In some of the larger programs, courses are self-paced. Interactivity in courses (both student-teacher and student-student) is an indicator of the quality of the experience for students, and courses range from highly interactive, with a teacher leading a cohort of students going through the course at the same pace, to highly individualized courses in which students start, progress, and finish at their own pace. Although the highly interactive courses may be a better educational experience for students, self-paced courses provide flexibility that is necessary for some students taking courses online.

Course Quality Assurance: Quality assurance is left almost entirely to the discretion of the statewide programs, and the programs have apparently taken this responsibility quite seriously. Several programs use external guidance on course quality, and several programs have thoroughly documented processes for development and review of courses. Although online practitioners believe that there are, or should be, significant differences between online and face-to-face course design, state policies almost never articulate such a difference.

Teachers: Most programs use part-time teachers primarily or entirely. Statewide programs require that their teachers be licensed by the state; in most cases, the requirement is that the teacher be licensed by the state running the statewide program, although there are exceptions. Licensure standards are designed for face-to-face teaching, and most statewide programs have specified training requirements for their teachers. The role of online teachers is not always consistent between programs. There are not yet standards in place in most states and statewide programs for the upper limit of student-teacher ratios, and the number of teachers and students in statewide programs suggests that the ratios vary widely.

Additional Quality Assurance: Because online education is still relatively new, state policy often leaves the determination of quality assurance to the person in charge of online learning in the state. States rarely specify quality assurance procedures or measures for the statewide programs. Many programs rely on surveys of students, and sometimes other stakeholders, in order to ensure quality. Many programs track course completion and pass rates, and some track Advanced Placement (AP) exam results. Except for the AP exam results, calculation of these measures varies, and there are no benchmark statistics across online programs.

Equity and Access: Equity and access to online courses entail several issues: equity in reaching students of different needs, from different geographic regions, and of different learning abilities; equity in providing online courses to all students who wish to take courses online; access in terms of ensuring that courses are accessible to students with disabilities; and access in terms of ensuring that students are able to use a computer and an Internet connection to take an online course. Almost all programs say that they comply with the provisions of Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and some have formal policies to ensure that instructors know of students' needs. In addition, several programs have processes for ensuring that instructors know of and work with students' individualized education plans.

3. Issues Analysis: State Policies

This section describes state-level policies that are not primarily applied to statewide programs, but apply to cyber charter schools and/or district programs. It is notable that there are only 16 states that have a level of policy activity that is of enough significance to report on. These are Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington.

Funding: Funding for students in cyber charter schools or district supplemental programs is typically tied to state FTE funding. In states without specific online education policies, FTE funding to students in online courses is not differentiated from funding to students in physical schools. In some states with specific online education policies, funding is the mechanism by which the state regulates the online programs. Many educators realize that applying traditional student counting methods to online programs can be problematic, but only a few states recognize this in policy. Some states (e.g., Colorado, before 2005 Minnesota) have limits on the number of students who were not formerly public school students who are funded by the state. Other states, such as Wisconsin and Idaho, have no limits on funding students who are new to the public school system. There is little information available on what an online education program should cost. Ohio has done two of the most comprehensive analyses of the cost of online education, looking specifically at its eCommunity schools, and found that the cost of delivering online learning was significantly lower than the cost of education in face-to-face charter schools and non-charter public schools.

Curriculum: States apply content standards created for physical school courses to online courses and have not created curriculum standards specific to online courses. All states require that online courses meet state content standards. These standards, however, do not address issues specific to the online environment, in either content development or delivery. Several states (e.g., Louisiana, Minnesota, California) have provisions requiring online courses to be similar to face-to-face courses.

Teacher Qualifications and Evaluation: Most states require that online teachers meet state standards in terms of licensure or certification without any requirements tied to online training; only Kansas and Alabama require teachers to have completed professional development in online teaching. Other states have a variety of requirements addressing teacher contact with students, class sizes, and other issues. Several states have limits on the number of students one teacher may teach.

Accountability for Student Achievement: All states require students to take part in state assessments, and no states have additional requirements for student outcomes in online programs. The logistical challenges of getting cyberstudents to take tests given by physical schools are left to the local schools and districts with some exceptions (e.g., Florida, Ohio).

Other Quality Assurance Issues: Many states have additional quality assurance mechanisms including reporting, accreditation, and student time requirements. In some cases the requirements of cyber charter schools are the same as for all charter schools, in other cases the requirements are just for online programs. Nevada, California, and Kansas have online program review and reporting requirements. Minnesota and Alabama require that online programs or course providers be "registered" or "approved" by the state. A few states (e.g., Ohio, Nevada, Alabama) have time requirements for online courses.

Equity and Access: All states require online programs and cyberschools to comply with nondiscrimination laws, but these laws are not specific to online education. Some states (e.g., Minnesota) have addressed digital divide inequities in access, but few states have addressed equity in terms of income or specific student needs.

Policies That Enable Online Education: Policies governing online education are in some ways restrictive—perhaps properly so—and do not always reflect the opportunities that online programs provide to bring courses and teachers to students who might not otherwise have access to them, particularly across state lines. In some cases the formal policies are a response to an initial "anything goes" approach and are a sensible attempt to bring quality control to online programs in the interest of long-term sustainability. In other cases, formal policies appear to be based on face-to-face education policies and do not take into account the unique challenges of online learning. A few policies (e.g., those in California, Kansas, Minnesota, and Florida) stand out as having been well thought out in terms of the opportunities that online programs present to students by transcending constraints of time and space.

4. Summary and Conclusion

About 50 percent of all states have one or both of the following:

- A statewide program with developed policies and practices.
- State-level policies that govern online programs across the state.

Analysis of policies across the country suggests:

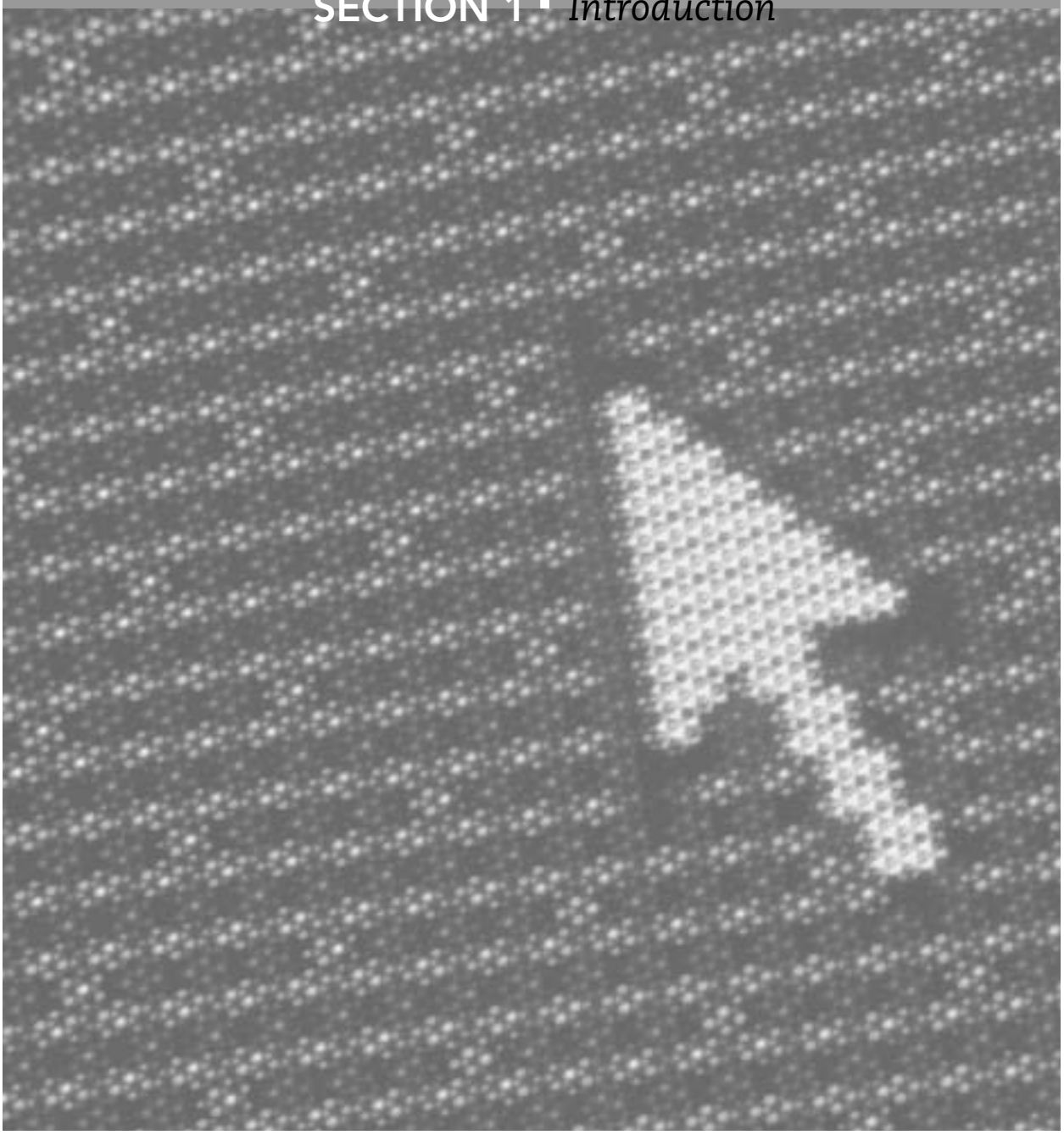
- Well-developed policies exist in a few states and can serve as examples for other states.
- Basic research is needed to inform online education policies.
- Research and policymaking require common measures that do not yet exist.
- Programs would benefit from sharing of best practices.
- A few states now have the reporting requirements in place that will yield useful data for study in the next several years.

The status of online education policy and practice in 2005 gives cause for both concern and optimism. The concern is based on the status of many states that have few or no online education policies despite the growth of online programs; or alternatively, have restrictive policies based largely on outmoded ways of thinking about education. The optimism, however, is based on the states and programs that are leading the way in determining how online learning should grow and develop and are putting the effort into creating appropriate policies to guide this growth.

The future of education will almost certainly include online courses and virtual schools. The benefits of online courses are clear both in terms of reaching students with courses they otherwise would not have access to, and also in helping students develop skills critical for success in the future. But will these benefits be equitable and accessible, in keeping with principles of public education? And will online education be integrated in a sustainable way into existing education systems? In order for the benefits of online education to be fully realized, online programs must

be sustainable. Online learning policy needs to be further developed to ensure this sustainability. This report begins the dialogue, describing the variety of statewide online education programs that currently exist, and the policies that have been developed to foster and sustain those programs. It also highlights where policies are lacking or are restrictive to the development of online education. State policymakers, school administrators, and community members must now begin the work of building on the knowledge gained from this report to develop and disseminate effective policies that foster, support, and enhance online learning opportunities for *all* students, and to develop 21st century citizens with the capacity for lifelong learning and productivity.

SECTION 1 | *Introduction*



1. INTRODUCTION

Online learning has developed explosively over the past five years. As of June 2005, 21 states have statewide online learning programs, and cyberschools and/or district-level online programs operate in almost every state. Both statewide programs and cyberschools report rapid growth during this time, with registrations and enrollments typically experiencing double-digit annual increases.

Recognizing the sustained rapid pace of growth in online education, the U.S. Department of Education released its first report looking at distance education statistics in March of 2005.[1] The Department of Education data show what many people involved in distance education already know: Many districts (an estimated 36 percent) have students enrolled in distance education courses, and online courses are the primary medium for distance-education courses. Although a greater number of *districts* reported using videotapes than using online courses (56 percent use video tapes and 44 percent use online courses), the districts using videotapes tend to be quite small. With 60 percent of mid-sized districts and 72 percent of large districts using the Internet as their main source for distance education, it is likely that more distance education students are accessing their courses online than through any other medium.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the explosive growth, relatively little is known about the programs that conduct online learning. What percentage of students passes the courses they take? What is the quality of their learning experience, and how does the quality of that experience compare to physical schooling for those students? How well prepared are the teachers to guide the courses? How much does it cost to provide online courses, and what are the best methods for paying that cost? How can access and/or support for learners make online learning more available and successful for all students? Questions like these raise complex issues of policy, practice, and educational philosophy that were highlighted by the Center on Education Policy report, *Preserving Principles of Public Education in an Online World*, which stated, "Virtual education is a prime example of a fast-moving trend that could have a major impact on [the] purposes and principles" of public education.[2] While online learning practitioners have been grappling with such issues for years, state policymakers have moved much more slowly. The concern raised four years ago by the report of the National Association of State Boards of Education[3]—that online learning developments would outpace the capacity of policymakers to shape these developments in constructive ways—has turned into an increasingly accurate prediction.

In 2004, four leading education organizations joined together to publish *Keeping Pace with K–12 Online Learning: A Snapshot of State-Level Policy and Practice*.[4] That report identified, among other issues, these facts and trends:

- Although online education programs are used by a small percentage of the total student population, these programs are growing rapidly and already are having a significant impact on public education.
- In some states, online education vendors are driving the development of online programs and practices. In some cases, vendors compete with public schools for funding, creating a situation in which the growth of online education is driven by funding opportunities and threats, rather than by students' educational needs.

- State policies rarely provide specific outcome requirements for online programs. States rely instead on local-district quality controls, state assessment tests, and self-enforced guidelines established by online programs. While this approach matches the policy applied to physical schools, it raises concern because online learning practice is new and not well understood (especially by the local district policymakers).
- Online education practices are being developed in the absence of clear state-level guidance, and the window for proactively developing such guidance ahead of practice is closing. States are attempting to apply to online programs policies created for physical schools, and these policies often do not fit well.

The 2005 U.S. Department of Education report confirms the findings in *Keeping Pace* regarding the growth of online education. In addition, the strong reception that *Keeping Pace* received suggests that many educators recognize the validity and timeliness of the issues raised in the report. In light of the continued need for this type of policy research, in early 2005 five organizations—Clark County School District (Nevada), Florida Virtual School, Illinois Virtual High School, Learning Point Associates, and Virtual High School—joined to fund and guide a second phase of the research. This report builds on *Keeping Pace* and adds new research in three primary areas:

1. Extending that original study of 11 states to all 50 states.
2. Following the continuing trends and developments in the 11 states that were studied in detail.
3. Exploring ways in which laws and policies may proactively shape online education.

Like *Keeping Pace*, this report explores policies and practices governing online education with a particular focus on policies aiming to provide students with high-quality online learning experiences and the level of support they need to be successful online learners.

1.1 Methodology

The study looked at two areas of online education in each state. First, for all 50 states, laws, regulations, and any additional formal policies that influence online education were reviewed. Second, all of the state-sanctioned statewide online learning programs were researched.

The research in this report was based in part on four valuable sources of information:

- Sections on state-level policies are based on state laws obtained from the North American Council for Online Learning's Online Clearinghouse, a project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Additional information on online schools is available at **www.nacol.org**.
- The Monterey Institute for Technology and Education provided state profiles in online education that it had developed for internal use.
- Education Week[5] reported on states that had established virtual schools in Technology Counts 2005, and made its source data available for this project.
- The Southern Regional Education Board's (SREB) *Report on State Virtual Schools*[6] was a valuable source of information on the SREB member states.

In addition to these sources, research was done via Web searches, phone interviews, and a survey distributed to statewide online learning programs.

Two areas of concern within online education not covered in this report are: (1) the effectiveness and quality of course content and (2) course management software. Both of these subjects have been explored in other reports and Web sites,[7] and those efforts are not duplicated here.

1.2 Definitions

This report uses several terms in specific ways, in order to improve the clarity with which information is presented. Some key definitions are offered here, and a full list is provided in Appendix A.

- *Online learning program:* An educational organization that develops and offers online instruction and content. An online learning program may be a cyberschool or a supplemental online program.
- *Cyberschool:* An online learning program in which students enroll and earn credit towards academic advancement based on successful completion of the courses (or other designated learning opportunities) provided by the school. In some states, many cyberschools are charter schools. Cyberschools enroll students full time.
- *Supplemental online program:* An online learning program that offers individual courses or other learning opportunities to students who are otherwise enrolled in physical schools or cyberschools. Credit for successful completion of these learning opportunities is awarded by the physical school or cyberschool in which each student is enrolled. (Students "enroll" in cyberschools, but they "register for courses" in supplemental online programs.[8])
- *Statewide online program:* An online learning program created by legislation or by a state-level agency, and/or administered by a state department of education or another state-level agency, and/or directly funded by a state appropriation or grant for the purpose of providing online learning opportunities across the state. Examples of statewide online programs include the Florida Virtual School, Illinois Virtual High School, and University of California College Preparatory Initiative. Statewide online programs are typically supplemental programs that may enroll a small number of full-time students.

In addition, the report refers to state departments of education. Although these agencies go by various names, such as Department of Public Instruction, for the sake of simplicity the generic reference "department of education" is used to refer to a state-level agency with K–12 education responsibilities.

1.3 How to Read This Document

This report is intended to serve as a reference source; as a result, its design emphasizes easy and consistent access to information. The profiles of states and statewide programs present information in a consistent format to allow comparison among states. The following document outline may help the reader anticipate how information is presented:

Section 1: Introduction. The rationale and methodology for the study are presented.

Section 2: Statewide Programs. The policies and practices of the statewide programs are reviewed. An overview paragraph for each statewide program is followed by a table of detailed information.

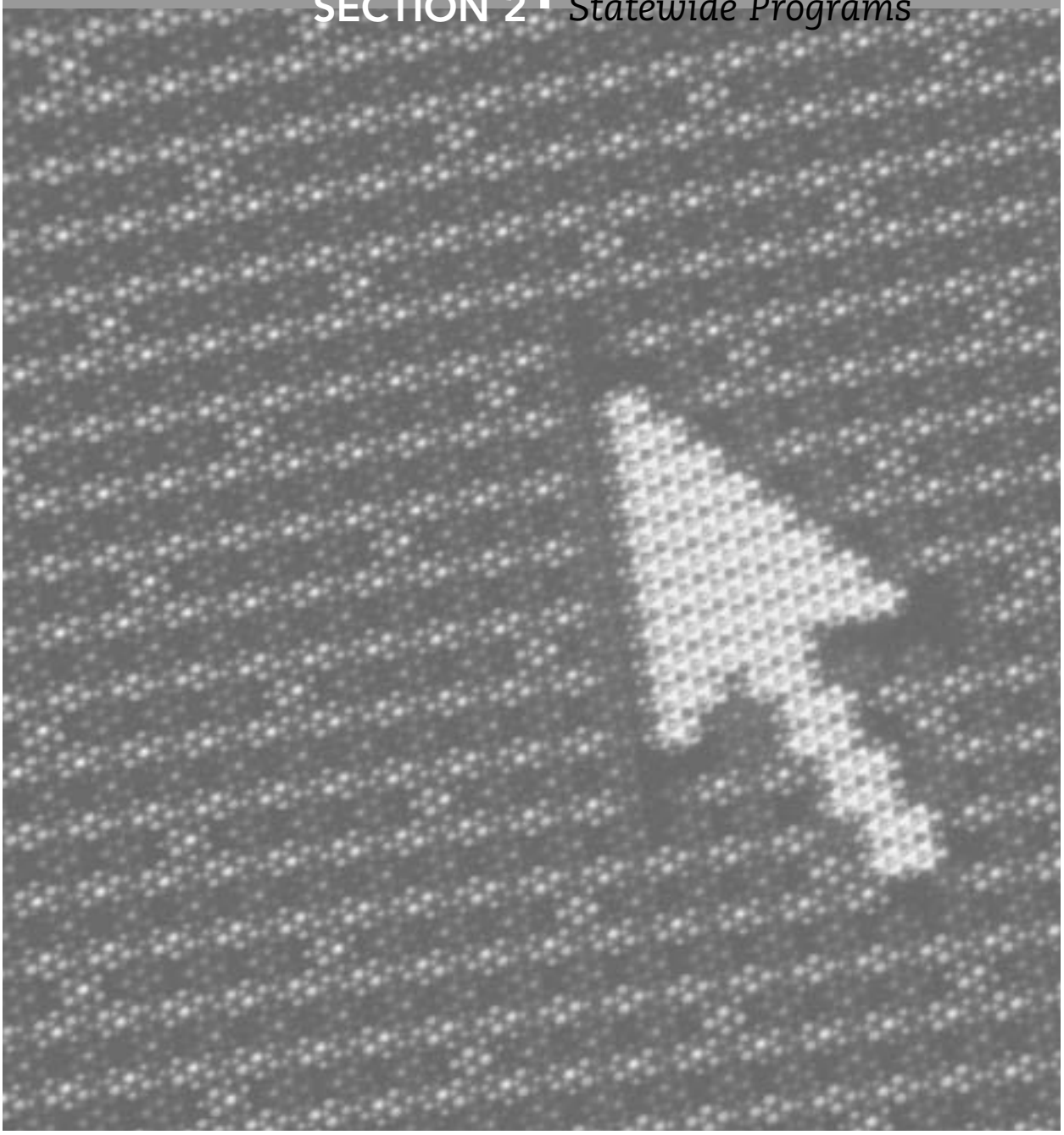
Section 3: Statewide Programs Issues Analysis. A narrative analysis of the information compiled about the statewide programs is presented.

Sections 4–7: State Profiles by Region: Northeast, Southeast, Central, and West. Sections begin with a table noting whether the state has a statewide program, cyber charter schools, and significant online education policy. Each state with significant policies is profiled in a narrative overview that describes the K–12 online learning policies and activity, followed by concise, bulleted statements under topics of funding, quality assurance, student achievement, and equity and access.

Section 8: State Policies Issues Analysis. A narrative analysis of the information from the state profiles sections.

Section 9: Summary and Implications. A presentation of potentially significant issues, questions for further study, and recommendations.

SECTION 2 | *Statewide Programs*



2. STATEWIDE PROGRAMS

One of the conclusions from the 2004 research done for *Keeping Pace* was that, in many states, the statewide program is the leading entity furthering online education policy and practice. With this conclusion in mind, the current report provides information about statewide programs in a separate section. Determining just what constitutes a statewide online education program is not a simple task. We used the following as a working definition:

A statewide online program is created by state legislation or a state-level agency, and/or administered by a state department of education or another state-level agency, and/or directly funded by a state appropriation or grant for the purpose of providing online learning opportunities across the state.

Examples of statewide online programs include the Kentucky Virtual School, Colorado Online Learning, Idaho Digital Learning Academy, and University of California College Prep Initiative.

While many statewide programs (e.g., Idaho Digital Learning Academy and Michigan Virtual High School) were explicitly created through legislation or by the state department of education, others have emerged out of local or regional agency initiatives and demonstrate different ways in which statewide programs can be developed. In one model for example, one or more local education agencies work together to provide online education opportunities across the state. In Wisconsin, a regional agency (Cooperative Education Service Agency 9) created and continues to operate what has become the statewide online program, using funds from the state department of education to cover a significant part of the program's budget. In other states, including Georgia and Colorado, the state agency has granted funds to a local agency, school district, or consortium to create a statewide program. A more complete exploration of the evolving models of statewide programs is provided in the next section.

Although cyber charter schools often draw students from across an entire state, they are not operated by a state agency, directly funded by a state appropriation or grant, or directly created from state legislation. As a result, even where cyberschools are the largest online programs within a given state (e.g., in Colorado), they are not described here as statewide programs. In addition, distance education programs that provide courses primarily by means other than the Internet are not included even if they offer a small number of courses online. Consortia of local education agencies were not counted as statewide programs if their registrations represent only a minority of the state's online students. Finally, it is worth noting that several states are in the early stages of creating statewide online programs but did not have these programs in operation at the time of this report; these programs are not included in the report. None of these sources is definitive; nor is our working definition.[9]

2.1 Alabama Online High School[10]

The Alabama Online High School is run out of the University of Alabama College of Continuing Studies, one of just a few statewide programs based in universities. It first offered courses in spring 2000. The Online High School is a key component of the state's plan for distance learning, Alabama Access (Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, and Students Statewide). The Access plan was developed by the Governor's Task Force on Distance Learning and was released in July of 2005. It includes the mission and vision for distance learning in Alabama, and its FY 2006 budget of $10.3 million includes funds for the development and delivery of courses via the Internet and video. The plan anticipates development of online education policies, but these have not yet been created.

ALABAMA ONLINE HIGH SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Supplemental.
Grade levels	9–12.
Types of students	Remediation students are targeted, no tuition is charged for them.
Number of course enrollments and students	About 1450 course registrations from summer 2004 through spring 2005.
Governance	University of Alabama College of Continuing Studies.
Funding	
Funding sources	State legislature appropriation at about $400,000 per year, plus additional funds to develop courses.
Course fees	• $350 per Carnegie unit. • Home school: $700 per Carnegie unit.
Curriculum	
Number of courses	17, 100 percent homegrown.
Course quality assurance	• Courses approved by the state department of education. • Courses meet state content standards.
Teachers	
Number of teachers	25, all part-time.
Required qualifications	• State certified and highly qualified in the subject area. • All required to go through online training.
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation.
Internal evaluation process or elements	No formal processes, but some are in development.
Tracking student achievement	Course completion rates.
Equity	
Online accessibility	• Local school must provide a computer with Internet access during a school period. • The school serves students with IEPs.
Support for at-risk students	Local school must provide an on-site mentor.

2.2 Arkansas Virtual High School[11]

The Arkansas Virtual High School (AVHS), operated by the Arkansas Department of Education, first offered courses in spring semester 2000. Courses are available to public school students only; home school or private school students must first enroll at their public high school in order to take courses. AVHS has an uncommon funding mechanism in which the state's Distance Learning Development Program receives FTE funding for courses taken through any of the distance learning programs and distributes funding to the programs. (AVHS is the Web-based program. There are other programs using other communications modes.) Unlike many other statewide programs, local schools are required to accept credits received through AVHS.[12]

ARKANSAS VIRTUAL HIGH SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Both supplemental and cyberschool.
Grade levels	9–12.
Types of students	No particular student populations are focused on in practice or policy.
Number of course enrollments and students	• 2,600 course registrations from summer 2004 through spring 2005, including 200 in summer 2004. • 100 percent increase in course registrations from previous year.
Governance	Housed within the State Department of Education.
Funding	
Funding sources	The Arkansas Distance Learning Development Program provides funding of $500 per student for up to 900 students, or $450,000 per year.
Course fees	None.
Curriculum	
Number of courses	52, 100 percent homegrown.
Course quality assurance	Courses meet state content standards.
Teachers	
Number of teachers	25 part-time, 2 full-time.
Required qualifications	• State certification. • Professional development opportunities provided by AVHS.
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	Arkansas Department of Education.
Internal evaluation process or elements	• Student surveys. • "Affiliate Schools will provide monitoring of participating students … to adequately ensure security and fair participation."
Tracking student achievement	Basic student participation monitored by the course management system.
Equity	
Online accessibility	"Affiliate Schools will provide the student with access to a computer … [and] insure that a student has adequate network connectivity."
Support for at-risk students	Affiliate schools must provide a site coordinator who is a point person for all students concerning student progress and other issues.

2.3 California: The University of California College Prep Online[13]

The University of California College Prep Online (UCCP) provides supplemental online courses to students throughout California. UCCP is run out of the University of California–Santa Cruz and is funded by the state legislature. It first offered courses in fall semester 1999, with a mission to provide online college preparatory courses to high school students who otherwise would not have the opportunity to achieve eligibility for admission to the University of California, California State University system, and other top universities. At first, it provided courses to students in low-income schools at no cost, but due to cutbacks in state appropriations, it now charges registration fees. UCCP has developed multimedia-rich courses, which it licenses to other programs; and it is working with the Monterey Institute for Technology and Education to make its courses more widely available.

CALIFORNIA: THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA COLLEGE PREP ONLINE

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Supplemental.
Grade levels	9–12.
Types of students	UCCP originally had a mission of serving academically disadvantaged students in low-performing schools by offering Advanced Placement and honors courses, but now its services are available to all schools in California. The program remains focused on preparing students for post-secondary education. Schools receive services on a sliding-fee scale based on aggregated socioeconomic status data.
Number of course enrollments and students	• 2,106 course registrations from summer '04 through spring '05, including 463 in summer 2004. • 47 percent decrease in course registrations from previous year due to a change from offering courses at no cost, to charging tuition. Funding cuts necessitated the change.
Governance	• UCCP was created by legislation and is housed within UC–Santa Cruz. • Policy committee comprised of representatives from postsecondary and K–12 institutions.
Funding	
Funding sources	State appropriation; $3.4 million in 2004–05; $33 million in total since the program started in 1999.
Course fees	Per student/per semester course fees vary: • $325 for AP courses. • $300 for college prep/honors courses. • $175 for returning/continuing schools. • $250 for schools with 50 percent to 74 percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. • $225 for schools with 75 percent to 100 percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.

CALIFORNIA: THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA COLLEGE PREP ONLINE

Category	Comments
Curriculum	
Number of courses	• 34. • 70 percent homegrown, 30 percent licensed.
Course quality assurance	• UCCP requests for proposals (RFPs) for course development describe specific instructional theories that guide the online course specifications such as course material, multimedia development, and modularized learning object architecture. • Course content adheres to the standards of the Monterey Institute for Technology and Education.[14] • Most UCCP courses have been pre-articulated to fulfill admission requirement to the University of California and the California State University System.
Teachers	
Number of teachers	29, all part-time.
Required qualifications	• High school classroom teaching experience and state certification to teach within the content area. • For AP courses, AP or college teaching experience. • Teachers must complete the UCCP Online Instructor Training online course and attend the UCCP Online Instructor online orientation.
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	External program evaluations have been done, although not in the past year.
Internal evaluation process or elements	Surveys of students and instructors to identify areas for program improvements. There is an escalation method for instructors to communicate content errors and recommend changes to content.
Tracking student achievement	• Drop, completion, and pass rates. • AP exams scores.
Equity	
Online accessibility	UCCP is an "equity in access" initiative: The mission of UCCP is to provide online college preparatory courses to high school students who otherwise would not have the opportunity to achieve eligibility for admission to the University of California, California State University system, and other top universities. UCCP targets academically disadvantaged students in low-performing schools. Schools now receive services on a sliding scale based on aggregated socioeconomic status (SES) data.
Support for at-risk students	UCCP currently monitors student course access and begins sending e-mails after a student has gone eight days without logging in. In these e-mails, UCCP poses a series of standard support questions to prompt a response and to ensure that the student is not hindered by routine technical difficulties. When students fall behind instructors are directed to contact the mentors to develop an academic plan to support the students' recovery.

2.4 Colorado Online Learning[15]

Colorado Online Learning (COL) emerged from an online program operated by a consortium of 60 school districts (out of the state's 178 school districts). Its creation as the statewide program was guided by the recommendations of the Colorado E-Learning Task Force—convened by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) from November 2001 to June 2002—and articulated in the grant program that CDE established in fall 2002 to provide primary funding for a statewide supplemental online program. COL started with a core high school curriculum, and has expanded its offerings to middle school curricula and courses adapted to nontraditional students. COL also is exploring strategies for expanding its role as the provider of online learning for districts, including taking full-time students (who would remain enrolled in their local school districts). COL has an extensive and noteworthy system for quality assurance, which applies to both its course design and its teachers.[16]

COLORADO ONLINE LEARNING

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Supplemental.
Grade levels	7–12.
Types of students	• Through school year 2004–05, high-poverty and high-need districts were targeted through a tuition break of $100 per student per semester per course. These districts were defined by the percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunches. This tuition break was eliminated as of school year 2005–06. • In fall semester 2004, 69 percent of COL students attended one of the defined "poverty districts."
Number of course enrollments and students	• 1,922 course registrations from summer '04 through spring '05, including 110 in summer 2004. • 1,631 students from summer '04 through spring '05, including 90 in summer 2004. • 19 percent increase in course registrations and 25 percent increase in students from fall 2004 to fall 2005.
Governance	• 501(c)(3) organization with a governing board. • The San Luis Valley Board of Cooperative Services is the fiscal agent for the grant from CDE.
Funding	
Funding sources	Primary funding source: grant from Colorado Department of Education from federal Enhancing Education Through Technology funds; $700,000 federal grant over the past 3 years, with a $400,000 grant extension in FY 2006.
Course fees	$300 per student per course per semester.
Curriculum	
Number of courses	53, 100 percent homegrown.[17]
Course quality assurance	• Extensive course quality-assurance process based on policies designed to "assure high quality standards-based courses via initial course approval and continuous curricular and pedagogical improvement."[18] • External content evaluations and internal pedagogy evaluations are completed on 1/3 of courses every year. • Each course will be reviewed at least once every 3 years.

COLORADO ONLINE LEARNING

Category	Comments
Teachers	
Number of teachers	30, all part-time.
Required qualifications	• State licensed in area of teaching. • Teachers strongly encouraged, but not required, to take an online course.
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation and North Central Association, also annual external program evaluation.
Internal evaluation process or elements	• Formal quality assurance process incorporates numerous teaching and course-development elements. • Individual professional development plans are created for each instructor, based on course reviews. • Student reviews at the end of every semester. • External evaluator provides quarterly and annual reports. COL reviews information contained in external evaluator quarterly reports and considers suggested changes.
Tracking student achievement	• Course completion/passing rates. • Daily and weekly monitoring of student progress by COL staff and on site facilitators.
Equity	
Online accessibility	There is no formal policy in place for students with disabilities, but COL is compliant with Section 508 and accessibility concerns affect decisions including selection of course platform.
Support for at-risk students	COL staff members work with site coordinators in identifying "Academic Watch" students and applying appropriate interventions, including communicating with students, parents, and teachers; and modifying instructional content and delivery for special education students.

2.5 Florida Virtual School[19]

Florida Virtual School (FLVS) is one of the oldest and largest online programs in the country, with over 21,000 individual students and 33,000 course registrations in 2004–05. Florida Virtual first offered courses in the fall semester of 1997 and has experienced rapid growth since then. It is now treated as a special school district by the state, and draws state-level public education FTE funding for its students. The state money is only paid for course completions, not course registrations. FLVS licenses courses to schools and districts in Florida as part of a franchise program, and to other programs around the country.

FLORIDA VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Primarily supplemental, some full-time students.
Grade levels	6–12.
Types of students	• Legislatively mandated to prioritize: 1. Students who need expanded access to courses … such as home education students and students in inner-city and rural high schools who do not have access to higher-level courses. 2. Students seeking accelerated access in order to obtain a high school diploma at least one semester early.[20] • 14 percent of students in 2004–05 enrollments are from low performing schools. • 10 percent of students in 2004–05 are from rural schools.
Number of course enrollments and students	• 33,767 course registrations from summer '04 through spring '05. • 21,425 students from summer '04 through spring '05. • 58 percent increase in course registrations and 65 percent increase in students from previous year.
Governance	FLVS operates under the guidance of a board of trustees created by statute, with members appointed by the governor.
Funding	
Funding sources	• Primary current funding source: FTE public education funding that follows the student based on a funding formula that calculates completion and performance of students. • Prior to FY 2004, funding was provided through state appropriations totaling more than $20 million over seven years.
Course fees	• Free to Florida students (paid by public education funds). • For nonresidents: ▪ $750 per one-credit regular and honors course for American students. ▪ $50 additional for International students. ▪ $800 per one-credit AP course.
Curriculum	
Number of courses	• 66 high school courses, 16 middle school courses, 9 adult education courses. • 100 percent homegrown, although some include content from other providers.
Course quality assurance	• Aligned to Florida state standards and national standards; alignment is assessed through peer review teams. • Students complete end of module surveys.

FLORIDA VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Teachers	
Number of teachers	141 full-time, 58 part-time.
Required qualifications	• Must hold current professional Florida teaching certification in the subject area being taught. • Required to have a minimum of three years of classroom teaching experience.
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation; also annual program evaluation.
Internal evaluation process or elements	• FLVS surveys the following stakeholders annually: ▪ FLVS students (active and withdrawn) and parents (active). ▪ Florida district-level administrators of all 67 districts. ▪ Florida school-level administrators and guidance counselors of 2,400 Florida middle and high schools. • The FLVS Instructional Leadership Team uses the following evaluation mechanisms: ▪ Observe classrooms and coach teachers; monitor workloads. ▪ Obtain and apply specific feedback from students and families. ▪ Monitor announcement pages. ▪ Conduct monthly [or more] teacher coaching phone calls. ▪ Review, track, and comment on teacher progress reports. ▪ Review, track, and rectify teacher phone logs.
Tracking student achievement	• Course completion rates. • AP exam results. • Teacher contact logs.
Equity	
Online accessibility	• Policies in place to give students in rural and low-performing schools priority access to FLVS courses. • FLVS is striving for 508 conformance in all FLVS-produced content and Web sites. • FLVS-retired computers are refurbished and donated to low-income schools to provide online access for students. • "School districts may not limit student access to courses offered through the Florida Virtual School."
Support for at-risk students	All students, including at-risk students, are given clear expectations regarding work requirements and communication. In addition: • If the student does not submit the expected number of assignments within a period of seven consecutive days, the student and parents receive a letter notifying them of the student's unacceptable pace for submitting assignments. • If the student does not respond to the letter by submitting assignments within seven days, the instructor will make a telephone call to the student/parents.

2.6 Idaho Digital Learning Academy[21]

The Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA) was created by legislation in 2002 as a supplemental program to provide courses to high school-aged students in Idaho, and has since expanded to offer courses to students in Grades 7–12. IDLA was created within the Idaho Department of Education, and is governed by a board of directors. It had 1591 course registrations from summer 2004 to spring 2005, representing 1145 students: roughly 33 percent of those students are at-risk. Course registrations increased by 34 percent from the previous year. The legislation creating IDLA called for the IDLA Board of Directors to establish policies in numerous areas including course quality, equity, and access; these policies are in draft form as of July 2005.

IDAHO DIGITAL LEARNING ACADEMY

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Primarily supplemental, although a few full-time students.
Grade levels	7–12.
Types of students	33 percent at-risk, 10 percent Hispanic, 7 percent have an individualized education plan (IEP).
Number of course enrollments and students	• 1,591 course registrations from summer '04 through spring '05, including 544 in summer 2004. • 1,145 students from summer '04 through spring '05, including 403 in summer 2004. • 34 percent increase in course registrations from previous year, 19 percent increase in students.
Governance	• Legislation created the IDLA within the State Department of Education. • Development and oversight are provided by a board of directors as outlined in Idaho code.
Funding	
Funding sources	• Original funding came from foundation grant of $1 million. • FY 2003 and FY 2004 state legislature funding was $450,000 per year for operations and infrastructure. • FY 2005 appropriation was $900,000.
Course fees	• $100 per student per course per semester for Idaho students, plus a one-time $25 registration fee. • For FY 2005–06 only, fees are reduced for Advanced Placement and dual-credit courses to $25 per course, plus the registration fee. • All course fees are paid from the district to IDLA. • Home-schooled students and part-time students may enroll in their local school and generate FTE funding for IDLA courses.
Curriculum	
Number of courses	• 47; 100 percent homegrown. • Multimedia content is purchased to supplement course content.
Course quality assurance	• Courses are based on Idaho achievement standards. • All courses go through a formal review. • "Online courses shall reflect state of the art in multimedia-based digital learning. Courses offered shall be of high quality in appearance and presentation …" • The State Board of Education is tasked by law with developing "policies and practices which provide strict application of time limits for completion of courses." • Idaho has end-of-course assessments for several subjects and is developing others. IDLA uses these as the final exam in applicable courses.

IDAHO DIGITAL LEARNING ACADEMY

Category	Comments
Teachers	
Number of teachers	• 45, all part-time. • "Courses shall be taught online by Idaho teachers unless special circumstances determined by the director require a waiver of this requirement." • Three regional coordinators. Primary responsibility: to serve as liaisons between IDLA, school districts, and Idaho higher education institutions to enhance program services to participants, specifically in the area of special populations (i.e., at-risk and gifted/talented students).
Required qualifications	• Instructors must meet the same criteria required by the state of Idaho for teaching in a public school, including valid Idaho Secondary Teaching Credential. • Required annual face-to-face and online training.
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	• Northwest Association of Accredited Schools and the Idaho State Department of Education. • External evaluation on a three-year cycle, last one in spring 2003 semester by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL). • External evaluation is a requirement in the legislation.
Internal evaluation process or elements	• Student surveys. • IDLA has an "online principal" who walks the "virtual hallways" to insure that the appropriate number and quality of interactions occur between students and faculty. • "Credit earned in courses shall be based on such criteria as mastery of the subject, demonstrated competency, and meeting the standards set for each course, in contrast to credit earned in a traditional classroom based on time spent in the classroom." The legislation tasks the State Board of Education with coming up with policies related to how credit is earned, but these policies have not yet been finalized. • "Students who register for courses shall provide the name of a responsible adult who shall be the contact person for the academy in situations which require consultation regarding the student's conduct and performance." • IDLA requires weekly reports from teachers documenting successes, challenges, student participation, Idaho standards, and plans for upcoming week. Phone logs and other contact logs are also required. • Legislation requires that students take a proctored final.
Tracking student achievement	• Teachers are required to track interaction with students and respond within a 24-hour period. • Course retention rates and course passing rates are tracked.

IDAHO DIGITAL LEARNING ACADEMY

Category	Comments
Equity	
Online accessibility	• Legislation says IDLA must be available to all students who want to participate, but much of the responsibility for accommodations falls to local schools. • Courses "shall be designed to meet the needs of all students regardless of the student's level of learning." • IDLA draft board policy includes a section on "Equal Education, Nondiscrimination, and Sex Equity."[22] • IDLA student manual states that by law the student's home campus and/or the course instructor must accommodate IEP specifications and make modifications of facilities for physically disabled students. It also explains a communication process for ensuring that IDLA and the instructor knows of students' needs.[23]
Support for at-risk students	• During the summer session, IDLA is approved as an alternative summer school. Summer school emphasizes completion of courses by at-risk students by providing financial incentives and additional online support for at-risk students. • IDLA also has provided professional development on strategies to address at-risk students online. • Because approximately one third of IDLA's students are at-risk, their needs are considered when designing and delivering online instruction. • More than 25 percent of the faculty have extensive experience working with at-risk students.

2.7 Illinois Virtual High School[24]

The Illinois Virtual High School (IVHS) offers supplemental online courses to all Illinois public school, private school, and home school students. IVHS is a nondegree, noncredit-granting program of the Illinois State Board of Education, operated by the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy. Public and private high school students register with IVHS through their respective schools. In school year 2004–05, IVHS had 3,245 course registrations, representing 2,259 individual students. IVHS serves a high proportion of students from low-income areas; in some cases, IVHS provides scholarships to cover these students' tuitions. For school year 2004–05, 62 percent of IVHS students were from low-income areas.

ILLINOIS VIRTUAL HIGH SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Supplemental with an occasional student taking a full curriculum.
Grade levels	Primarily 9–12; some students in grades 6–8.
Types of students	• The IVHS mission statement dedicates the program to providing "increased equity and access to the highest quality educational opportunities." IVHS has emphasized providing opportunities to low-income areas, providing financial incentives for schools in which 25 percent of students qualify for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program. • For the summer 2004 to spring 2005 time period, 62 percent of enrollments were from low-income areas. • During FY 05, the demographics of students served was: ▪ 62 percent urban, 24 percent rural, 14 percent suburban. ▪ 55 percent female, 45 percent male. ▪ 46 percent Caucasian, 24 percent African American, 18 percent Hispanic, 7 percent Asian, 5 percent other.
Number of course enrollments and students	• 3245 course registrations from fall '04 through summer '05, including 534 in summer 2005. • 2259 students from fall '04 through summer '05, including 460 (404 new students) in summer 2005. • 66 percent increase in course registrations and 53 percent increase in students from previous year.
Governance	• IVHS is a program of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and is managed and operated by the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy (IMSA). • Both ISBE and IMSA have appointed boards that govern these respective entities, including IVHS. However, neither board is explicitly a governing or advisory board for IVHS.
Funding	
Funding sources	• For FY 05 the approximate budget is: ▪ State educational technology funds—$1,250,000. ▪ Federal Title II-D of the No Child Left Behind Act (Enhancing Education Through Technology) money—$200,000. ▪ Federal earmark grants—$575,000. ▪ Enrollment fees—$500,000. • The overall budget is expected to decrease in FY 06 due to a decrease in available federal funds.

ILLINOIS VIRTUAL HIGH SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Funding	
Course fees	• $175 per semester enrollment ($120 for summer enrollment) charged to the school, which may sometimes collect the money from the student. The fee will be increased to $195 per semester enrollment in FY 06. • Scholarships are available to schools in low-income areas. • Districts can claim average daily attendance reimbursement for IVHS courses, provided the district pays the registration fee, and the student takes the course during the regular school day at a preapproved site.
Curriculum	
Number of courses	• 91 courses. • 53 percent licensed; 47 percent homegrown.
Course quality assurance	Local administrators evaluate courses using local requirements and state standards.
Teachers	
Number of teachers	95 teachers, all part-time.
Required qualifications	• All IVHS instructors must be certified Illinois teachers. • All new teachers take a four-week professional development online course and a three-day face-to-face course. • Current teachers are expected to attend two one-day, face-to-face workshops, and a summer three-day workshop.
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	External program evaluation annually since FY 2002.
Internal evaluation process or elements	• End of course student surveys. • All teachers are assigned a mentor (experienced IVHS teacher) and there are required mentor/instructor interactions throughout the year.
Tracking student achievement	Course completion rates.
Equity	
Online accessibility	• Policies in place provide some free course registrations for students at schools in low-income areas and allow all students from low-income families to request the waiver of the course registration fee. • No specific policies in place for students with disabilities, but IVHS asks schools to provide relevant student information in an individualized education plan (IEP). • "All students should have access to the IVHS curriculum, regardless of whether they attend public, private, or home schools."[25] Practice has evolved such that private schools can register directly with IVHS and home school students can register though the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy.
Support for at-risk students	IVHS serves a large number of at-risk students. Two programs—initiated in spring 2005 through a partnership between IVHS and Chicago Public Schools—target at-risk students. One program targets students who have recently dropped out of high school, but only need a few credits to graduate. The second program provides a school-choice option under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act when the student's school has been identified as not meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP).

2.8 Iowa Learning Online[26]

Iowa Learning Online (ILO) is a new program, first offering courses in summer 2004. While it shares many characteristics of other statewide programs (e.g., local schools grant credit and provide student support), it is unusual in two ways. First, it offers some courses that are a combination of Internet and video, with the video available through the statewide Iowa Communications Network. Second, ILO offers courses for high school credit *and* courses for college credit. The program is funded through a U.S. Department of Education Funds for Improvement of Education grant and a grant from a private foundation that funds course development.

IOWA LEARNING ONLINE

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Supplemental.
Grade levels	9–12.
Types of students	No particular student populations are focused on in practice or policy.
Number of course enrollments and students	• 527 course registrations (512 students) from fall '04 through spring '05, including 40 in summer 2004. Of these, 330 received instruction primarily from video. • Program began in summer 2004, so no growth or decline yet.
Governance	ILO is an initiative of Iowa's State Department of Education. The state board of education guides policy for ILO high school courses offered.
Funding	
Funding sources	• $600,000 from a U.S. Department of Education Funds for Improvement of Education grant. • $400,000 for development of three courses.
Course fees	$250 per student per course per semester, paid by the school district.
Curriculum	
Number of courses	17 courses, 76 percent homegrown.
Course quality assurance	Each course undergoes review based on an established rubric.
Teachers	
Number of teachers	10 part-time, 4 full-time.
Required qualifications	• Iowa state licensed. • Secondary-level endorsement in the content area of the course. • Full-time teachers comply with Iowa Teacher Quality legislation through the ILO Professional Program and compile an electronic portfolio.
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	None.
Internal evaluation process or elements	Student surveys.
Tracking student achievement	Course drop rates.
Equity	
Online accessibility	No specific accessibility policies in place.
Support for at-risk students	Local schools provide a "student coach" for all students taking an online course.

2.9 Kentucky Virtual High School[27]

The Kentucky Virtual High School (KVHS) was created by the state governor in January 2000 and is operated by the state department of education. KVHS offers a range of high school courses, about half of which are Advanced Placement (AP) courses. It also offers online professional development for teachers. KVHS is one part of a larger state program of virtual education that includes the Kentucky Virtual University and the Kentucky Virtual Library.

KENTUCKY VIRTUAL HIGH SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Supplemental.
Grade levels	High school courses; some middle school students take courses.
Types of students	No particular student populations are focused on in practice or policy.
Number of course enrollments and students	2,220 students in School Year 2004–05.
Governance	KVHS is an initiative of the state department of education.
Funding	
Funding sources	State legislative allocation and federal funds.
Course fees	$275 per student per course per semester. Discounts for multiple students from one school in the same course.
Curriculum	
Number of courses	50 courses, both homegrown and licensed.
Course quality assurance	• Courses meet state and national standards. • Courses evaluated using the *Essential Principles of Quality: Guidelines for Web-based Courses for Middle and High School Students* published by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB).
Teachers	
Number of teachers	25 part-time, 2 full-time.
Required qualifications	Kentucky certified.
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	None.
Internal evaluation process or elements	• Professional development offered to all online teachers. • Courses are systematically monitored.
Tracking student achievement	• Course completion rates and pass rates. • AP exam scores.
Equity	
Online accessibility	• School districts must accept KVHS course credit towards the student's graduation requirements. • School districts must pay KVHS course fees when the student takes a KVHS course as part of the student's "regular day coursework."[28] • Course development process includes guidance on ADA compliance.
Support for at-risk students	Local schools provide a "student contact" for all students taking an online course.

2.10 Louisiana Virtual School[29]

The Louisiana Virtual School (LVS) is a supplemental program run jointly between the Louisiana Department of Education and the Louisiana School for Mathematics, Science, and the Arts. The program started in the 2000–01 school year. In school year 2004–05, it served approximately 2,300 students, with a total of 2,450 course registrations. Core academic courses make up 20 of the 32 courses offered; additional courses are AP, foreign language, and career/technical. The program is funded by a state board of education grant, with additional funds specifically for the Algebra I program (see below) coming from a state legislative appropriation. LVS does not charge fees for its courses and uses a phased registration system to allow students from many schools to register for courses.

A notable LVS program is its hybrid Algebra I course, which provides materials and a certified teacher online, plus an uncertified teacher in the classroom; students meet during a scheduled class period to take the course. In school year 2004–05, 257 students in nine schools are taking the course. The goal of the program is to provide a certified algebra teacher to students in districts that don't have such teachers, while affording professional development opportunities to the classroom teachers who are not yet qualified to teach algebra.[30]

LOUISIANA VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Supplemental.
Grade levels	8–12.
Types of students	No particular student populations are focused on in practice or policy.
Number of course enrollments and students	• 2,450 course registrations from fall '04 through spring '05 (courses are not offered in summer). • 2,300 students from fall '04 through spring '05. • 11 percent increase in number of students from previous year; 42 percent increase from two years previous.
Governance	LVS is run jointly between the Louisiana Department of Education and the Louisiana School for Mathematics, Science, and the Arts. A program plan outlining policies and procedures for the school is approved annually by the Louisiana Board of Secondary and Elementary Education.
Funding	
Funding sources	• $1.5 million FY 2005 Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Quality Support Fund 8(g) grant. • $500,000 FY 2005 state legislature appropriation funds Algebra I online.
Course fees	• None. • Because no course fees are charged, LVS uses a three-phase registration system that initially caps course registrations from any single school.

LOUISIANA VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Curriculum	
Number of courses	32 courses, 100 percent homegrown.
Course quality assurance	• All courses evaluated by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory using the *Essential Principles of Quality: Guidelines for Web-based Courses for Middle and High School Students* published by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). • Courses meet Louisiana state content standards and benchmarks. • In June 2004, LVS courses were aligned to the Louisiana Grade-Level Expectations (GLEs). GLEs are statements of what all students should know or be able to do by the end of each grade. The GLEs apply to all core content areas (English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) from PK through 12.
Teachers	
Number of teachers	42 total. 28 part-time, 14 full-time.
Required qualifications	Teachers must be Louisiana certified in the appropriate content area and complete an online course in "Online Course Design & Delivery."
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	External evaluation by the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.
Internal evaluation process or elements	• Student, school, and SREB survey instruments are used to evaluate instruction. • Each school with a student taking an LVS course must designate a school site facilitator who holds a Louisiana teaching license and be present at the school.
Tracking student achievement	• Course completion, pass, and drop rates. • Updated progress reports are posted online for school facilitators every three weeks.
Equity	
Online accessibility	• The local physical school must provide a computer and Internet access. • In fiscal year 2005–06, LVS will provide students from low-income families the opportunity to have their AP exam fees reimbursed through a U.S. Department of Education AP Test Fee Program grant.
Support for at-risk students	School facilitators must check on all students' grades every third Monday.[31]

2.11 Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities Program[32]

Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities (MVLO) is a relatively new program, first offering courses in fall 2003. It is an initiative of the state department of education, and has many common characteristics of statewide programs. It is the only major online program in the state, and has published extensive policies and procedures for local schools using MVLO.[33]

MARYLAND VIRTUAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Supplemental.
Grade levels	Courses in grades 9–12, also offered to middle school students and adults.
Types of students	No particular student populations are focused on in practice or policy.
Number of course enrollments and students	• 334 course registrations (332 students) from fall '04 through spring '05, including 32 in summer 2004. • 100 percent increase in course registrations from previous year.
Governance	MVLO is an initiative of the State Department of Education.
Funding	
Funding sources	$75,000 from Federal Title II-D of the No Child Left Behind Act (Enhancing Education Through Technology)
Course fees	$15 to $375 per student per course per semester, paid by the school district.
Curriculum	
Number of courses	17 courses, 90 percent licensed.
Course quality assurance	• Alignment with state standards required by law.[34] • Each course undergoes formal review.
Teachers	
Number of teachers	6 part-time.
Required qualifications	• State certified in the content area being taught. • Required professional development in teaching online.
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	External program evaluation; courses are from accredited providers or developed internally.
Internal evaluation process or elements	• Extensive quality assurance checklists for courses and teaching. • Evaluations by students, parents, and mentors; focus groups.
Tracking student achievement	• Course drop rates and passing rates. • Scores in state tests for high school assessment courses.
Equity	
Online accessibility	• 508 compliance is considered as courses are reviewed and developed. • Guidelines in place for schools with students with IEPs. • Summer and night school have course fee reductions available for students from low-income families.
Support for at-risk students	Local schools provide a mentor for all students taking an online course.

2.12 Michigan Virtual High School[35]

The Michigan Virtual High School (MVHS) is a supplemental program operated by the Michigan Virtual University, a private, not-for-profit Michigan corporation. MVHS offers a wide variety of courses, detailed below. Public Act 230, passed in 2000, established the MVHS and called for schools to work in partnership with MVHS to grant credit for courses taken. Since its inception, the MVHS has had more than 20,000 enrollments in online semester-length courses and more than 125,000 enrollments in an online test review tool. MVHS utilized a subscription model from 2002–04 in which schools paid a set fee for a number of course seats, and has now moved to a model in which schools pay for courses on a per enrollment fee basis. In 2004, the MVHS launched Michigan LearnPort, an online professional development system for Michigan's teachers and educators.

MICHIGAN VIRTUAL HIGH SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Supplemental.
Grade levels	9–12 (some pilot programs at the middle school level).
Types of students	No particular student populations are focused on in practice or policy.
Number of course enrollments and students	• 6,084 semester course registrations summer 2004 through spring 2005. • 3,910 semester course students summer 2004 through spring 2005. • 49,541 test prep registrations from summer 2004 through spring 2005. • 10.6 percent decrease in semester course registrations from one year earlier due to change in course fee model.
Governance	MVHS is part of Michigan Virtual University (MVU), a private not-for-profit corporation governed by an independent board of directors. The MVU board adopted a new strategic plan in March 2005, placing emphasis on K–12 education services.
Funding	
Funding sources	• Seed capital from original $17 million legislative appropriation. • $1,750,000 appropriation from the state for 2004–05.
Course fees	• $250-$350 per student per semester course. • Previous subscription model is no longer being used. • Districts pay course fees, with some limitations including: ▪ Students are limited to two courses per semester and must be enrolled in at least one course offered by the district in which credit is earned. Regular attendance is required. ▪ There is no limit to the number of online courses that a student can take with a certified teacher present when the courses are delivered to the student at the enrolling high school. ▪ "The pupil must enroll by and be in attendance on the appropriate count day … during the class time designated for the course on the pupil's schedule."[36]

MICHIGAN VIRTUAL HIGH SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Curriculum	
Number of courses	• MVHS offers several types of courses: ▪ Flex 90: self paced, flexible start date, instructor guided, designed for credit recovery ▪ Semester paced: instructor led, highly interactive; including AP. ▪ Student Direct: Self paced, courseware driven learning with the local school providing instructional support ▪ Test tools: Test prep for SAT/ACT/PSAT and state assessment. • Total of 176 semester courses in 2004–05; this includes all types of courses above but does not include test tools. • 78 MVHS-developed, 98 licensed from other developers.
Course quality assurance	Must meet national content standards and Michigan Curriculum Framework Standards.
Teachers	
Number of teachers	66 part-time in spring 2005.
Required qualifications	• Licensed teachers certified in the course's content area. • By state policy, teachers do not have to be Michigan certified. • Mandatory online training includes one-day, on-site training and six weeks online. • MVHS has a cadre of more than 375 trained online teachers. • Teacher evaluation: A formal teacher evaluation process is under development for implementation in the 2005–06 school year.
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	• MVHS has received "candidacy status" for accreditation from the Commission on International and Trans-regional Accreditation (CITA). Formal accreditation expected in late 2005. • Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has approved MVHS as an authorized supplemental education service provider under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. • The MVHS advisory council provides guidance and external input. • Michigan's state superintendent of public instruction serves as a MVU board member.
Internal evaluation process or elements	By MDE policy, schools participating in MVHS courses are required to provide an on-site mentor and designated technical support person.
Tracking student achievement	• Teacher must be in contact with students within 48 hours, and must be online every school day; this is in teacher contracts. • There is an internal system to monitor teacher activity with class; MVHS staff members periodically drop into courses and confirm teacher activity. • Pass rates and completion rates are tracked.
Equity	
Online accessibility	• MVHS makes every effort to have courses comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. • Private and home-schooled students may participate in MVHS online services and course offerings to the same extent that they are allowed to participate in public school district course offerings, as provided for under Michigan law.
Support for at-risk students	• Courses such as Flex 90 and Student Direct are designed for at-risk students • An on-site mentor must be assigned to all students, including at-risk students. • Since 2004, MVHS has offered a summer school option for students.

2.13 Mississippi Online Learning Institute[37]

The Mississippi Online Learning Institute (MOLLI) is a supplemental program that first offered courses in fall 2002. Run by the Mississippi Department of Education, the program registered 463 students in 17 courses in 2004–05. In contrast to other statewide programs, all except one of MOLLI's courses are licensed from vendors. MOLLI provides an extensive handbook to participating school districts explaining how the districts can have students participate in online courses, and relies heavily on school districts for support to students.

MISSISSIPPI ONLINE LEARNING INSTITUTE

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Supplemental.
Grade levels	9–12.
Types of students	• No particular student populations are focused on in practice or policy. • Students must register through a public high school; private school or home school students must first enroll in the public school.
Number of course enrollments and students	• 463 students from summer 2004 through spring 2005, including 9 in summer 2004. • 31 percent increase in number of students from previous year.
Governance	The MS Department of Education Office of Educational Technology.
Funding	
Funding sources	Grants from private foundations, no state money supports MOLLI.
Course fees	• $550 per student for one semester; $750 for two semesters, however some course fees are waived. • Local school districts decide whether the student or the district pays. • Districts are allowed to count MOLLI enrollment for average daily attendance (ADA) purposes if the course is taken during the school day on school grounds. If schools are using MOLLI enrollment as part of ADA, the district is responsible for course fees.
Curriculum	
Number of courses	17, all are licensed.
Course quality assurance	• "Courses are reviewed by the MDE Office of Curriculum and Instruction to ensure that courses are aligned with the Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks." • "The MDE Office of Curriculum and Instruction consults with MOLLI on a continuing basis to ensure that MOLLI courses are appropriate and of high quality."
Teachers	
Number of teachers	13, all full-time.
Required qualifications	• Mississippi state certified. • All teachers receive training in teaching online.

MISSISSIPPI ONLINE LEARNING INSTITUTE

Category	Comments
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	No.
Internal evaluation process or elements	Student surveys including instructor evaluations.
Tracking student achievement	Course drop rates.
Equity	
Online accessibility	• The course management system provider is Section 508 compliant. • Each participating school district must provide a technical facilitator responsible for ensuring all MOLLI students have access to and assistance with the necessary equipment and software.
Support for at-risk students	No special policies.

2.14 Nevada: Clark County School District Virtual High School[38]

Clark County School District Virtual High School (CCSD VHS) is a unique case of a single school district serving a large majority of the state's student population because 70 percent of Nevada's students live in Clark County. The online portion of Virtual High School first offered courses in 1998 and was a supplemental program until the 2004–05 school year. It now enrolls 240 full-time students as a diploma-granting high school, in addition to registering over 5,000 students per year taking supplemental courses. The CCSD VHS serves a wide variety of students including Advanced Placement, honors, homebound, and credit-deficient students as well as students from other Nevada school districts. It provides a combination of asynchronous and synchronous delivery methods. Students meet weekly with teachers in a synchronous environment to enhance student interactivity. It receives some federal Title V grant money as well as school district per-pupil funding. Nevada has extensive rules governing cyber charter schools and districts' online programs, including the CCSD VHS. Nevada's policies are explained in Section 7.5.

NEVADA: CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT VIRTUAL HIGH SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Primarily supplemental, but also a cyberschool with 240 full-time students.
Grade levels	9–12.
Types of students	No particular student populations are focused on in practice or policy.
Number of course enrollments and students	• 5,804 course registrations from summer 2004 through spring 2005, including 2,011 in summer 2004. • 18 percent increase in course registrations from previous year.
Governance	Board of trustees for Clark County School District (CCSD), Las Vegas, Nevada.
Funding	
Funding sources	• Federal Funds under Title V, approximately $200,000 per year. • CCSD per pupil allocation from general funds. • Student tuition.
Course fees	• Concurrent students within CCSD, who are taking courses in addition to their regular school day, are assessed $95 tuition for each semester course they take per semester. • The Driver Education course is $55, and is a noncredit course. • CCSD students taking a course not offered at their home high school, or students with scheduling conflicts, have the tuition fee waived. • Students taking courses from districts outside of Clark County must have a signed agreement (by their school board) before they can enroll in the CCSD Virtual High School. Once the agreement has been signed, the district is assessed one sixth of the student's daily student allotment per course. Four of the 17 school districts in Nevada have signed agreements. • All students pay the $95 tuition during the summer session.
Curriculum	
Number of courses	• 119 different semester courses (online, video, and combination formats). ▪ 27 semester courses of solely video format. ▪ 16 semester courses dual platform—both video and online. ▪ 76 semester courses solely online. • 70 percent homegrown, 30 percent licensed.

NEVADA: CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT VIRTUAL HIGH SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Curriculum	
Course quality assurance	• A team of teachers, administrators, instructional designers, and curriculum personnel review each course for content and design. • CCSD's curriculum administrators review courses and course content to ensure alignment to national and state standards, and the CCSD course scope and goals.
Teachers	
Number of teachers	10 full-time, 51 part-time.
Required qualifications	• Must hold a Nevada teaching license. • Must be highly qualified in their subject area. • Required to take a minimum of 36 hours of training for those who are teaching a course, and up to 155 hours of training for those who are teaching and developing a course. • Teachers are given the opportunity to take online professional development courses during the school year.
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	Candidate for accreditation with Northwest Association of Accredited Schools.
Internal evaluation process or elements	• The instructional design team uses the following evaluation mechanisms: ▪ Monitors course content and development process. ▪ Communicates content errors and recommends content changes. ▪ Observes classrooms and coaches teachers on development and implementation. ▪ Obtains and applies specific feedback from students and families to enhance the course content and pedagogy. • Survey for program improvements and areas of growth: ▪ Students at the completion of each course. ▪ District-level administrators.
Tracking student achievement	• Course passing and completion rates. • Advanced Placement (AP) exam results. • For full-time students, tracking state and district tests. This includes the pass rate for the Nevada High School Proficiency Exam. Students must successfully pass this exam to earn a high school diploma.
Equity	
Online accessibility	• CCSD serves students with IEP and 504 plans and makes accommodations according to their individual plans. • Full-time students are asked to meet certain technological requirements, and loaner computers are available for students. • CCSD works closely with the special needs program to help meet the needs of students with disabilities.
Support for at-risk students	• All students must communicate with their teacher weekly to discuss his or her progress in the course. • The technical support team monitors student course access and sends both voice and e-mail notification after seven days of inactivity. • Instructors are directed to contact students when they fall behind to develop an academic plan to recover. • Full-time credit deficient students are enrolled in an elective that supports distance education learning performance.

2.15 North Dakota Division of Independent Study[39]

The North Dakota Division of Independent Study was created by state legislation in 1935. About 30 percent of its course registrations, or 2,850 for school year 2004–05, are for online courses. It offers a full high school curriculum online, serving both full-time students and students seeking supplemental courses. It has been funded by state general funds, although it now covers about 90 percent of its operating costs through tuition of $110 per semester course. In addition to its online course registrations, the division licenses its online course content to schools that have their own teachers conduct the courses, through a site license model. Site license fees range from $800 for 11–30 students, to $1,575 for 91–150 users. In the 2004–05 school year, approximately 2,000 students accessed the division's online course content in this way.

NORTH DAKOTA DIVISION OF INDEPENDENT STUDY

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Both supplemental and cyberschool.
Grade levels	4–12.
Types of students	No particular student populations are focused on in practice or policy.
Number of course enrollments and students	• 2,850 online course registrations from summer '04 through spring '05. • 50 percent increase in online course registrations from previous year.
Governance	• The North Dakota Division of Independent Study is an agency of state government. • Governed by a state board called the K–12 Educational Technology Council.
Funding	
Funding sources	• State general fund. • Course fees and site licenses. • Between online and other courses, the program generates 90 percent of its revenue through course fees and licenses.
Course fees	• $110 per semester course for North Dakota residents, $119 for nonresidents. • Site licenses range from $800 for sites with 11–30 users, to $1,575 for sites with 91–150 users; schools provide the teacher for these users.
Curriculum	
Number of courses	• 100 high school courses; 17 middle school courses; 10 elementary courses. • 100 percent homegrown.
Course quality assurance	Formal review of courses by an established Curriculum Team.
Teachers	
Number of teachers	18 full-time equivalent teachers, 2 part-time teachers.
Required qualifications	• North Dakota professional teacher license. • Beginning July 1, 2006, all teachers must be "highly qualified" in their respective discipline with either a major or master's degree.
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement, and Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA).

NORTH DAKOTA DIVISION OF INDEPENDENT STUDY

Category	Comments
Quality Assurance	
Internal evaluation process or elements	• Student evaluations. • Teacher evaluations.
Tracking student achievement	• Drop rates. • Compilation of average grades.
Equity	
Online accessibility	• NDIS asks for information on special learning needs or other disabilities. • Will order large print textbooks for visually impaired students.
Support for at-risk students	No formal policies.

2.16 Utah: The Electronic High School[40]

The Electronic High School (Utah) is different from most other statewide programs in several ways. It started earlier than other programs (in fall 1994), and has more students—more than 38,000—than any other online program. Its courses are self-paced with some students taking as long as two years to complete a course. Courses have teachers who establish a one-to-one relationship with the students and correct assignments. The courses are free to Utah students. The school operates on an appropriation from the state legislature and will receive $1 million in FY 2006.

UTAH: THE ELECTRONIC HIGH SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Primarily supplemental, some full-time students.
Grade levels	9–12.
Types of students	60 percent of students are credit-recovery, 25 percent are taking classes not offered at their school, and 8 percent are home-schooled.
Number of course enrollments and students	• 35,414 students in spring 2005. • 141 percent increase in students from 2004 to 2005.
Governance	Housed within the Utah state office of education and governed by the state board of education.
Funding	
Funding sources	• Appropriation from the Utah state legislature FY 2006: $1 million. • FY 2002–05: total of $2.05 million.
Course fees	Free to Utah students, out-of-state students pay $50 per quarter credit.
Curriculum	
Number of courses	• 138. • 98 percent homegrown.
Course quality assurance	All courses reviewed by a subject-matter specialist at the Utah state office of education.
Teachers	
Number of teachers	90, all part-time.
Required qualifications	• All teachers are Utah licensed. • All have majors in the subject(s) they teach. • All meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act.
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	Northwest Association of Accredited Schools; obtaining accreditation with Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation; also external program evaluation.
Internal evaluation process or elements	No.
Tracking student achievement	All students are required to take state-mandated end-of-level tests.
Equity	
Online accessibility	No policies; accommodations made at local school.
Support for at-risk students	No policies; accommodations made at local school.

2.17 Virginia Virtual Advanced Placement School[41]

The Virginia Virtual Advanced Placement School offers Advanced Placement and foreign language courses to students in schools that have too few students to justify hiring a full-time teacher or that are unable to locate a qualified teacher. The online program has emerged from a program that started with video courses in 1983. Online courses were added in 2003; in 2004–05 there were 460 online course registrations. The program receives state funding and charges course registration fees, but schools are able to obtain reimbursement for the registration fees through the state's Early College Scholars Program.

VIRGINIA VIRTUAL ADVANCED PLACEMENT SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Supplemental.
Grade levels	7–12.
Types of students	80 percent of students are from rural areas.
Number of course enrollments and students	• 460 course registrations from fall 2004 through spring 2005; none in summer. • No change in number of course registrations from the previous year.
Governance	State Department of Education.
Funding	
Funding sources	State funding $2.5 million annually.
Course fees	• $600 per student per course. • Schools pay the course fees and can be reimbursed through the state "Early College Scholars Program."
Curriculum	
Number of courses	• 30. • 80 percent homegrown, 20 percent licensed.
Course quality assurance	None reported.
Teachers	
Number of teachers	13 full-time, 20 part-time.
Required qualifications	• Virginia licensed. • Prior teaching experience. • Masters degree in subject area.
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	No.
Internal evaluation process or elements	Student evaluations.
Tracking student achievement	• Advanced Placement exam results. • Track student progress during school year.
Equity	
Online accessibility	Accommodations for students with disabilities are made on a case-by-case basis.
Support for at-risk students	No formal policies, but a number of incarcerated students are in the program.

2.18 Virtual High School[42]

Virtual High School (VHS) is a unique nationwide program that provides online courses to students in 27 states and 16 other countries. Begun in fall semester 1996, VHS is an independent nonprofit organization that offers online courses through a unique cooperative model. Schools pay an annual membership to be part of the VHS collaborative, and then free one teacher from one face-to-face teaching assignment to teach one online VHS course per semester. In exchange, the school providing the teacher can register fifty students in VHS courses. Although not a statewide program quite like the others in this section, VHS is used by many states, is comparable in size to some of the largest statewide programs, and in some states plays a role similar to a statewide program. Some states that are in the early stages of determining how to offer or expand online learning opportunities to their students offer VHS courses; other programs, seeking to fill gaps in their offerings, take part in the collaborative. Virtual High School offers courses to students of all abilities, with an emphasis on Advanced Placement (AP), pre-AP, and elective courses.

VIRTUAL HIGH SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Supplemental.
Grade levels	Primarily 9–12; middle school enrichment courses offered in 12 pre-AP subjects.
Types of students	No particular student populations are focused on in practice or policy, but many courses are AP, pre-AP, or electives.
Number of course enrollments and students	• 6,138 course registrations from summer 2004 through spring 2005, including 81 in a pilot summer program in summer 2004. • 3,952 students from summer 2004 through spring 2005, including 73 in summer 2004. • 17 percent increase in course registrations and 15 percent increase in students from previous year.
Governance	VHS is a 501c(3) nonprofit, governed by a board of directors.
Funding	
Funding sources	• VHS charges schools an annual membership fee of $6,500. Member schools are eligible to enroll 50 students per year in VHS courses. • Other funding sources include tuition for teacher training, and grant funding.
Curriculum	
Number of courses	140, 100 percent homegrown
Course quality assurance	• Courses are written to national curriculum standards, VHS course design standards, and meet NCAA accreditation standards. While in development, courses are continuously evaluated by content and online course delivery experts. • All teachers are monitored and mentored by master VHS teachers.
Teachers	
Number of teachers	• VHS teachers remain at the high school that joins the VHS collaborative. They are freed one period per day to teach a VHS course. • In 2004–05 VHS had 260 teachers teaching or training.
Required qualifications	• Completion of the VHS online professional development, 10-week, six-graduate-credit course. • Must be certified to teach within the area of discipline of their VHS course.

VIRTUAL HIGH SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	• External evaluations conducted by Stanford Research International (SRI) during first five years of operation. • Annual program evaluation conducted by VHS. • VHS courses are accredited by the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) and the governing agency that accredits the school from which the course is offered. VHS is currently working with NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) to develop and implement a VHS accreditation process to be monitored and reviewed by NEASC.
Internal evaluation process or elements	• Student evaluations. • Site coordinator, teacher, principal, and superintendent evaluations. • Weekly monitoring of courses and teachers by faculty advisors. • End-of-semester reviews of courses and teachers. • Annual program evaluation which includes student, teacher, site coordinator, principal, and superintendent survey results; and program metrics including: ▪ Course quality indicators (AP exam participation and pass rates, course completion rates, credit recovery rates). ▪ Professional development indicators (professional development graduation rates, mastery of online teaching pass rates, percentage of online teachers requiring teacher support). ▪ Program services quality indicators (membership renewal rates, seat utilization rates).
Tracking student achievement	• Course completion and credit recovery rates. • AP exam pass and participation rates.
Equity	
Online accessibility	• Most VHS students take VHS courses as part of their school day, and are provided access to the online course(s) through school technology resources. VHS courses are designed for 56K access and do not require special software. • VHS serves students with IEP plans and makes accommodations according to their individual plans. Virtual High School also has three stated and published policies addressing online accessibility requirements covering equity, special needs students with educational plans, and VHS course placement. • VHS is in the process of making all courses 508-compliant.
Support for at-risk students	• Local schools provide a mentor for all students taking an online course. • All students, including at-risk students, are given clear expectations regarding work requirements and communication. In addition, all VHS students and on-site mentors receive current grade averages every two weeks. • All VHS courses begin with a student orientation, which provides instructions on use of the course platform and time-management guidance.

2.19 West Virginia Virtual School[43]

The West Virginia Virtual School is a supplemental program serving students in Grades 7–12. It was created by legislation in 2000[44], is housed within the West Virginia Department of Education, and is governed primarily via State Board Policy 2450. Although originally created to offer Advanced Placement courses, it now offers a comprehensive set of 183 courses, all but two of which are provided by third-party course providers. The school pays for many students to participate in 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.

WEST VIRGINIA VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Supplemental.
Grade levels	• Primarily 7–12 • A small number of accelerated fifth- and sixth-grade students take advanced mathematics courses for high school credit
Types of students	No particular student populations are focused on in practice or policy.
Number of course enrollments and students	• 1,355 course registrations from summer '04 through spring '05. • 1,246 students from summer '04 through spring '05.
Governance	Created by legislation in 2000, housed within the Office of Technology and Instructional Services within the West Virginia Department of Education.[45]
Funding	
Funding sources	• State appropriation; in FY 05, $450,000. • Additional funds from the Educational Broadcast Authority fund student course registration fees and pay course providers.
Course fees	• Registration fees of $250–400 (depending on course provider) are paid by WVVS on a first-come, first-served basis. When WVS reaches the limit for how many registrations it can fund, registrations drop to almost zero. • If WVVS does not pay the registration fee, schools may ask parents to pay if the school also offers the course and "there is no justifiable reason to duplicate the school course."
Curriculum	
Number of courses	• 183 courses, all but two offered by third-party providers. • Students are registered directly into the external providers' courses; WVVS does not license the courses. • Two courses were codeveloped with Florida Virtual School and are taught by WVVS teachers.
Course quality assurance	• Homegrown courses are reviewed by a team of content specialists against the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) checklist for essential principles of quality. • Homegrown courses align with the corresponding West Virginia Content Standards and Objectives and must "include appropriate course materials." • Courses offered by providers must be approved by the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE).

WEST VIRGINIA VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Teachers	
Number of teachers	• Most courses are taught by teachers provided by the course provider. • WVVS has a small number of teachers for the courses it developed, which are highly facilitated and interactive.
Required qualifications	• "Course facilitators located in West Virginia schools may be required to hold specific certification/qualifications based upon provider guidelines that may vary from course to course." • "The distance learning course facilitator shall receive in-service training or technology-delivered instructions pertaining to the course organization, classroom management, technical aspects, monitoring of student testing, and securing other student services as needed." • These requirements apply only to the Spanish courses developed by WVVS.
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	No.
Internal evaluation process or elements	• "Evaluations of the success of the virtual program must be documented to provide any continued funding requests." • "To accommodate rapidly changing options for virtual classes and distance learning, guidelines and procedures will be developed to review operational issues in a timely manner and will include legislation components."
Tracking student achievement	• "The local education agency is responsible for establishing specific uniform procedures for evaluating pupil progress and administering a final grade based ...." This means that each school district decides if it accepts the course-provided procedures or sets its own policies. • Every school in West Virginia has a virtual school contact person who is responsible for mentoring students taking online courses.
Equity	
Online accessibility	• "To ensure equity, access must be available to students at school."[46] • "When available, student access may be authorized at other equipped locations such as public libraries, community learning centers and homes." • "It is not the responsibility of the school, county, or state to provide home computer equipment and/or home Internet access."[47] • All courses are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. This is part of course review—noncompliant courses are not approved; other issues of equity for students with disabilities are a local issue.
Support for at-risk students	• "In an alternative education setting, distance learning shall in no case be a student's only source of instruction." This policy ensures that at-risk students are not given access to online courses solely, that they have at least some face-to-face courses.

2.20 Wisconsin Virtual School[48]

The Wisconsin Virtual School is a supplemental program that first offered courses in fall semester 2000. WVS is run out of a regional Cooperative Educational Service Agency and offers courses to students in Grades 6–12. It had 1383 course registrations from summer 2004 to spring 2005, representing 1177 students. The number or registrations and students doubled from the previous year.

WISCONSIN VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Category	Comments
Operations	
Program type	Supplemental.
Grade levels	6–12.
Types of students	• No particular student populations are focused on in practice or policy. • Reasons for taking online courses: 54 percent credit deficit, 15 percent accelerated.
Number of course enrollments and students	• 1,383 course registrations from summer '04 through spring '05, including 333 in summer 2004. • 1,177 students from summer '04 through spring '05, including 284 in summer 2004. • 100 percent increase in course registrations and students from previous year.
Governance	Operated out of Cooperative Educational Service Agency 9 (CESA 9), which serves as the fiscal agent. CESA 9 is one of 12 independent regional agencies. The CESA 9 Board of Control for fiscal accountability serves as an advisory board.
Funding	
Funding sources	State and federal grants: $70,000 per year from 2000–02; $42,000 in 2003; $28,000 in 2004.
Course fees	$325 per semester. Registration fees are paid by the district; home-school families self-register and pay the registration fees.
Curriculum	
Number of courses	70, 100 percent licensed.
Course quality assurance	• Courses meet Wisconsin state content standards. • Each course is evaluated against a checklist of quality indicators. • Courses are reviewed by district curriculum reviewers.
Teachers	
Number of teachers	35 part-time.
Required qualifications	• Teachers must be state-certified in the content area. • Mandatory day-and-a-half of face-to-face training.
Quality Assurance	
Accreditation/ External evaluation	No.
Internal evaluation process or elements	Student post-course survey on instructor and course satisfaction.
Tracking student achievement	• Course completion rates, drop rates in two-week trial period, and overall drop rate. • Average time to complete the course, number of days in the course.
Equity	
Online accessibility	Left to local districts.
Support for at-risk students	• Local district policy. • A "local education guide" provided by the district serves as student mentor.

SECTION 3 | *Issues Analysis: Statewide Programs*

3. ISSUES ANALYSIS: STATEWIDE PROGRAMS[49]

Statewide programs have more commonalities than differences. All are primarily or entirely supplemental; all of them operate primarily at the high school level; almost all of them develop at least some of their own courses; almost all of them rely primarily on part-time staff to conduct the course; almost all of them rely, in whole or in part, on local schools or districts to provide support for the online students (which makes sense, given the supplemental role and the registration of students through the schools or districts); and most are experiencing rapid growth. The extent of these common features suggests that a strong and largely successful educational model has emerged. The differences, however, suggest important areas for considering how to diversify and/or refine that model as it continues to mature. Both common and unique features are addressed in the sections that follow.

3.1 Models of Statewide Programs

All statewide programs are entirely or mostly supplemental programs, providing one or a small number of courses to students who are enrolled in a local physical school. A few programs (e.g., Florida Virtual and Utah Electronic High School) have a small number of full-time students who are enrolled in the online program. Most supplemental programs share the following characteristics:

- Students register for courses through local physical schools or districts.
- Districts pay the cost of registration.
- Districts provide local support for the online students.

The mechanisms through which statewide programs have been established tend to fall within one of four categories:

- *Established by the state department of education or other state entity.* This is a common mechanism; in some cases the push for creating the program has come from a state's governor. Sometimes these programs are created to serve a particular student population rather than to serve a broader supplemental service. The federal Advanced Placement Incentive Program, for instance, has led to the creation of several programs that fit the definition of statewide program, such as Iowa Learning Online. These programs offer a small range of courses and target high-achieving students.
- *Established by state legislation.* Examples of programs created by legislation include Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA) and West Virginia Virtual School. In some cases (e.g., IDLA), the legislation provides the policy basis for the program. A variation on this model is programs that were started without legislation, but later had related legislation enacted (i.e., Florida Virtual School).
- *Created by a local education agency (LEA)—a school district or regional service agency—or by a consortium of LEAs.* Wisconsin Virtual School is an example of a program established by an LEA (in this case, a regional service agency) that now receives funding from the state and operates statewide; Colorado Online Learning was established by a consortium of school districts. Not all programs established in this way become the statewide program. Oregon Online, for example, was created by a consortium of school districts, but it does not qualify as the statewide program because only about 30 percent of Oregon's districts are involved.[50]

- *Evolved out of distance education programs originally using channels other than the Internet.* The North Dakota Division of Independent Study was formed in 1935 to provide correspondence courses, and now provides online courses, print courses, and video. The Virginia Virtual Advanced Placement School first offered video courses in 1983 and added online courses 20 years later.

3.2 Program Size and Growth Trends

The largest statewide programs are Utah's Electronic School (more than 35,000 students) and Florida Virtual School (more than 33,000 course registrations and 21,000 students). After those two programs, there is a significant drop in program size, with the next largest programs having about 6,000 students (e.g., Clark County School District, Michigan Virtual High School).[51] Smaller programs register from 1,000 to 3,000 students annually.

The number of course registrations and number of individual students taking courses from statewide programs are growing rapidly in almost all statewide programs. Utah Electronic School's registrations have increased by 141 percent in the past year, Wisconsin Virtual School registrations have increased by 100 percent, Florida Virtual School's registrations have increased by 60 percent, and Illinois Virtual High School's registrations are up by 66 percent. Large percentage increases are not confined to smaller programs. Florida's and Utah's online programs are two of the fastest growing, which suggests that growth of online programs can continue at a rapid pace for many years. Where programs have experienced recent declines in course registrations, the decreases have been caused by instituting or sharply increasing course fees (e.g., MVHS, UCCP).

3.3 Student Populations Served

All statewide programs provide courses primarily or exclusively to high school students; some (e.g., Louisiana Virtual School, Virginia Virtual Advanced Placement School, Florida Virtual School) serve smaller numbers of middle school students as well. Statewide programs collectively serve a wide variety of student types; they often reach students whose needs are not being completely met by their brick-and-mortar schools, such as students unable to take a physical school course due to lack of availability or a scheduling conflict, as well as students needing credit recovery.

The mission statement or founding legislation for some programs targets particular student populations. Illinois Virtual High School, for example, has interpreted its mission statement ("increased equity and access to the highest quality educational opportunities") to mean that it should target students who have limited educational opportunities. IVHS emphasizes options for students from low-income areas through financial incentives for schools in which 25 percent or more of the students qualify for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program. As a result, between summer 2004 and spring 2005, 62 percent of IVHS registrations were by students living in low-income districts. Other programs have similar missions. Colorado Online Learning (COL), for example, targets students from "high-poverty" districts (also defined by the percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch). In fall semester 2004, 69 percent of COL's students were from these districts. University of California College Prep (UCCP) online has a mission to provide online college preparatory courses to high school students who otherwise would not have the opportunity to achieve eligibility for admission to the University of California and California State University systems. UCCP charges schools with a high percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch as much as 30 percent less than other schools.

3.4 Funding

Determining how to pay for online courses continues to be one of the major issues facing statewide programs. State funding and course registration fees remain the primary options, but some other strategies have proven successful in limited cases:

- *State appropriation or grant.* This is the most common main source of funding. Examples of programs that started with significant state appropriation or grant funding include Florida Virtual School, Michigan Virtual High School, Illinois Virtual High School, Kentucky Virtual High School, and University of California College Preparatory Initiative.
- *State public education funding.* Florida Virtual School is the only statewide program that is being directly funded through state public education full-time equivalent (FTE) money; even part-time FLVS students are paid for as a percentage of their FTE. In Arkansas, the state established the Arkansas Distance Learning Development program, which includes the Arkansas Virtual High School as well as other forms of distance learning. The program receives one sixth of the student FTE funding for students taking distance-learning courses and uses this revenue source to fund the virtual high school and other distance learning programs. Some statewide programs (e.g., Illinois Virtual High School) point out that districts can collect FTE funding from the state for courses taken through the program. This method of finance is how cyberschools are funded, however, and may become a more common way to fund statewide online programs.
- *Federal funding.* Clark County School District in Utah uses Title V funding (part of its entitlement funds through the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act), and Colorado Online Learning receives Title II-D Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funds as a result of grant award from the state's department of education. Federal appropriations are not generally used, with the one exception being Illinois Virtual High School, although federal funding for IVHS is not long-term and is rapidly decreasing in FY 06. Another way federal funding has been used is to jump-start programs with federal dollars, thereby enabling the program to develop a large base of schools and students, and transition to another type of entity. VHS, for example, evolved into a self-sustaining nonprofit using the subscription membership model, and others will probably shift from federal funding to state funding.
- *Private grants.* Grants from foundations or other donors occasionally support significant aspects of statewide programs' operations. Iowa Learning Online received $400,000 from a private foundation to fund development of several courses, and Idaho Digital Learning Academy received a $1 million grant from a private foundation for start-up costs.
- *Course fees.* All but four statewide programs (Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, and Utah) charge course fees, which are paid by local school districts or, in some cases, by parents. Fees range from about $100 to $400 per student for a one-semester course.
- *Subscription membership in the online program.* Virtual High School and Michigan Virtual High School have both used a type of subscription membership program. Membership fees are based upon the size of the school, and the type of membership in which the school wishes to participate. VHS is now entirely self-sustaining from subscription membership revenue, while MVHS has recently begun charging course fees. [52]

- *Course licensing.* Instead of course fees, a statewide program may charge school districts seat licenses or "subscriptions" that pay for a specified number of registrations. North Dakota Division of Independent Study licenses its course content—without the teacher—to schools that want to use the courses with their own teachers. The license fee ranges from a high of $73 per user to a low of $10.50 per user.

Funding will remain a significant challenge for the foreseeable future. While many programs have a goal of becoming self sustaining, the definition of self-sustaining is not clear. (VHS is the exception to this—the business model is one in which self-sustaining is defined as covering the costs of providing all services to member schools through revenues generated by membership and professional development fees.) Course fees are limited by what schools or districts are willing to pay, and often are set below the marginal cost of delivering an online course, even without accounting for overhead costs. Michigan Virtual High School, in a report to the Michigan Department of Education, said:

> The revenue generated from [course] fees has not covered the total cost of delivering an online course. Ongoing state and federal appropriations will be required if Michigan is to maintain a national leadership position in providing high-quality online instructional service for Michigan students. It is unlikely that MVHS can successfully operate exclusively with revenue generated from the sale of online courses and services to schools in Michigan. A blended funding approach that relies on sales revenue and grant support appears to be the most practical and effective long-term strategy for sustainability.[53]

Programs that have instituted or significantly increased course fees have seen a drop in course registrations, and programs that have had course fees from the start sometimes report that the presence of course fees keeps course registrations low.

Sustainability aside, there is also the question of whether particular funding sources are appropriate for statewide programs—in particular, whether course fees are appropriate. Some analysts argue that online programs should pay their way entirely through course fees, so that they demonstrate their true value as schools and districts decide whether to pay for the online courses. This market analysis, however, ignores that K–12 education is not a free market. The consumers (students) do not pay directly for public education; and administrators, who decide whether to pay for online courses, face financial disincentives for doing so. Moreover, cyberschools are entirely funded through state FTE appropriations. Finally, there have been few studies to determine whether enrolling students in cyberschools or registering them in supplemental programs yields a net cost or a net savings of public education funds. (Ohio is an exception. See Section 6.3.) Since statewide programs are, for the most part, growing rapidly, charging some course fees appears not to be too great a disincentive; but the experience of programs that have introduced or substantially increased fees in the past year suggests that the financial disincentive is real.

3.5 Curriculum

Collectively, statewide programs offer a wide variety of types of courses (e.g., core, elective, and specialized). The larger programs (e.g., Florida Virtual, Michigan Virtual) tend to offer several different types of courses to meet the needs of their student populations. Some programs (e.g., University of California College Prep, and Virginia Virtual Advanced Placement School) offer only one type of course because of the mission of the program.

Most statewide programs develop all or most all of their own courses; only three programs (Mississippi, Wisconsin, and West Virginia) license the majority of their courses from a third party. (All three license at least 95 percent of their courses; the next highest percentages are Illinois, which licenses 47 percent of its courses, and Michigan, which licenses 33 percent of its courses.) There does not appear to be a particular pattern or cause for either preference, except that the three programs that license their courses are all small and relatively new.

Most programs offer one model of course—usually semester-based, highly interactive with a teacher. In some of the larger programs (e.g., Utah Electronic School), courses are self-paced. Interactivity in courses (both between student and teacher and between students) is an indicator of the quality of the experience for students. Courses range from highly interactive, with a teacher leading a cohort of students going through the course at the same pace, to highly individualized courses in which students start, progress, and finish at their own pace. Although the highly interactive courses may be a better educational experience for students, self-paced courses provide flexibility that is necessary for some students taking courses online.

Some programs offer more than one course model. Michigan Virtual High School offers several different types of courses, including semester-based courses with set dates, self-paced courses, and test prep courses. North Dakota Division of Independent Study offers its course content—without a teacher—to local schools that can provide the teacher and offer the course to students at lower cost.

3.6 Course Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is left almost entirely to the discretion of the statewide programs, and the programs have apparently taken this responsibility quite seriously. Several programs report using the Southern Regional Education Board's "Essential Principles of Quality: Guidelines for Web-based Courses for Middle and High Schools"[54] as a check for their courses. Virtual High School provided its online course design and delivery standards as the model for the Guide to Online High School Courses, available on the National Education Association (NEA) Web site.[55] In addition, several programs (e.g., Colorado Online Learning and Florida Virtual School) have thoroughly documented processes for development and review of courses.

Although online practitioners believe that there are, or should be, significant differences between online and face-to-face course design, state policies almost never articulate such a difference. An exception is in the statute creating the Idaho Digital Learning Academy, which states, " Credit earned in courses shall be based on such criteria as mastery of the subject, demonstrated competency, and meeting the standards set for each course, in contrast to credit earned in a traditional classroom based on time spent in the classroom."[56]

Online courses commonly are developed to meet state content standards. The use of third-party courses may cause a problem with meeting state content standards, although both vendors and online programs say that this is rarely the case. The West Virginia Virtual School acknowledges this issue in its Web site, which states, "certain courses may require that a school cover some Content Standards and Objectives that may not be sufficiently covered in the virtual or distance course."[57]

Online course technology provides for high levels of interaction between the instructor and students, and between students. Concerns remain, however, that online courses can be simply a student reading text from a computer screen; an updated correspondence course for the digital age. Idaho statute attempts to address this concern by tasking the state board of education with developing "policies of accountability" to "address the special conditions which exist in an environment where there is reduced face-to-face contact between student and teacher; where students access courses at any time of day, from any location and at the student's own pace; where online etiquette and ethics should be clearly understood and required of all participants; and where all students' participation is monitored by online teachers and academy personnel."[58] The board has not yet finished these policies.

3.7 Teachers

Most programs use part-time teachers primarily or entirely, with exceptions in Florida, Mississippi, and Virginia. Statewide programs require that their teachers be licensed. In most cases, the requirement is that the teacher be licensed by the state of the statewide program, although there are exceptions. Licensure standards are designed for face-to-face teaching, and no state has adopted policies that aim at specific licensure or endorsement for online teaching. Practitioners, of course, recognize that the differences in the two teaching environments are quite significant, and most statewide programs have specified training requirements for their teachers. Many programs (e.g., Illinois, Kentucky, Georgia, Maryland, Wisconsin, Mississippi) require their teachers to take an online professional development course.

The role of online teachers is not always consistent between programs. The role of a teacher in a course that is self-paced, versus a course that has a group of students going through as a cohort, will be quite different and will require different types of involvement from the teacher. There are not yet standards in place in most states and statewide programs for the upper limit of student-teacher ratios. The number of teachers and students in statewide programs suggests that the ratios vary widely.

Several statewide programs (e.g., Michigan Virtual, VHS) offer online professional development opportunities for teachers. These can be divided into two categories: (1) online courses to help teachers become better online teachers, and (2) online courses to help teachers teach in face-to-face classrooms. Most of the professional development opportunities are in the second category, for the simple reason that statewide programs need teachers who are skilled in teaching online. This report did not look into professional development issues in any depth, but there are no common standards concerning issues such as:

- Defining skills that online teachers should have, above and beyond those of classroom teachers.
- Determining how those skills are being developed in online teachers.
- Determining how to evaluate online teachers once they begin to teach.
- Developing opportunities for ongoing professional development for online teachers.

3.8 Additional Quality Assurance

Because online education is still relatively new, state policy often leaves the determination of quality assurance to the person in charge of online learning in the state. The statute establishing the West Virginia Virtual School is typical, in stating that the school director shall "develop policy recommendations for consideration by the state board" in areas including "standards of teachers and other school employees who are engaged in the activities surrounding the offering of courses on the internet or other developing technologies" and "methods for employing persons who are the most familiar with the instructional goals and objectives to develop the courses to be offered on the internet and through other developing technologies …"[59]

States rarely specify quality assurance procedures for the statewide programs. Idaho represents a notable exception; the legislation creating the Idaho Digital Learning Academy called for IDLA's board of directors to establish policies in numerous areas, including quality assurance. When they are finished and adopted, IDLA will have a set of written policies more extensive and more formal than most other programs have (as of summer 2005 the policies are in draft). Also in Idaho, the state board of education is required by law to establish policies "for student-related issues including taking exams, proctored or unproctored; ensuring that the work is being done by the student; and ensuring that ethical conduct and proper etiquette are always observed by all participants."[60] These policies have not yet been finalized.

Left to their own devices, some programs have creative ways to address quality issues. For example, the Idaho Digital Learning Academy has an "online principal" who walks the "virtual hallways" to insure that the appropriate number and quality of interactions occur between students and faculty. Many programs rely on surveys of students, and sometimes other stakeholders, in order to ensure quality. Florida Virtual and VHS have two of the most extensive survey programs, involving students, parents, and district- and school-level administrators. Results of annual surveys are published and available on the FLVS and VHS Web sites.

Many programs track course completion and pass rates, and some that offer AP courses track AP exam results. Except for the AP exam results, however, these measures vary in how they are calculated from program to program. Because few programs track AP exam results, there are no benchmark statistics across online programs. In addition, because programs are supplemental, state achievement exams are not tracked by the programs, so there are no measures comparing the online programs with brick-and-mortar schools. One exception is IDLA, which uses the end-of-course exams created by the state for several subjects. New thinking in developing useful measures is needed; for example, one possible metric for statewide programs might be the percentage of schools in the program that renew their participation the following year.

3.9 Accreditation and External Program Evaluations

Most programs have some sort of program evaluation by an outside source. There are three general categories:

- *Accreditation by an outside agency*. Several programs (e.g., Utah Electronic School and North Dakota Division of Independent Study) have been accredited or are in the process of gaining accreditation by an outside agency that has established criteria and processes for accreditation reviews. Similar to accreditation for postsecondary and K–12 independent schools, these accreditation processes involve a formal review that is consistent from program to program; evaluating primarily inputs rather than measures of student achievement.
- *Accreditation by a state department of education*. Some programs (e.g., Arkansas VHS) are accredited by the respective state's department of education; the accreditation criteria vary by state.
- *External evaluation*. Some programs (e.g., Illinois Virtual High School, Virtual High School, Florida Virtual School, and University of California College Prep) obtain an external evaluation annually, or every second or third year. External evaluations are sometimes mandated by the authorizing legislation or agency. No standards exist for external evaluations. In most cases, however, the external evaluation includes a survey of students, parents, and other stakeholders, and serves as a valuable check on the successes and shortcomings of the program. To the extent that results are published and transparent, external evaluations can be a valuable source of information about the programs.

Although the processes and results of accreditations and evaluations vary widely, each entails some level of review from an outside source. At the very least, the presence of an outside review shows that a program is taking steps to monitor and improve performance.

3.10 Equity and Access

Equity and access to online courses entail several issues: equity in reaching students of different needs, from different geographic regions, and of different learning abilities; equity in providing online courses to all students who wish to take courses online; access in terms of ensuring that courses are accessible to students with disabilities; and access in terms of ensuring that students are able to use a computer and an Internet connection to take an online course.

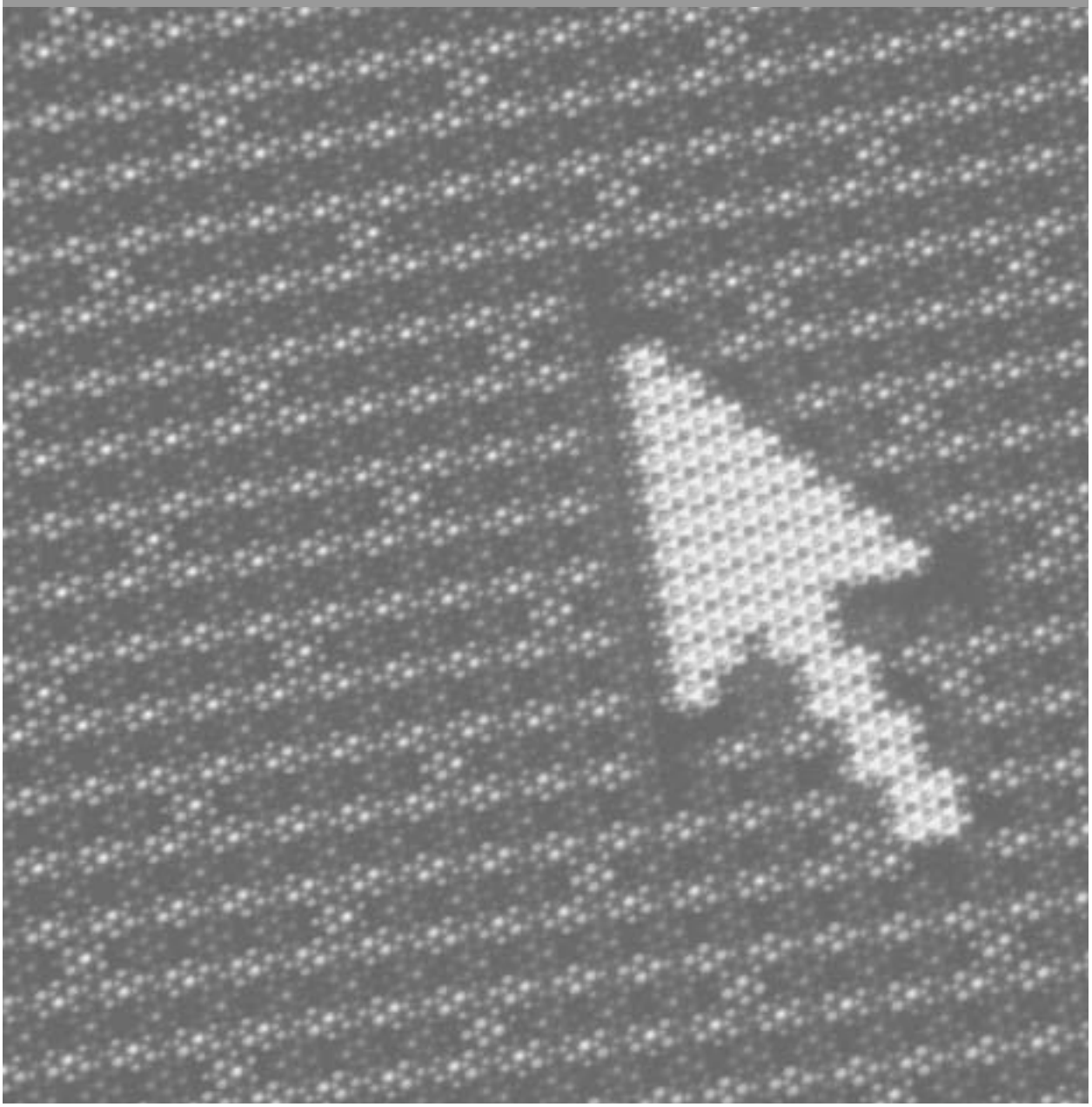
As statewide programs increasingly charge course fees that are most often paid by school districts, there is a potential financial incentive for schools to disallow these program courses. In Florida—where public education funds follow the student, and the Florida Virtual School receives the full-time equivalent FTE funding for the student taking one or more FLVS courses—legislation mandates that "school districts may not limit student access to courses offered through the Florida Virtual School."[61]

In cases where the program does not charge course fees, demand for online courses can greatly exceed supply. Some programs have developed systems for allocating courses among students of various schools and school districts. The Louisiana Virtual School, for example, has a three-phase registration system. In the first phase, only seniors are allowed to register, and schools are capped at six students per course; 25 students total. In the second phase, students from all grades may register, with the same enrollment caps in place. In the third phase, the enrollment caps are lifted.

Adapting to students with special needs is another component of equity and access. Almost all programs state that they are in compliance with the provisions of Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and some have formal policies to ensure that instructors know of students' needs. In addition, several programs have processes for ensuring that they know of and work with students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs). IDLA, for example, has a formal policy in its student manual that reiterates the program's legal requirement to accommodate students with special needs, and lays out a communications process to ensure that the instructor knows of the need. Most statewide programs have similar efforts underway, but few are as well documented.

Programs that focus on at-risk students, or on students from low-income schools tend to rely on the local school for mentoring support. Some programs (e.g., Mississippi) have very specific expectations of and requirements for the local school. Most, however, are dependent on the local school mentor, with few checks.

SECTION 4 *State Profiles: Southeastern States*



4. SOUTHEASTERN STATES

SOUTHEASTERN STATES K–12 ONLINE ACTIVITY SNAPSHOT

Statewide Program	Cyberschools[62]	Legislation/Policy[63]
ALABAMA		
Yes. Alabama Online is reviewed in Section 2.1.	No	Yes. State code includes numerous regulations for online courses; see Section 4.1
ARKANSAS		
Yes. The Arkansas Virtual High School is profiled in Section 2.2.	No	Yes. The Arkansas Department of Education published rules governing distance learning in 2003; see Section 4.2.
FLORIDA		
Yes. The Florida Virtual School is profiled in Section 2.5.	Yes	Yes. Florida has two additional pilot online programs; legislation affecting these and aspects of FLVS are explained in Section 4.3.
GEORGIA		
Yes. Georgia Virtual School was authorized in May 2005.	No	Yes. Senate Bill 33, establishing the Georgia Virtual School (GVS), was passed on May 4, 2005. The bill authorizes the state board of education to promulgate rules and regulations governing the Virtual School. As of July 2005, these policies had not yet been created and the GVS was just beginning. Neither GVS nor Georgia is profiled in this report.
KENTUCKY		
Yes. Kentucky Virtual High School is profiled in Section 2.9.	No	No. The state is not separately profiled in this section.
LOUISIANA		
Yes. Louisiana Virtual School is profiled in Section 2.10.	No	Yes. The Louisiana Department of Education published State Standards for Distance Education; see Section 4.4.
MISSISSIPPI		
Yes. Mississippi Online Learning Opportunities is profiled in Section 2.13.	No. There are no cyber charter schools or other major online programs.	No. The state is not separately profiled.
NORTH CAROLINA		
No. North Carolina is moving towards creating a statewide program that may be implemented in 2005–06, but as of July 2005, this program is not in place. The North Carolina Distance Learning Program is described briefly below.	No	No

SOUTHEASTERN STATES K–12 ONLINE ACTIVITY SNAPSHOT

Statewide Program	Cyberschools[62]	Legislation/ Policy[63]
SOUTH CAROLINA		
No	No. Charter school law prohibits home-based instruction; therefore, there are no cyber charter schools in South Carolina.	No. The state published a guide to distance education in 2002, but no policies have been developed. The state is not profiled separately.
TENNESSEE		
No	No	Yes. State charter school law prohibits online charter schools. No further policy exists, and the state is not profiled in this report.
VIRGINIA		
Yes. The Virginia Virtual Advanced Placement School is profiled in Section 2.17.	No. Other distance education in the state is primarily through video.	No. The state is not profiled separately in this section.
WEST VIRGINIA		
Yes. West Virginia Virtual School is profiled in Section 2.19.	No. There are no cyber charter schools or other major online programs, and the state is not profiled separately in this section.	Yes, regarding creation of the WV Virtual School.

As a group, the states in the southeast have extensive online education activity. Nine of the 12 states have statewide programs, and several states have significant legislation or policy, often related to the statewide program. The policies of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, and Louisiana are profiled in this section, and the nine statewide programs are profiled in Section 2.

There are a several additional items from southeastern states worth noting:

- *Tennessee* charter school law specifically prohibits online charter schools.[64]
- In *South Carolina*, charter school law prohibits home-based instruction; therefore, online instruction is allowed only if a student is in a classroom. No cyberschools exist in the state. South Carolina published a guide to distance education in 2002[65] that provides general direction for districts seeking to understand online education options, but the state does not have any formal policies related to distance learning.
- The *North Carolina* State Department of Public Instruction's Distance Learning Program provides limited funding to allow students to enroll free of charge in one of several providers' online courses. The program had 1,889 students in more than 300 courses in school year 2004–05. The state is considering creating a single statewide online program for school year 2005–06.[66]

4.1 Alabama State Profile[67]

Alabama does not have cyber charter schools; the provisions below apply to district online programs. Quotes below are taken directly from Alabama code. Alabama created a plan for distance learning in 2005 called Alabama Access (Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, and Students Statewide). The Access plan was developed by the Governor's Task Force on Distance Learning. It includes the mission and vision for distance learning in Alabama, and has a budget of $10.3 million for FY 2006 that includes development and delivery of courses via the Internet and video. The plan anticipates further development of online education policies, but these have not yet been created.

Funding

- Regular state funding is used for district supplemental online courses.

Quality Assurance

- Courses must be from institutions accredited by one of several accrediting organizations listed in the code.
- Students must complete lessons, tests, and labs "during a regular class scheduled within the normal school day."
- "Class size regulations shall be the same as for courses not taught online."
- "All online courses shall have an adult facilitator who has completed professional development in online methodology and technical aspects of Web-based instruction and serves as a liaison to online teachers and providers."
- Teachers must be certified in the subject area, or must be "faculty members of an institution of higher education," and "must have participated in in-service education, sponsored by the providing institution, pertaining to instructional methodology and technical aspects of online delivery."
- Core courses must be "approved and registered" by the state department of education; elective courses don't need to be approved, but must be registered.
- "Online courses qualifying for credit in required courses must contain all required content identified in Alabama courses of study."
- Course credits are based on "clock hours"—a minimum of 140 "clock hours" for a one-credit course.

Accountability for Student Achievement

- No policies.

Equity and Access

- "School systems will be responsible for costs and equipment for courses necessary for completion of graduation requirements."
- "Schools will provide students with appropriate technology."

4.2 Arkansas State Profile

Arkansas has an unusual approach to distance learning in which all forms of distance learning are coordinated at the state level by the state department of education's Arkansas Distance Learning Development Program. Distance learning includes modes other than Internet-based. Online courses are run through the Arkansas Virtual High School (see Section 2.2). Arkansas does not have cyber charter schools. The Department of Education published *Rules Governing Distance Learning*[68] in August 2003. A bill passed in 2005 puts these rules into law.[69] Direct quotes below are from the *Rules*. Many provisions apply to "required" courses, meaning those that fulfill a graduation requirement, but not to elective courses. In addition, courses can be approved as "pilot" courses for up to two years without meeting all the legal rules.

Funding

- The Distance Learning Development Program receives one sixth of the student's full-time equivalent (FTE) funds for each distance-learning course. Distance learning programs, including the Arkansas Virtual High School, are funded from this revenue.

Quality Assurance

- All "required" courses must be approved by the department of education if the course originates "from an offering institution located outside the State of Arkansas. The courses must be approved either individually or the Department may approve the institution to offer distance learning courses to public schools in Arkansas."
- All "required" courses originating in Arkansas "shall have an appropriately licensed or approved primary instructor" and "shall have an adult facilitator to supervise any instructional activity where students meet as a group."
- Courses must use a "curriculum designed to comply with the Arkansas Curriculum Frameworks and Arkansas Course Content Standards."
- "An adult facilitator must be present when student achievement assessments used to determine a student's final grade are administered in a distance learning required course."
- There are no class size requirements for asynchronous courses; synchronous courses have the same standards for class size as face-to-face courses. For asynchronous courses, student interaction with the primary instructor must be at ratios of no more than 30 students per class and 150 students per day.

Accountability for Student Achievement

- "Student achievement assessments shall be designed to assess the degree to which the students have mastered the Arkansas Course Content Standards."
- "Documentation of student achievement … shall include the assessment questions, student responses, and the grade for each student assessment and grading period."

Equity and Access

- Public schools must accept credit for courses granted by the Distance Learning Program.

4.3 Florida State Profile[70]

Florida has a large statewide online public school, Florida Virtual School (FLVS; see Section 2.5), and two cyber schools; Florida Virtual Academy and Florida Connections Academy. Online education legislation in Florida pertains to either FLVS or the K–8 Virtual Pilot program, under which the two cyber schools operate. In 2000, legislation established FLVS as an independent education entity. Legislation enacted in 2002 and 2003 granted parental right for public school choice, listed FLVS as an option, and defined full-time-equivalent (FTE) students for FLVS based on "course completion and performance" rather than on traditional seat time. The legislation responded to the initiative passed by Florida voters in 2002 requiring a significant decrease in class size across the state by 2010. In 2003, the Florida Legislature funded the K–8 Virtual Pilot program, through which the FLDOE will study the effect of virtual programs on public school class size. In 2005, the Florida Legislature has committed to continue funding for the K–8 Virtual Pilot Program. In addition, the legislature has committed additional funds to expand online learning for high school students.

Funding

- Funding model is per full-time equivalent (FTE), based on seat time, with exceptions for FLVS.
- FLVS's FTE is defined as successful course completion rather than seat time, calculating course completion and performance. If a student fails the course, FLVS is not funded.
- A FLVS full-time equivalent student is defined as "one student who has successfully completed six credits" that count toward high school graduation. Students may enroll in one to six FLVS courses.
- A student may take an extra FLVS course in addition to a full six credits at the physical school, thus generating more than 1.0 FTE of funding. If a student takes one credit at FLVS and five credits at the physical school, FLVS receives one sixth FTE and the physical school receives five sixths FTE funding.
- School districts may not limit student access to courses offered through FLVS.
- K–8 Virtual Pilot Schools are funded by grants up to $4,800 per student with an enrollment not to exceed 1,000 students. Only students who attended public schools the prior year are eligible for funding, which precludes kindergarten students.

Quality Assurance

- Local schools, including FLVS and the pilot schools, must ensure that online content meets curriculum and content standards.

Accountability for Student Achievement

- K–8 Virtual Pilot schools must administer the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), or, for those grades not required to take the FCAT, local assessments and the K–3 state-approved assessment for reading.
- The K–8 Virtual Pilot schools must provide physical locations for the testing.

Equity and Access

- K–8 Virtual Pilot schools must loan computers to enrolled students.

4.4 Louisiana State Profile

Louisiana has a statewide program, the Louisiana Virtual School (LVS), which is profiled in Section 2.10. One notable program of the LVS is its Algebra I Online course; a hybrid course designed to reach students in districts without certified algebra teachers. This course is also described in Section 2.10. Louisiana does not have any cyber charter schools, but it does have charter schools and cyber charter schools are not prohibited. The state also has district programs offering distance-learning courses. These courses include satellite and compressed video. The department of education has published *State Standards for Distance Education* that cover these modes of instruction as well as online learning.[71] Policies listed in this section are from these standards; many of the policies hold distance education programs to the same standards as face-to-face programs, For example, the standards state that "distance education shall comply with **all policies** of the Louisiana *Handbook for School Administrators*" (emphasis is original). All quotes below are from the *State Standards*. All distance learning programs in Louisiana are supplemental, and the policies distinguish between the provider of distance education courses and the "receiving" school or LEA. Specific, separate requirements for providers and for schools and LEAs are delineated.

Funding

- School districts receive state funding through Louisiana's funding program (the Minimum Foundation Program, based on student counts); distance education courses are counted toward the student count with no specific or additional requirements.

Quality Assurance

- Courses must incorporate state content standards.
- Schools or local education agencies with students in distance education programs must "ensure that each distance education course is provided by an institution accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting body or is authorized by the LEA."
- "Content, instruction, and assessment" of online courses must be "comparable" in "rigor and breadth to a traditionally delivered course."
- Teachers must be certified and must "provide timely and informative feedback" to students.
- Schools must provide a "facilitator" for their students taking online courses; the facilitator must be a qualified teacher.
- Distance education providers must "judiciously address issues relative to course load and student-teacher ratio as appropriate for the particular method of delivery and particular course content."

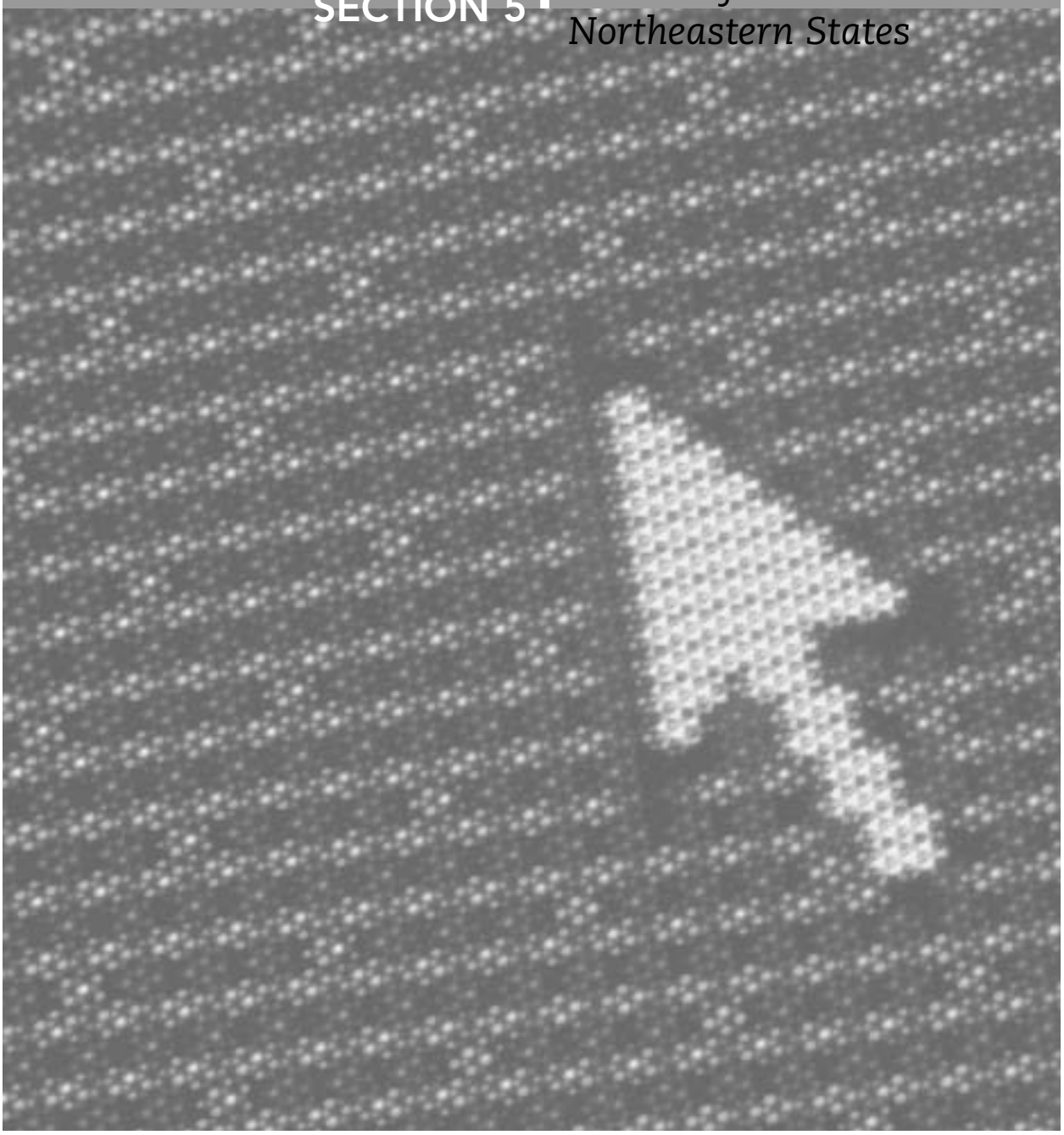
Accountability for Student Achievement

- None, in part because all courses are supplemental.

Equity and Access

- Providers of online courses must "provide courses which are designed … to engage students in learning activities based on various learning styles and … to accommodate individual differences, including student disabilities."

SECTION 5 | *State Profiles: Northeastern States*



5. NORTHEASTERN STATES

NORTHEASTERN STATES K–12 ONLINE ACTIVITY SNAPSHOT

Statewide Program	Cyberschools[72]	Legislation/Policy[73]
CONNECTICUT		
No	No	No online education policy activity, but a consortium of Regional Educational Service Centers is offering online courses, see below.
DELAWARE		
No	No	No online education policy activity, state is not profiled in this report.
MAINE		
No	No	No online education policy activity, state is not profiled in this report.
MARYLAND		
Yes. Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities is profiled in Section 2.11.	No. Students are required to be physically present in charter schools; therefore, there are no cyberschools in Maryland.	No. The state is not profiled in this report.
MASSACHUSETTS		
No	No	No. Many high schools use Virtual High School to provide online courses but no formal policy exists. State is not profiled in this report.
NEW HAMPSHIRE		
No	No	No. A short distance education policy is noted below; it is not extensive and the state is not profiled in this report.
NEW JERSEY		
No	No	No policy, but the state is funding ten online courses among ten schools through Title II-D discretionary funds. See below.
NEW YORK		
No	No. New York charter school law does not allow for creation of cyberschools.	No online education policy activity; state is not profiled in this report.
PENNSYLVANIA		
No	Yes. Extensive cyberschool activity largely governed by charter school law; see Section 4.1.	Yes

NORTHEASTERN STATES K–12 ONLINE ACTIVITY SNAPSHOT

Statewide Program	Cyberschools[72]	Legislation/Policy[73]
RHODE ISLAND		
No	No	No online education policy activity; state is not profiled in this report.
VERMONT		
No	No	Limited. Vermont statute allows the state board of education to develop guidelines for distance learning "technologies." Distance learning programs are allowed under provisions for "independent schools;" these provisions are not specific to online education.[74] State is not profiled in this report.

The northeastern states collectively have less online education policy activity than any other region of the country. Only Maryland has a statewide program, and only Pennsylvania has extensive cyberschool activity. Maryland's statewide program, Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities, is profiled in Section 2.11, and Pennsylvania is profiled in Section 4.1. The other states have little to no significant policy related to online education and are not profiled in this report. There are, however, several additional efforts worth noting:

- The Connecticut Alliance of Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) has formed a consortium to offer Virtual High School (VHS) courses at reduced rates to school districts statewide. In the Connecticut RESC Alliance model for statewide projects, one RESC takes the lead. For VHS, that RESC is the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) in Hartford, Connecticut. CREC is the liaison between the other RESCs and VHS as well as districts in its own region. CREC also monitors the budget and billing for the consortium. The consortium is able to offer discounted fees, membership sharing among local districts, peer support, and district support. Currently, 19 teachers in Connecticut are teaching VHS courses, allowing their high schools full membership in VHS. Twenty-three additional high schools are "student-only" schools; they purchase individual seats for their students in VHS courses.
- In Maryland, charter schools students must be "physically present on school premises for a period of time substantially similar to that which other public school students spend on school premises,"[75] thus cyber charter schools are not allowed.
- New Hampshire has a short policy on distance education[76] that formalizes local control of online education (and other forms of distance education). School boards are required to have policies to comply with statutes related to student privacy, to ensure that students take state assessments, and to ensure that courses meet academic requirements similar to those for face-to-face courses. The state requires that districts have policies relating to student-progress monitoring, grading, testing, and to student-teacher ratios; however there are no state requirements or guidelines to which these district policies must adhere.
- New Hampshire is also notable as the location of a charter school that blends online education and face-to-face instruction. The Great Bay eLearning Charter School has 85 students, and is governed by charter school law and the policies of the local school district.

- New Jersey has a pilot program in which the state is using Title II-D discretionary funds to allow nine schools to develop online courses through the Kids Officially OnLine (KOOL) grant program.[77]
- Vermont has some online programs operating as independent schools under Vermont statute for approved and recognized independent schools, but there is no tracking of these programs, and the statute has no provisions specific to online education.[78]

5.1 Pennsylvania State Profile[79]

Pennsylvania has several cyber charter schools and a law passed addressing concerns about cyber charter schools. Pennsylvania law requires that the home district of a student forward per-pupil funding allotments to the student's school of choice. In 2001, facing financial drain from cyber charter schools, school districts refused to pay student funds to the cyber charter schools and joined the Pennsylvania School Board Association in filing a lawsuit that challenged the legitimacy of the cyber charter schools. The school districts lost in court; but, in response to their concerns, Act 88 (2002)[80] was passed. The new law gave cyber charter schools legitimate standing. It designated the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) as the authorizer of any new cyber charter school and of any renewing charter of an existing cyberschool. The charter school application to PDE and an annual report from the school must explain how the school meets Pennsylvania's academic standards and assessment requirements. It also must explain what technical support will be given to students, how student work will be monitored, what type of communication will be held with students and parents, and how often that communication will take place. In many other areas—such as accreditation, quality assurance, and funding—cyber charter schools follow the same policies and mandates as brick-and-mortar charter schools.

Funding

- Local school districts provide funding for students enrolled in cyber charter schools based on a per-pupil cost determined by PDE.
- A cyber charter school must "satisfy requirements for compulsory attendance," but it is up to the cyber charter school to provide "a description of how the cyber charter school will define and monitor a student's school day."

Quality Assurance

- PDE requires all curricula used by school districts and public charter schools to be aligned with academic standards approved by the state board of education. Cyber charter schools must determine compliance with state curriculum standards.
- All charter schools are required to have 75 percent of staff meet state certification standards. There are no special provisions for online teachers.
- Teacher evaluations must be done by a supervisor holding a Principal Certificate or Letter of Eligibility with the PDE. There are no special provisions for online teachers.

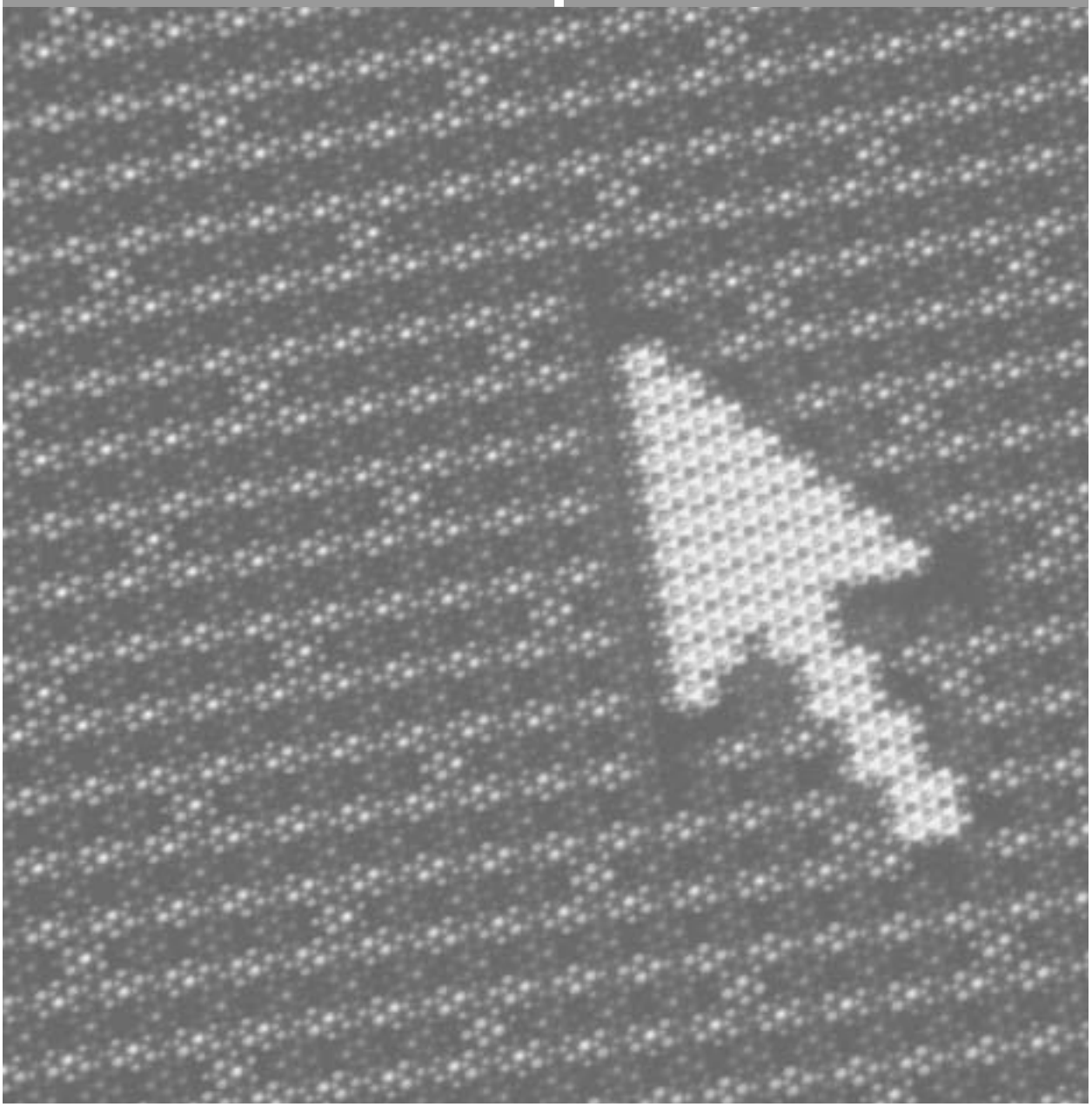
Accountability for Student Achievement

- Cyber charter school students are required to take the Pennsylvania state assessment.

Equity and Access

- Cyber charter schools must supply students with equipment—including computer, computer monitor, and printer—and provide or reimburse for all technology and services necessary for online delivery of curriculum.

SECTION 6 *State Profiles: Central States*



6. CENTRAL STATES

CENTRAL STATES K–12 ONLINE ACTIVITY SNAPSHOT

Statewide Program	Cyberschools[81]	Legislation/Policy[82]
ILLINOIS		
Yes. Illinois Virtual High School is profiled in Section 2.7.	No. There are no cyber charter schools.	No. There is no policy activity; the state is not profiled separately.
INDIANA		
No	No	No online education policy activity; the state is not profiled in this report.
IOWA		
Yes. Iowa Learning Online is profiled in Section 2.8.	No. There are no cyber charter schools.	No. There is no policy activity; the state is not profiled in this report.
KANSAS		
No	Yes	Yes. Kansas has extensive requirements for online programs; see Section 6.1.
MICHIGAN		
Yes. Michigan Virtual High School is profiled in Section 2.12.	No. There are no cyber charter schools.	Legislation is related to MVHS. There is no policy activity; the state is not profiled separately.
MINNESOTA		
No	Yes. Minnesota has many cyberschools.	Yes. Minnesota has extensive policies addressing its cyberschools; see Section 6.2 for the state profile.
MISSOURI		
No	No	No. No online education policy activity; state is not profiled in this report.
NEBRASKA		
No	No	No. No online education policy activity; state is not profiled in this report.
NORTH DAKOTA		
Yes. North Dakota Division of Independent Study is profiled in Section 2.15.	No. There are no cyber charter schools.	Legislation is related to the statewide program, the North Dakota Division of Independent Study.[83] There is no policy activity; the state is not profiled separately.
OHIO		
No	Yes	Yes. Ohio has extensive policy regulating its eCommunity Schools; see Section 6.3 for profile.

CENTRAL STATES K–12 ONLINE ACTIVITY SNAPSHOT

Statewide Program	Cyberschools[81]	Legislation/Policy[82]
SOUTH DAKOTA		
No	No. South Dakota has the Digital Dakota Network, which offers a few online courses, but is mostly video. See comments below.	No. The state is not profiled in this report.
WISCONSIN		
Yes. Wisconsin's statewide program is profiled in Section 2.20.	Yes	Yes. The state is profiled in Section 6.4.

The central states have a significant amount of online-education activity; Kansas, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin are profiled in this section. Several states have statewide programs (Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, and North Dakota); all are profiled in Section 2 of this report. Ohio has extensive cyber charter schools, and Wisconsin has both a statewide program and cyber charter schools. Online education policy is developing in Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Other items of interest:

- *South Dakota* has developed the Digital Dakota Network. The network primarily offers courses through video, but about 15 courses are offered online. The network is run by the department of education. There are no additional policies guiding online education in the state.
- *Ohio* passed significant new legislation in 2005, partly in response to the sense that cyber schools were growing too fast, with too few standards. The new legislation includes a moratorium on new cyber charter schools. See Section 6.3 for a profile on Ohio's policies.

6.1 Kansas State Profile

Kansas has published extensive guidance and rules for cyber charter schools and district online programs offering online courses to students who are not already generating FTE funding (e.g. home school students). Information and quotes in this section are based on documents available on the Kansas Department of Education (KSDE) Web site,[84] including an extensive explanation of *Online Program Requirements for Kansas Schools*. Requirements include site visits, personnel and program requirements, and expectations of students and parents. They are very specific, stating, for example, the type of personnel that must be included on the program staff, and requirements for those positions. Online programs must be registered with the state in order to receive student FTE funding; this registration and a required annual report mean that Kansas has one of the few online student and program tracking mechanisms in the country. The state also requires that a team of at least three people evaluate each online program to ensure that guidelines have been followed. This type of process, with a formal review of individual programs against established guidelines, is rare. The state's Web site lists more than 30 programs that have completed the registration requirements.[85] Specific requirements are detailed below.

Funding

Students enrolled in cyber charter schools and district online programs receive FTE funding, with the following requirements:

- Only students who reside in Kansas are eligible for FTE funding, out-of-state students must be funded by those states, districts, or parents.
- FTE can only be claimed for students who are enrolled in a program/school that is registered with KSDE and has completed the Online Program Requirements application.
- Programs claiming FTE funding have to count students through one of three census date options:
  1. September 20 and one day before.
  2. September 20 and one day after, but on or before October 4.
  3. One day before and one day after September 20, but on or before October 4, IF the student was not on-site, online, and/or offline on the official count day.
- Verifying "enrolled and attending" in a virtual course:
  - Three options to indicate that students were "enrolled and attending" on those days: on-site; online; or completing assignments offline.
  - To verify any of these options, the Academic Activity Log and Documentation of Virtual/Online Activity are required for each student.
- In tracking attendance, "documentation using paper logs, electronic logs, statistics within online e-Learning systems or other devises [sic] must be used to document regular engagement in the online program;" or "completion of unit tests, projects, online journals, discussion boards may also be used to provide documentation of student attendance and engagement in the online courses."

Quality Assurance

- The department of education accredits schools and districts. Districts with online programs must include the program in their "Quality Performance Accreditation" (QPA) plan; cyber charter schools must "meet QPA … regulations as a stand alone school."
- Teachers must be state-certified in the grade level in which they are teaching, and must, among other requirements:
  - Be available daily during the regular workweek with a 24-hour response time.
  - Develop/incorporate curriculum based on national/state/district standards.
  - Maintain and document attendance records and engagement in the online courses.
  - Provide feedback to students regarding their progress, to assist students in improving before final course grades are given.
  - Provide opportunities for students to participate in face-to-face activities, including but not limited to field trips, study sessions, open houses, conferences, end-of-year celebrations, parent resource centers, libraries, and/or labs.
  - Participate in training on e-Learning systems, other software/hardware used, and other best teaching practices.

- A communications coordinator "must be designated to ensure that ongoing and continuous communication occurs between schools, teachers, students, parents and other online program staff members," with specific tasks to include:
  - Ensure students/parents are provided a response within 24 hours.
  - Ensure ongoing feedback regarding student progress is provided.
  - Keep teachers informed of any students' e-mail or phone number changes.
  - Establish a back-up plan for handling communication if a teacher is not available.
  - Develop an Internet acceptable-use policy.
- A staff member must be designated as responsible for training, and must develop and provide an orientation session for parents and students, develop training for staff, and ensure staff attend all training/orientation sessions.
- Courses must be aligned to state and national standards.

Accountability for Student Achievement

- A testing facilitator must be designated who will, among other tasks, ensure that "students enrolled exclusively in an online program take all state and district assessments that students take for their grade/age level at all district schools." This person is also responsible for state and federal (e.g., adequate yearly progress [AYP] under No Child Left Behind [NCLB] Act) data reporting.
- "At the completion of all high school semester courses, students must take facilitated finals … no finals will be taken without a certified educator in their presence overseeing the finals. This adult may not be a parent or guardian of the student."
- A staff member must be designated to perform counselor-type duties; such as reviewing transcripts, recommending course schedules for the online program, and providing career counseling and postsecondary learning options.

Equity and Access

- "The district will have a policy in place for the provision of special education services."
- "A student intervention plan will be in place for online students, if necessary."
- "The online program/school will provide opportunities to learn for any students not proficient by NCLB goals and standards to include summer school, intervention classes, learning center courses, additional tutoring, etc."

6.2 Minnesota State Profile[86]

Minnesota has cyber charter schools and online education programs within districts. According to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), "more than a dozen school districts in Minnesota offer substantial online learning programs, and more than 30 percent of schools offer at least some courses online."[87] The Omnibus K–12 Education Act of 2003 (amended in 2005) sets forth a number of policies directly affecting online education. It also directs MDE to develop and maintain a list of approved online-learning providers and a list of courses and programs that it has reviewed and certified. This certification effort by MDE is the overarching state-level policy activity, covering most online learning programs except district-level programs that only offer online courses to students enrolled in the district's schools. The certification includes elements of quality assurance, access, and equity; although the certification generally requires only that the online programs have policies on these issues. As of July 2005, there were 15 online programs on the "approved" list.

Funding

- Effective FY 06, Minnesota provides general education revenue for online students.
- Public school students are funded through general education revenue:
  - For students taking courses from the district in which they are enrolled, funding is the same as if the students were taking all their courses in physical classrooms.
  - For students taking courses from outside their enrolling district, the online learning program receives 88 percent of one twelfth of an average daily membership (ADM) per completed semester course times $4,783, weighted based on grade level. The other 12 percent goes to the student's enrolling district and generates general education revenue. The enrolling district's funding will be reduced if the student's ADM exceeds 1.0. Funding is generated only for students who complete the online course.
- In all cases above, total ADM for a pupil must not exceed 1.0 FTE. Students are allowed to enroll in a maximum of 12 semester courses during a single school year, and must pay course fees for additional courses.
- Funding is tied to the program meeting all requirements of the law. As part of the online provider application, programs must sign a "Statement of Assurance" affirming that the provider is meeting all requirements and has required policies in place.

Quality Assurance

- "Courses and programs must be rigorous, aligned with state academic standards, and contribute to grade progressions in a single subject."
- The MDE certification process requires that providers list courses and their alignment with Minnesota state standards.
- Online courses must have "standards of instruction, curriculum, and assessment requirements equivalent to other [nononline] courses."

- The legislation "requires that a teacher with a Minnesota license be the person that assembles and delivers instruction to enrolled students receiving online learning from an enrolling district. The delivery of instruction occurs when the student interacts with the computer or the teacher and receives ongoing assistance and assessment of learning. The instruction may include curriculum developed by persons other than a teacher with a Minnesota license."
- The legislation "limits the teacher-to-student ratio for an online course or program to 1 to 40, unless the Commissioner grants a waiver."
- "Actual teacher contact time or other similar communication is an expected online learning component," and the online learning provider must "demonstrate expectations for actual teacher contact time or other student-to-teacher communication." The MDE requires that programs "describe what methods will be used for interactivity and assessment between students and teachers to comply with" the law.
- "Students under the age of 17 must have a parent's written consent" to take an online course.
- An *Online Learning Advisory Council* will be appointed by the Commissioner of Education for a three-year term to take up issues related to online learning and provide input to the Department in matters including, but not restricted to "quality assurance, teacher qualifications, program approval, special education, attendance, program design and requirements, and fair and equal access to programs."

Accountability for Student Achievement

- The student's enrolling district is responsible for ensuring students take the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments.

Equity and Access

- Districts must accept credit for courses from providers certified by the MDE. The law "allows an enrolling district to challenge the validity of a course offered by an online learning provider. The department must review such challenges."
- The legislation "allows an online learning student to have the same access to computer hardware and education software available in a school as all other students enrolled in the district," and "allows an online learning student to participate in the extracurricular activities of the enrolling district on the same basis as other enrolled students."
- The legislation "directs the online learning provider to assist students whose family qualifies for the education tax credit to acquire computer hardware and educational software for online learning purposes."
- Schools must have a policy "approved by its school board or board of directors for accepting and rejecting students' applications to its program."
- The legislation "allows a student with a disability to enroll in an online learning course if the student's individualized education plan team determines that online learning is appropriate education for the student."

- According to the MDE application form for providers: "Special education students must have equal access to online learning. Describe how the [online learning] provider will ensure that a student with a disability has equal access, assuming the student's individualized education program (IEP) team determines that online learning is appropriate education for the student, and how the needs of special education students will be met through the proposed online learning program."

6.3 Ohio State Profile[88]

As of July 2005, Ohio has 44 eCommunity schools serving almost 17,000 students. An eCommunity school is an Internet- or computer-based community school in which the enrolled students work primarily from their residences; a community school is a public school that operates independently of any school district but is under a contract with a sponsoring entity authorized by the Ohio State Board of Education (OSBE), similar to charter schools in other states. eCommunity schools are relatively new—the first opened its doors for the 2000–01 school year. Legislation adopted in April 2003 provided additional guidance for the operation of eCommunity schools. New legislation was enacted in 2005, due to a number of concerns including:

- Fast growth of some of the eCommunity schools coupled with a lack of standards for the schools. There are six statewide schools, including one that has more than 7,000 students.
- Low participation rates in state assessments and low test scores among students who do take the assessments.
- Enrollment of students in eCommunity schools has contributed to decreased enrollment in many public school districts.
- Funding issues, because funding follows the student. Districts are losing students, and the foundation funding associated with those students, to the eCommunity schools.

In response to these concerns, the 2005 legislation imposed a moratorium on new eCommunity schools until the general assembly adopts standards for the schools. Other aspects of the legislation are covered below.

Ohio is significant in that it has done two of the most comprehensive analyses of the cost of online education, looking specifically at the eCommunity schools. The study, by the Legislative Committee on Education Oversight, found that eCommunity schools spent $5,382 per student, compared to $7,452 per student for other community schools, and $8,437 per student for school districts. The study also concluded that these costs were "reasonable."[89]

Funding

- State public education FTE funding includes a base-cost amount for all students, with additional funding provided for higher cost students (e.g., those in special or vocational education).[90]
- Community schools, including eCommunity schools, receive state funds directly from the state; these funds have been transferred from school district allocations.
- eCommunity schools no longer are eligible to receive poverty-based funding.
- Beginning in fiscal year 2007, each eCommunity school shall spend a designated amount for pupil instruction or face a possible fine of up to 5 percent of state payments to the school.

Quality Assurance

- Each eCommunity school must have an "affiliation" with at least one "teacher of record" licensed by the State Board of Education. The "teacher of record is responsible for the overall academic development and achievement of a student and not merely the student's instruction in a single subject."
- No teacher of record can be responsible for more than 125 students.
- Each eCommunity school must provide a minimum of 920 hours of "learning opportunities" to students per school year. Only 10 hours in any 24-hour period can count toward this total.
- eCommunity schools can count student learning in terms of days instead of hours; in this case, a "day" must consist of at least five hours.

Accountability for Student Achievement

- eCommunity schools must administer the state-developed achievement tests and diagnostic assessments in the same manner as school districts, and must provide students a location within 50 miles of the student's residence at which to take the achievement tests and diagnostic assessments.
- Whenever an eCommunity school student fails to participate in the spring administration of a grade-level achievement test for two consecutive school years, the school must withdraw that student from enrollment unless the parent pays tuition equal to the state funds the school otherwise would receive for that student. eCommunity schools must report these students to the state, the state must maintain a list of these students, and no eCommunity school will receive funds for students appearing on this list.
- Beginning in 2006–07, all community schools with a designated rating of continuous improvement, academic watch, or academic emergency will be required to administer fall and spring assessments in mathematics and reading. Schools will need to meet gains established by the department and will be required to close if they fail to meet those gains for three consecutive years.

Equity and Access

- Each eCommunity school "must submit to its sponsor a plan for providing special education and related services to disabled students enrolled in the school."
- "Within 30 days after submission of the plan, the school's sponsor must certify to the Department of Education whether the plan is satisfactory and, if not, that the sponsor will promptly assist the school in developing an acceptable plan. The sponsor also must provide assurance to the Department that it will monitor implementation of the plan and take corrective action if necessary."
- Each child enrolled in an eCommunity school is entitled to a computer supplied by the school. If there is more than one child per household, the parent can request fewer computers than children enrolled in the school.
- eCommunity schools may not provide a stipend in lieu of a computer; they must provide an actual computer.

6.4 Wisconsin State Profile[91]

Wisconsin has a statewide program (Wisconsin Virtual School, see Section 2.20), several cyber charter schools, and district online programs. District online programs are locally controlled and are not tracked or regulated by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Charter schools in Wisconsin are operated by school districts and regional educational service agencies and are governed by charter school laws. They are "exempt from most state requirements" but "accountable in three major areas: (1) student performance (i.e., state assessments), (2) fiscal management, and (3) adherence to their contracts and the charter school law."[92] Wisconsin's open enrollment law allows students to attend any public school in the state by transferring funds between school districts. Local districts decide whether to accept credit for online course work.

DPI, in consultation with a committee comprised of educators from around the state, created a set of recommendations for online policies in early 2001. As of June 2005, no formal regulations or laws have been created based on the recommendations. In June 2005, State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster has invited a group of virtual education advisers to examine virtual schools and online learning in public PK–12 schools in Wisconsin, conduct public hearings, and report to the DPI. The advisers' report may include suggestions for changes in the DPI practice, administrative rule, and Wisconsin state statutes to ensure quality education for all PK–12 students.

Funding

- Wisconsin's open enrollment law allows parents and students to choose any public school in the state, including cyber charter schools.
- Through open enrollment funding, approximately $5,500 is paid by the resident district to the nonresident district in which the student attends school. The resident district in turn is allowed to count the student for aid and revenue limit purposes. The actual amount of aid that the resident district receives varies greatly from district to district ranging from $0 to more than $7,000 of equalization aid per student in the 2004–05 school year.
- For special-needs students, there are two steps to calculating payments. First, the resident district owes the nonresident district the regular education open enrollment transfer amount. Second, the nonresident district is allowed to charge only the actual additional special education costs above the regular education statewide open enrollment transfer amount that is required to implement the student's special education program and related services required by the student's individualized education program (IEP).
- There are no limits on students who were formerly home-schooled enrolling in cyber charter schools and receiving public education funding.

Quality Assurance

- Courses must align with state content standards.
- Teachers must be licensed by DPI and certified in the subject area in which they are teaching. A charter school license permits a teacher to teach more than one subject, however the instructor must be certified in the core subject area in which they are teaching.
- Charter schools must participate in the annual School Performance Report.

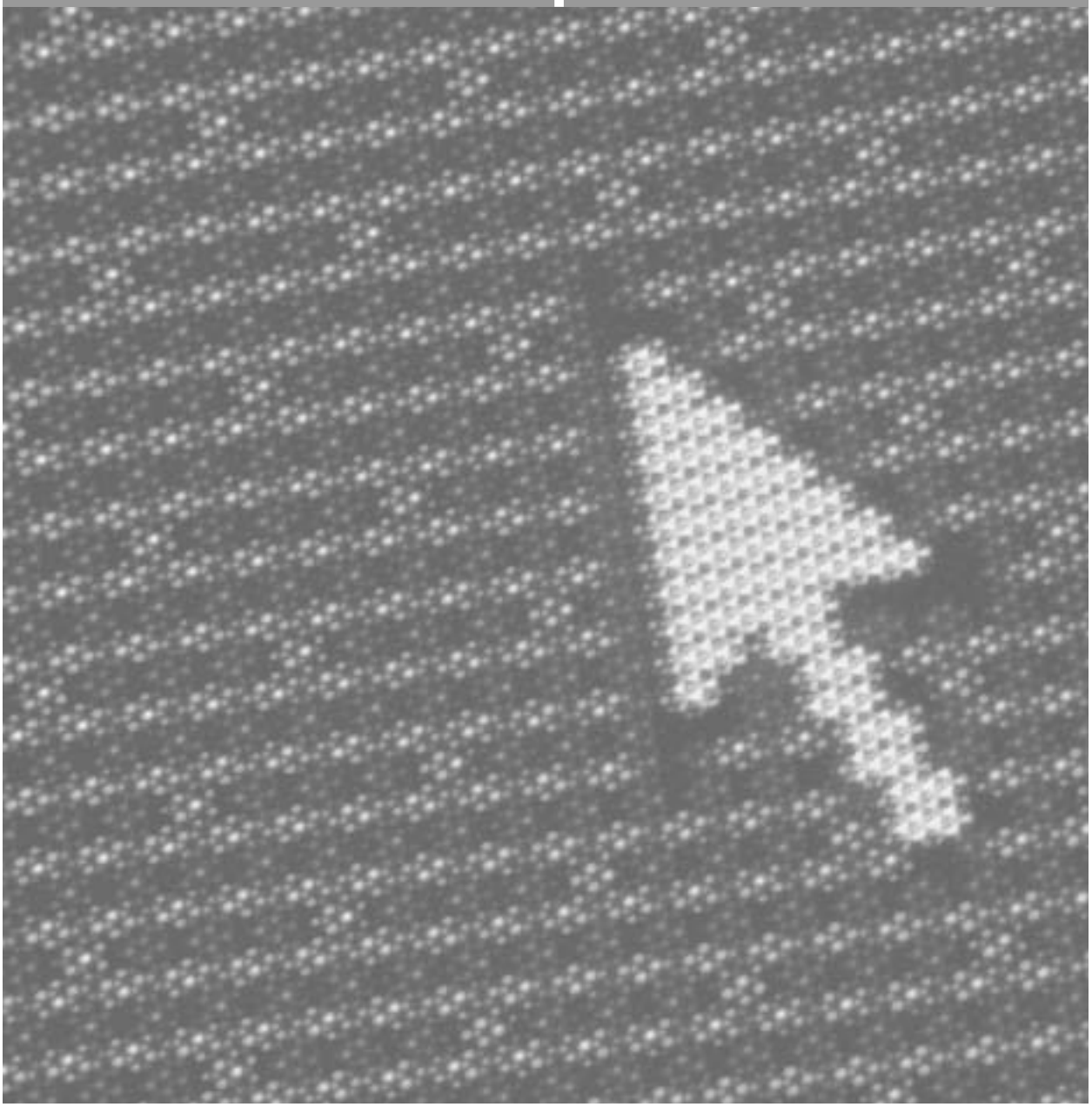
Accountability for Student Achievement

- Charter school students are required to take Wisconsin state assessments.
- In their petitions, charter schools must explain the methods that will be used to help students reach the educational goals spelled out in Wisconsin law and must define how student progress will be measured.

Equity and Access

- All charter schools are required to abide by all federal laws, including those regarding students with disabilities.
- A cyber charter school may not deny access to a student simply because the student needs special education.
- If a student has an IEP, the IEP is released to the enrolling cyberschool from the resident district as part of the open enrollment process.
- Charter schools that receive federal funds must hold an admission lottery if more students apply for admission than space allows.

SECTION 7 *State Profiles: Western States*



7. WESTERN STATES

WESTERN STATES K–12 ONLINE ACTIVITY SNAPSHOT

Statewide Program	Cyberschools[93]	Legislation/Policy[94]
ALASKA		
No	Yes. Alaska has a cyber charter school that was previously a statewide correspondence school; see below.	No. The state is not profiled in this report.
ARIZONA		
No	Yes	Yes. Arizona's Technology Assisted Project Based Instruction Programs is described in Section 7.1.
CALIFORNIA		
Yes. The University of California College Prep is profiled in Section 2.3.	Yes	Yes. California legislation created a pilot program for district supplemental online programs, profiled in Section 7.2.
COLORADO		
Yes. Colorado Online Learning is profiled in Section 2.4.	Yes. Colorado has extensive cyberschools.	Yes. Colorado has extensive cyberschools and legislation, profiled in Section 7.3.
HAWAII		
Yes. Information about Hawaii's E-School is provided below.	Yes	No. The state is not profiled in this report.
IDAHO		
Yes. Idaho Digital Learning Academy is profiled in Section 2.6.	Yes. Idaho has cyberschools governed by charter school law.	Yes. Idaho has cyberschools governed by charter school law and a statute governing "technological instruction" profiled in Section 7.4.
MONTANA		
No	No	Yes. Montana has limited policies for districts and online program providers; see below. The state is not profiled in this report.
NEVADA		
Yes. The Clark County School District Virtual High School is profiled in Section 2.14.	Yes. Nevada has cyber charter schools and district programs.	Yes. State policies governing distance education are profiled in Section 7.5.
NEW MEXICO		
No	Yes. New Mexico has cyber charter schools but has no policy governing them beyond standard charter school processes.	No. The state is not profiled in this report.

WESTERN STATES K–12 ONLINE ACTIVITY SNAPSHOT

Statewide Program	Cyberschools[93]	Legislation/Policy[94]
OKLAHOMA		
No	No	Yes. State code requires that local school boards have a policy for online courses and sets requirements for the policy. See Section 7.6.
OREGON		
No	Yes	No. Oregon does not yet have formal policies in place, but is going through an online learning planning process in 2005. See below. The state is not profiled in this report.
TEXAS		
No	No	Yes. Texas has extensive policy that is reviewed in Section 7.7.
UTAH		
Yes. The Electronic School, Utah's statewide program is profiled in Section 2.16.	No	No. There is no additional policy activity and the state is not profiled in this report.
WASHINGTON		
No	No	Yes. Washington passed online learning legislation in 2005, and this is reviewed in Section 7.8.
WYOMING		
No	Yes	Yes. Wyoming has a funding incentive program for distance education, but no further policies. See below. The state is not profiled in this report.

The western states include four with statewide programs *and* state policies (California, Colorado, Idaho, and Nevada), and four with extensive state policies but no statewide programs (Arizona, Oklahoma, Texas, and Washington). All eight of these states are profiled in this section. The statewide programs are profiled in Section 2 of this report.

Other notable state activities include:

- Wyoming law provides a funding incentive for distance learning programs of $500 per student above regular FTE funding, for students from districts other than the one providing the online program. Postsecondary institutions as well as K–12 districts are eligible to receive this funding.[95]
- In Alaska, the Alyeska Central School started providing correspondence courses in 1939 and recently added online courses to its offerings. The school had been operated by the State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. In 2004, it was taken over by the Yukon Koyukuk School District and is now operated as a charter school. It offers 15 online courses (and more than 200 traditional correspondence courses), has both full-time and part-time students, and is targeting at-risk students. The school receives FTE funding and has passed the charter school audit done by the department of education.

- Oregon has cyber charter schools, a consortium of districts providing online courses (Oregon Online), and has had extensive discussions about online learning at the state level that have not yet resulted in creation of online learning policy. The state has well-developed distance learning infrastructure, both Internet-based and video-based. In 2004, it held an ELearning Distance Education Summit, bringing together stakeholders from across the state. This group, coordinated by the state department of education, has had discussions and made policy recommendations concerning funding, teacher training, and other issues. The state is working with several online programs to develop a plan for a "cohesive" delivery system that is scheduled to be released in late 2005. Although with one exception Oregon does not yet have the formal policies in place to be profiled in this report, it is going through a well-thought-out process to develop these policies. The exception is a policy change that allows an instructor from an accredited postsecondary institution to teach an online course, even if the instructor is not Oregon-licensed.[96]

- Hawaii's E-School is operated out of the state department of education's Advanced Technology Research Branch. The school provides supplemental high school courses to 200 to 400 students enrolled in 30 to 48 public schools. All public high school students are able to take the courses, which are free of charge during the school year. Summer school courses charge $80 per half credit. Students are limited to two E-School courses per semester.

- Montana policy states that districts may receive or provide distance learning, and may receive supplemental distance learning instruction "without restriction." The state has an elaborate system that requires either the online teacher or a local facilitator to be state licensed, and requires facilitators to have received training in distance learning strategies and other areas. It also requires distance-learning providers to register with the state and provide program and course descriptions, including demonstrating that students have "ongoing contact" with the online teacher, and verifying the qualifications of teachers.[97] Montana also has the Montana Schools E-Learning Consortium, a group of districts working together to provide online learning opportunities.[98]

7.1 Arizona State Profile[99]

In 2003, Arizona passed legislation creating the "technology assisted project-based instruction" program, a pilot program that in 2005 consists of seven public schools and seven charter schools offering online courses. Schools participating in the program receive public funding and must provide an annual report describing the program and how student achievement will be measured. Schools must also survey students annually and include survey information in their reports. The state board of education is to compile the information from the pilot program reports and report to the legislature on the effectiveness and cost of the pilot program.

Funding

- The online schools receive standard FTE student funding.
- No student may generate greater than 1.0 FTE funding.
- For funding purposes, programs must maintain a daily student log describing the amount of time spent by each pupil on academic tasks.
- To be part of the program, students must have been previously enrolled in public school—with an exception for students who are in kindergarten and have a sibling in the program.

Quality Assurance

- Students must be surveyed to determine:
  - "Pupils' attitudes about delivery modalities employed by the school.
  - Changes in pupils' attitudes toward learning in general.
  - Changes in pupils' attitudes about their own ability to learn and about their own academic progress.
  - Pupils' attitudes about the school they attend."
- Parents must be surveyed to determine:
  - "Parents' and their children's attitudes about the delivery modalities employed by the school.
  - Changes in their children's attitudes about learning in general.
  - Changes in their children's attitudes about their ability to learn and about their academic progress.
  - Parents' and their children's attitudes about the school that the child attends."

Accountability for Student Achievement

- Students must participate in state assessments; if a student does not take the state assessment and the school has less than 95 percent participation in the assessments, the student may not continue in the online program.

Equity and Access

- No specific policies are in place.

7.2 California State Profile[100]

California has a large statewide online program, a handful of district-level online programs, and several cyber charter schools. The statewide program, the University of California College Prep (UCCP), is reviewed in Section 2.3. In addition to UCCP, there are online programs in school districts in Los Angeles, Orange County, Poway, and Clovis. Two informal statewide efforts to shape online education policy have taken place. UCCP has been involved in efforts to conceive of a larger statewide program serving more types of students than it does presently; it commissioned the California Virtual School Report to look into statewide program issues in 2002. The California Consortium of Virtual Education (CCOVE) is an organization of eight school districts working to provide quality online education for students statewide.

The online legislative and policy landscape in California is largely based on Assembly Bill (AB) 294,[101] passed in 2003. The law created a three-year online education "pilot program," allowing 40 supplemental online programs to collect funding based on average daily attendance (ADA) for up to two online courses, provided the student attends school for a minimum of 180 minutes per day. The pilot program also initiated the AB 294 work group, made up of representatives from the 11 different school districts that are part of the pilot. The group has developed the evaluation criteria being used and that will be reported to the state legislature each year.

California's cyber charter schools are governed under charter school laws that are not specific to online programs. Because California legislation does not specifically address these cyber charter schools (as of July 2005), this section focuses on AB 294. All quotes below are taken directly from the legislation unless otherwise noted.

Funding

- State education funding is based on average daily attendance (ADA), an FTE model based on seat time. Students of up to 40 online programs will be funded through ADA with some additional specifications. Through the AB294 pilot, students are not funded at more than 1.0 FTE, and receive the ADA of the district in which the student resides. School districts are not receiving new funding through the pilot program.
- Seat time is not directly addressed in the legislation, although it says online programs "shall maintain records to verify the time that a pupil spends online and related activities in which a pupil is involved. The school district shall also maintain records verifying the time the instructor was online."

Quality Assurance

- "The subject matter content shall be the same for the online course as for the traditional in-classroom course," and school districts that offer online courses must develop and implement policies for "evaluation of the online courses including a comparison with traditional in-classroom courses."
- The teacher of an online course "shall be online and accessible to the pupil on a daily basis to respond to pupil queries, assign tasks, and dispense information."
- The student-teacher ratio in online courses "shall be substantially equivalent to the ratio of teachers to pupils in traditional in-classroom study of the same subject matter."

- Teachers of online courses must "hold the appropriate subject matter credential" and "concurrently [teach] the same course…in a traditional in-classroom setting … or [have done so] within the immediately preceding two-year period."
- School districts that offer online courses must "develop and implement" policies for "the teacher selection process, "training for online teaching," and "evaluation procedures."
- "A school district may not have more than five schoolsites that operate an online course …. Each participating schoolsite may provide online courses to a total number of pupils not greater than 15 percent of the total enrollment of that schoolsite."
- Students cannot be assigned an online course, and students must receive written permission from a parent or guardian to take an online course.

Additional quality issues are addressed by requiring school districts that offer online courses to develop and implement policies for "test integrity … by proctor or other reliable methods," "a procedure for attaining informed consent from both the parent and pupil regarding course enrollment," "criteria for asynchronous learning including the type and frequency of the contact between pupil and teacher," and "pupil computer skills necessary to take an online course."

Programs must self-certify that they have these and other policies in place as part of their proposal to the California Department of Education, but the department is limited in its ability to confirm the existence or efficacy of these policies. The law calls for a review of "program and fiscal records" of participating schoolsites starting in July 2005; this review is expected to examine in part the policies called for in the law. Specifically, "the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall convene a working group to assess the pilot project … and the fiscal costs of offering instruction through online classroom programs."

Accountability for Student Achievement

- No measures are in place to directly address student achievement.

Equity and Access

School districts that offer online courses must develop and implement policies for:

- "Criteria regarding pupil priority for online courses."
- "Equity and access in terms of hardware or computer laboratories."
- "The provision of onsite support for online pupils."

7.3 Colorado State Profile[102]

Colorado has a statewide program (Colorado Online Learning, see Section 2.4), cyberschools with a collective enrollment of several thousand students, numerous district-level supplemental online programs, and statutes governing online learning. Since 2002, Colorado has had three state-level task forces or commissions report on online learning issues. Specific interest has focused on funding issues, particularly determining how much to pay for online learning and the impact on the state budget of formerly home-schooled students enrolling in cyberschools. Colorado is a local control state, giving school districts substantial responsibility for oversight of cyberschools. The state holds school districts accountable through a system of district accreditation. Significant tension exists in Colorado between Colorado's multidistrict cyberschools and its physical school districts because of competition over student enrollment (and the state per-pupil funding connected to that enrollment); state policymakers are wrestling with issues of choice, equity, and accountability. In 2005, a state law that would have provided additional funding for statewide supplemental online programming (Senate Bill 139), was passed by the state legislature but vetoed by the governor. Quotes in this section are taken from Colorado Statute 22-33-104.6.[103]

Funding

- Funding is based almost entirely on per-pupil revenue (PPR), an FTE funding model that sets a minimum level of funding, which is adjusted upward based on a number of factors.
- PPR funding is limited to 1.0 FTE per student. For students attending more than one school, PPR 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 CDE.
- Most cyberstudents are funded at the state minimum PPR level.
- Single-district cyberschools get funded at the district's regular PPR unless the student is taking more than 50 percent of courses online and at home, in which case the district receives the state minimum.
- No official policy exists for determining a seat-time equivalent for cyberstudents. Cyberschools must demonstrate that students are actively involved in online courses with determination made by CDE, which sometimes audits programs.
- State law prohibits cyberschools from obtaining PPR funds for students who were not enrolled in a public school in the previous school year, unless the students receive a special-needs exemption.
- Cyberschools may receive PPR funding only for students who reside in Colorado.

Quality Assurance

- Online learning programs are expected to adhere to state content standards; this adherence is determined through district oversight of online programs.
- All teachers in Colorado, including online teachers, must be licensed by the state. Evaluation is solely the responsibility of the school or program.

Accountability for Student Achievement

- The department of education requires that cyberstudents take the Colorado Student Assessment Program.
- Online programs must include "regular assessment … as to whether a child participating in the program is progressing on a regular basis toward assigned work."
- "Each child participating in an online program shall be evaluated, tested, and monitored at the same intervals as other students in the grade level in the child's school."
- Online programs must include a "process … to … notify any child who is not performing satisfactorily in the online program … and shall identify other educational alternatives available to such child."
- Individual programs have quality assurance policies and processes, but there are no state-level quality assurance policies.

Equity and Access

- No policies exist regarding equity and access.

7.4 Idaho State Profile[104]

Idaho has a statewide program, the Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA, see Section 2.6), and cyberschools that operate under charter school laws as interpreted by the Idaho Department of Education. In addition, educators at the state level believe that some districts are using online education to supplement physical classrooms, but these programs are not tracked by the state. The legislation creating and governing IDLA is covered in Section 2.6. The policies in this section are based on two laws: charter school law[105] and a statute addressing "technological instruction."[106] Quotes in this section, except where otherwise noted, are from charter school law.

Funding

- Charter schools, including cyberschools, are funded based on average daily attendance and a specific formula.
- Funding of students who were previously home schooled is not recognized as a concern within the charter school law. There is no limitation on FTE funding of these students.
- Districts offering distance-learning programs, they may count students' time in an online course for ADA funding purposes. They are not allowed to claim more ADA funding than the FTE of a regular term of attendance for a single student.

Quality Assurance

- No laws or regulations list specific requirements for cyberschool curriculum; however, all charter schools must meet state accreditation standards that include curriculum quality indicators. Charter schools are also required to have certified teachers, unless a waiver or limited-certification option is granted by the state board of education.

Accountability for Student Achievement

- A charter school must describe:
  - "The measurable student educational standards identified for use by the charter school. 'Student educational standards' … means the extent to which all students of the charter school demonstrate they have attained the skills and knowledge specified as goals in the school's educational program."
  - "The method by which student progress in meeting those student educational standards is to be measured."
  - "A provision by which students of the charter school will be tested with the same standardized tests as other Idaho public school students."

Equity and Access

- A charter school "shall not discriminate against any student on any basis prohibited by the federal or state constitutions or any federal, state or local law."
- No requirements exist in law or regulation regarding special-needs students in online programs; however, each charter is to describe how it intends to educate students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency.

Enabling Policies[107]

- For students in distance learning programs, "a school district may use documented contact hours … in determining the district's average daily attendance (ADA), whether the student is actually in the computer lab or distance learning center, or has logged on to the computer from another location."
- A district's technology instruction programs shall be subject to the following provisions:
  - "The certification requirements for … a distance-learning program may be met by having a properly certificated teacher available on a consultant tutorial basis. The consultant tutors will be available by telephone, fax, e-mail, or in person at the school site on a daily basis."
  - "Districts may offer individualized computer education or distance learning programs on a calendar which may differ from the rest of the district's instruction …."
  - "Nonalternative high school students may receive individualized computer education or distance learning instruction and credit through an alternative school site."

7.5 Nevada State Profile[108]

Nevada has cyber charter schools and district online programs. The state is unique in that 70 percent of its students are in one district, the Clark County School District, which covers 8,000 square miles and includes the Las Vegas valley. Because the program serves much of the state's student population, it is profiled in the statewide programs Section 2.14. The state also has policies governing distance education, which includes video and online delivery. The policies set forth programmatic and reporting requirements, have the state maintain a list of courses and programs that meet its requirements, allow the state to review or audit distance programs, and allow the state to revoke its approval of a distance education program that does not meet the requirements. Unless otherwise noted, the following information is taken from Nevada Revised Statutes, with quotes from the Nevada Department of Education Web page on distance learning.

Funding

- Students must get permission from their own school district before taking part in another school district's online program. This allows FTE funding to go to the school district offering the online program. If the student is taking online courses as part of the school day, the two districts agree to the apportionment of funds. The written agreement must be filed with the state to allow the student funding to go to the district providing the instruction. Similar provisions apply to charter schools and for agreements between districts and charter schools.

Quality Assurance

- Teachers of core academic courses must be licensed in the state of Nevada.
- The teacher must meet with or otherwise communicate with the pupil at least once each week during the course to discuss the pupil's progress.
- "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."
- Each online program must report the following to the state each year:
  - A program description including program expenditures.
  - The number of part-time and full-time students.
  - "If available, a description of the reasons why pupils enrolled in the program."
  - "A description of any disciplinary measures taken against pupils who were enrolled in the program."
  - "An analysis of the academic achievement and performance of the pupils who were enrolled in the program before and after the pupils participated in the program."

Accountability for Student Achievement

- Annual reports must include the number of students who drop out of the program.

Equity and Access

- No policies exist regarding equity and access.

7.6 Oklahoma State Profile[109]

Oklahoma has formal policy that requires that local school boards develop policies for online courses, and provides a few guidelines, which are detailed below. Quotes are taken directly from state code.

Quality Assurance

- Courses must be aligned with state standards.
- Teachers must be certified in the subject area in Oklahoma or another state.
- Teachers "shall be provided inservice training" in distance learning technology.
- The school board policy must address "monitoring of student progress, graded assignments, and testing."
- 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, and must establish a "contractual agreement" with the student's parents or legal guardians that "may address such issues as grading criteria, time allotted for course completion, student attendance, and the responsibility for course costs and equipment."
- Teachers do not have to be certified in Oklahoma; they may be certified in another state, or may be a faculty member at a postsecondary institution.

Accountability for Student Achievement

- Students in online courses must take the state assessments at "the school site at which the student is enrolled."
- Local school board must set a policy for the number of students each instructor will have in an asynchronous course; in a synchronous course the number of students per class and per day is the same as in face-to-face courses.

Equity and Access

- Students in an online program must be "regularly enrolled" in the school district of the online program; however, a district may make an exception 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.

7.7 Texas State Profile[110]

Texas authorizes all public schools to offer online courses to their students, primarily as state-funded supplemental programs, as long as normal attendance accounting requirements are met. Schools may offer students online courses created locally or acquired from any course provider the school desires if the course meets or exceeds the state's curriculum standards, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TAKS).

Texas is implementing a statewide pilot program to enact legislation passed in 2003, Senate Bill (SB) 1108. The goal of the Electronic Course Pilot[111] (eCP) is to gather data to develop and support recommendations that enable quality online learning and appropriate state funding for these courses. This pilot continues the exploration of online learning begun by earlier legislation, SB 975 (2001), which led to a two-year pilot (2001–03), called the Virtual Schools Pilot (VSP). VSP, managed by the Texas Education Agency (TEA—the state's department of education), examined state policies, requirements, and restrictions that impact districts and charter schools offering electronic courses. A parallel program, the Investigating Quality of Online Courses (IQ) Pilot, was implemented to establish and pilot quality guidelines for online courses. A TEA report on both pilot programs was submitted to the Legislature in December 2002 and served as a catalyst for the funding of the Electronic Course Pilot in SB 1108 to continue the exploration of online learning.

New legislation regarding the creation of a state virtual school network was introduced during the 2005 regular session of the Texas legislature. Though voted out of the House Public Education Committee, House Bill 1445 did not come before the entire House prior to the conclusion of the session, which ended in May. The Governor called a special 30-day session and this legislation was reintroduced as House Bill 17. No action was taken on HB 17 by the end of the special session, which focused on overhauling the state's education funding and tax systems. As of July 2005, a second 30-day special session is currently underway and the future of HB 17 is unclear.

The Electronic Course Pilot, codified in the Texas Education Code, Chapter 29.909 and based on SB 1108 (2003), continues a pilot program approach, but with provisions for the program to partially offset administration fees by allowing the Commissioner to charge school participation fees.

Funding

- The public school funding model is average daily attendance (ADA), a full-time equivalency model based on seat time. To receive Foundation School Program (FSP) state funding for distance learning programs, schools must abide by the ADA standard, meaning students must be physically present to be eligible for state funding under normal attendance accounting rules.
- Provisions through the eCP increase funding possibilities for schools participating in the pilot by allowing access to FSP funding for some students who otherwise would not generate state funding.
  - If a student registers and takes courses through the pilot, the school may then get FSP funding.

- Because the FSP funding model is the only mechanism for schools through the eCP to collect funding, all students participating in the eCP must be enrolled in a public school.
- All students participating in the eCP must enroll in a public school to be eligible to generate FSP funding and must take the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills statewide assessment test.

Quality Assurance

- According to TEA, online courses must meet the same standards as traditional courses. Courses must meet or exceed Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards in order for students to receive state credit for the courses. Schools may offer courses that do not meet TEKS for local credit. This decision is made at the local level.
- Teachers in online programs have the same certification requirements as teachers in the traditional classroom.

Accountability for Student Achievement

- Local school districts are held accountable through the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills proficiency test, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills curriculum standards, passing rate standards for student demographics, and percentage of student attendance that meets state standards.
- All students participating in the eCP must take the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, end-of-course exam, and AP exam (if applicable) at the regularly scheduled administrations.
- Electronic Course Pilot schools are required to physically proctor administration of end-of-course exams.
- The IQ Pilot (Investigating Quality of Online Courses) was created by TEA in 2001 to establish guidelines for evaluating online courses. The resulting evaluation instrument, the Quality of Service Guidelines for Online Courses Evaluation Matrix developed by the IQ project, is available to schools through TEA's Web site. Data from pilot evaluations of 51 courses were analyzed for reliability in a study conducted in 2005. Results of the study indicate the instrument is fundamentally valid and recommendations were made to further refine the instrument and evaluation process.

Equity and Access

- According to TEA, all students must be given the opportunity to participate in the eCP project.
- Under the eCP project requirements, schools may loan equipment to their students taking VSP courses but cannot transfer ownership of the equipment.

7.8 Washington State Profile

Washington has taken a unique approach to online education through the creation of the Washington Digital Learning Commons (DLC). The DLC, a nonprofit organization formed in 2002, provides online courses, digital resources, digital tools, and training to students, parents, and teachers. It is not a statewide program that registers students into courses, but provides digital resources to schools across the state.[112] Washington also passed a law in 2005 addressing online education; previously online learning had been governed through alternative learning experience policies. Information and quotes below are taken from the new law.[113] Interestingly, the introduction to the law states, "rules used by school districts to support some digital learning courses were adopted before these types of courses were created, so the rules are not well-suited to the funding and delivery of digital instruction." Many of the requirements listed below are to be detailed in rules to be developed by the superintendent of public instruction.

Funding

- "The superintendent of public instruction shall revise the definition of a full-time equivalent student to include students who receive instruction through digital programs." This allows online students to generate funding and the law sets requirements for programs that claim state funding.
- No student can generate more than 1.0 FTE.

Quality Assurance

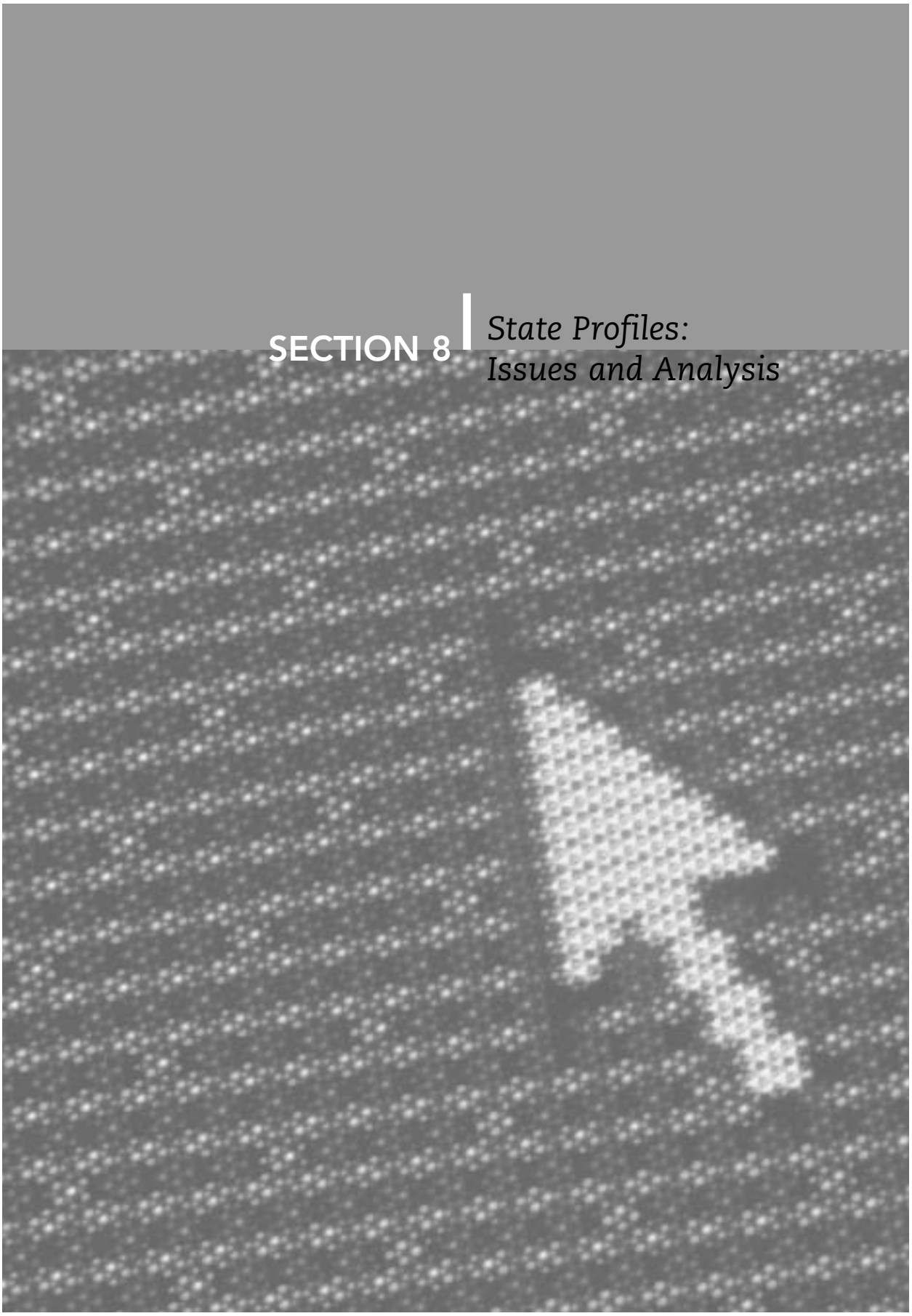
- Online programs must submit an annual report to the state that includes number of students enrolled, types of courses, and student-teacher ratios.
- "Certificated instructional staff" must provide "supervision, monitoring, assessment, and evaluation" of the program.
- Programs must use "reliable methods to verify a student is doing his or her own work."
- Each online student must have "a learning plan that includes a description of course objectives and information on the requirements a student must meet to successfully complete the program or courses."
- Students must have "direct personal contact" with an instructor weekly; "direct personal contact" may include "telephone, e-mail, instant messaging, interactive video communication, or other means of digital communication."
- Programs that are primarily online must be accredited through "the state accreditation program or through the regional accreditation program."

Accountability for Student Achievement

- Students must take state assessments and any assessments given by the district.

Equity and Access

- No provisions in the law address equity and access.



SECTION 8 | *State Profiles: Issues and Analysis*

8. STATE PROFILES: ISSUES ANALYSIS

This section describes state-level policies that apply to cyber charter schools and/or district programs, but are not primarily applied to statewide programs.

It is notable that there are only 16 states that have a significant level of policy activity. These are Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington. (Note that this list is not exactly the same as the tables in Sections 4–7 or below, because some states have a small, noncomprehensive section of code or policy related to online education.)

Another set of states—Illinois, Maryland, New York, and Tennessee—is notable because their laws prohibit cyber charter schools. South Carolina, while not prohibiting cyber charter schools specifically, does prohibit charter schools using home-based instruction. There is no further analysis of these laws and states in this report.

8.1 Funding

Summary: Funding for students in cyber charter schools or in district supplemental programs is typically tied to state full-time equivalent (FTE) funding. In states without specific online education policies, FTE funding to students in online courses is not differentiated from funding to students in physical traditional schools and charter schools. In some states with specific online-education policies, specific state requirements must be met for the online program to generate student FTE funding.

States fund public education through a version of the FTE model, which pays districts based on per-pupil enrollment, with adjustments for grade levels, size of districts, and other factors. In most states, cyberstudents are funded through the same mechanism, sometimes with adjustments or additional requirements that may apply to all charter schools, or just to cyber charter schools. Colorado, for example, funds cyberstudents at a slightly different rate than it funds students enrolled in physical schools. Kansas sets forth specific requirements for tracking enrollment and attendance in order for schools to receive funding. Minnesota tracks cyber charter schools and requires them to be certified by the state. Until a new law passed in 2005, Minnesota also had a specific appropriation for cyber charter school students in addition to special education funds. The $1.25 million appropriation (in FY 2005) paid for students who were not public school students in the year prior to their enrollment in a cyberschool. Starting with school year 2005–06, all online students are funded through general education funds.

District-level supplemental programs are generally funded by district appropriations, not directly by FTE funding. The districts receive state FTE funds for the students in such programs—not for the supplemental online courses but for the students' enrollment in a district physical school. Students in *district* online programs are usually not tracked differently than students taking all their courses in face-to-face classes. Two exceptions are: (1) for students who were not previously enrolled in the district and (2) for students taking online courses from a district other than their home district. Kansas requires tracking and reporting of online programs in order for those programs to receive FTE funding for students who were not previously enrolled in the school district. Nevada has a policy allowing funding to follow the student to another district's online course with the permission of the districts.

Many educators realize that applying traditional student counting methods to online programs can be problematic, but few states recognize this in policy. Kansas has provisions for documenting students' participation in online courses for funding purposes, and Florida and Minnesota provide funding based on course completions instead of traditional "seat time" measures.

Some states have specific requirements or limitations on funding students in online programs:

- Kansas specifies that funding is limited to students who reside in Kansas, and has mechanisms for counting students in online programs. This includes a way to show online attendance on the census days.
- Minnesota has a complex formula that provides most of the FTE funding to the online program, and some funding to the student's district of residence.
- California requires programs to track student and instructor time online.
- Some states (e.g., Colorado, before 2005, Minnesota) limit the number of state-funded students who were not formerly public school students. Other states, such as Wisconsin and Idaho, have no limits on funding students who are new to the public school system.
- Florida's Virtual Pilot Schools program funds two cyberschools through a separate appropriation, which is limited to 1,000 students. It only funds students who were in public schools the previous year.
- Some states (e.g., California, Idaho, Colorado) recognize that the availability of online courses means students can take more than a full load of courses, and these states limit funding to no more than 1.0 FTE.

There is little information available on what an online education program should cost. Ohio has done two of the most comprehensive analyses of the cost of online education, looking specifically at its eCommunity schools. The study, by the Legislative Committee on Education Oversight, found that eCommunity schools spent $5382 per student, compared to $7452 per student for other community schools, and $8437 per student for school districts. The study also concluded that these costs were "reasonable."[114]

8.2 Curriculum

Summary: States apply content standards that were created for physical school courses to online courses; they have not created curriculum standards specific to online courses.

No state has created detailed curriculum standards for online courses. All states require that online courses meet state content standards, in the same way that all courses in brick-and-mortar schools must meet them. These standards do not address issues specific to the online environment, either in content development or delivery.

Several states have provisions requiring online courses to be similar to face-to-face courses. Louisiana requires that "content, instruction and assessment" of online courses must be " comparable" in "rigor and breadth to a traditionally delivered course." Minnesota requires that online courses must be "rigorous" and must have standards of instruction "equivalent" to nononline courses. California law requires online courses to have content that is "the same"

as that of a brick-and-mortar school course. In the case of Minnesota, programs must list courses and how they align to standards; in California, there is no documentation in the law specifying how online courses are to be shown as similar to face-to-face courses.

Arkansas requires that the department of education approve online core courses or the institution offering the courses if the courses "originate" from an out of state institution. Two states—Louisiana and Alabama—require that the courses be from an accredited institution.

Kansas has an unusual requirement: Teacher must provide "opportunities for students to participate in some face-to-face activities … including (but not limited to) field trips, study sessions, additional orientation and training assistance, open houses, conferences, end-of-year celebrations, use of parent resource center, and teacher face-to-face instructions for labs."

8.3 Teacher Qualifications and Evaluation

Summary: Most states require that online teachers are state-certified at the same level as teachers in physical schools. Only two states, Kansas and Alabama, require professional development specific to teaching courses online. Some states, however, have specific requirements for the way online courses are taught (e.g., by setting standards for communication with students).

Most states require that online teachers meet state standards in terms of licensure or certification without any requirements tied to online training. Kansas and Alabama are the exceptions that require teachers to have completed professional development in online teaching. California requires that programs offering online courses have policies for teacher professional development requirements, but does not give any specific requirements for the policy. Other states have a variety of requirements concerning teacher contact with students, class sizes, and other issues. Kansas, for example, requires that teachers must be available on a daily basis during the regular workweek with a 24-hour turnaround during weekdays; Nevada requires that teachers communicate with students at least once per week.

Ohio has several provisions related to teachers and teaching:

- The teacher cannot be responsible for more than 125 students.
- eCommunity schools cannot rely solely on "on teachers employed by a person or company from which the e-school purchased its curriculum."
- Each student must have four, one-hour face-to-face sessions with a licensed teacher each year, although the teacher does not have to be the eCommunity school's teacher of record.
- Each eCommunity school must have an "affiliation" with at least one "teacher of record" licensed by the State Board of Education. The "teacher of record is responsible for the overall academic development and achievement of a student and not merely the student's instruction in a single subject."

California law has several stipulations related to teachers:

- "The teacher of an online course shall be online and accessible to the pupil on a daily basis to respond to pupil queries, assign tasks, and dispense information."
- The student-teacher ratio in online courses "shall be substantially equivalent to the ratio of teachers to pupils in traditional in-classroom study of the same subject matter."
- "A teacher may teach pupils in one or more online courses … only if the teacher concurrently teaches the same course to pupils in a traditional in-classroom setting in the providing school district or did so within the immediately preceding two-year period."

Minnesota limits the student-teacher ratio to 40:1, and its law states, "Actual teacher contact time or other similar communication is an expected online learning component." Arkansas also sets a student-teacher ratio limit for asynchronous courses at no more than 30 students per class and 150 students per day.[115] Both California and Minnesota require that online programs have policies in place to address teacher performance; California law provides that school districts offering online courses must "develop and implement" policies for teacher selection, training, and evaluation. Minnesota requires programs to describe the methods "for interactivity and assessment between students and teachers."

States' requirements that teachers be state-certified or licensed may be seen as a quality assurance factor, but it also limits one of the potential advantages of online courses—the ability of programs to use qualified, out-of-state teachers. Arkansas takes an interesting approach to this issue, requiring that only courses "originating in Arkansas" have an Arkansas-licensed teacher.

8.4 Accountability for Student Achievement

Summary: All states require online students to take part in state assessments, but no states have additional requirements for student outcomes in online programs.

States require that cyberstudents take part in state assessments, but the logistical challenges of getting cyberstudents to take tests given by physical schools are left to the local schools and districts. Florida's K–8 Virtual Pilot requires the pilot online schools to provide physical locations for testing. Ohio's eCommunity schools must provide testing at a suitable location within 50 miles of the student's residence. Charter school law in Idaho requires that the online school describe "the measurable student educational standards identified for use by the charter school … [and] the method by which student progress in meeting those student educational standards is to be measured … [and a] provision by which students of the charter school will be tested with the same standardized tests as other Idaho public school students." Wisconsin charter school law takes a similar approach.

8.5 Other Quality Assurance Issues

Summary: Many states have additional quality assurance mechanisms; these mechanisms include reporting, accreditation, and student time requirements.

Several states have extensive reporting requirements of online programs. In some cases, the requirements of cyber charter schools are the same as for all charter schools; in other cases, the requirements are just for online programs. Nevada, for example, requires that each online program annually provide a program description including expenditures, number of students, reasons why students enrolled in the program, and an analysis of student achievement before and after participation in the program. California law calls for a review of the online programs that are part of AB294; this review process is just starting as of July 2005. The Kansas department of education accredits schools and districts and requires that online programs be part of the accreditation review. Alabama has a similar accreditation requirement although the accreditation is done by any one of several accrediting bodies, not by the department of education. Minnesota and Alabama require that online programs or course providers be "registered" or "approved" by the state.

A few states have time requirements of online courses. Ohio requires each eCommunity school to provide a minimum of 920 hours of "learning opportunities" to students per school year; only 10 hours in any 24-hour period can count toward this total. Nevada law states that full-time programs "must include at least as many hours or minutes of instruction as would be provided under a program consisting of 180 days." Alabama online course credits are based on "clock hours"—a minimum of 140 "clock hours" for a one-credit course.

California and Alabama show concern about students taking un-proctored exams. California requires that online programs develop and implement policies for "test integrity … by proctor or other reliable methods." Arkansas states, "An adult facilitator must be present when student achievement assessments used to determine a student's final grade are administered."

Kansas has an unusual approach to quality assurance in that it requires online programs to have several personnel positions within each program. For example, each program must designate a communications coordinator "to ensure ongoing and continuous communication occurs between schools, teachers, students, parents, and other online program staff members" with specific tasks to include ensuring 24-hour response time to student and parent communications, and keeping teachers informed of students' e-mail or phone number changes. Each program also must designate a staff member responsible for training. He or she must develop and provide an orientation session for parents and students, develop training for staff, and ensure that staff members attend all training and orientation sessions.

8.6 Equity and Access

Summary: All states require online programs and cyberschools to comply with nondiscrimination laws, but these laws are not specific to online education. Some states have addressed digital divide inequities in access, but few states have addressed equity in terms of income or specific student needs.

All states require that online programs comply with federal nondiscrimination laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act. Some states (e.g., Ohio, Florida, Pennsylvania) require that cyberschools provide enrolled students with computers and Internet connectivity. In addition, some states' charter school laws, and some laws specific to online programs, require that all students must be given the opportunity to participate. California law requires that school districts with online programs develop and implement policies regarding prioritization of students for online courses. The same law also requires that districts have policies for equity and access in terms of access to hardware and for providing on-site support to online students, but the law does not specify details for those policies. Minnesota law allows cyberstudents access to hardware and software in the school district where they reside.

Minnesota law also states "special education students must have equal access to online learning." The state requires that online programs describe how they "will ensure that a student with a disability has equal access, assuming the student's individualized education program (IEP) team determines that online learning is appropriate education for the student, and how the needs of special education students will be met through the proposed online learning program." In Wisconsin, a cyber charter school may not deny access to a student who needs special education unless the school lacks space in the student's grade or program.

California and Minnesota require that students and parents be informed that the student will be taking an online course, and California ensures that students cannot be assigned an online course.

8.7 Enabling Policies

Summary: Policies governing online education are in some ways restrictive—perhaps properly so—and do not always reflect the opportunities that online programs provide to bring courses and teachers to students who might not otherwise have access to them, particularly across state lines. In some cases, the formal policies are a response to an initial "anything goes" approach and are a sensible attempt to bring quality control to online programs in the interest of long-term sustainability. In other cases, formal policies appear to be based on face-to-face education policies and do not take into account the unique challenges of online learning.

A few policies stand out as having been well thought out in terms of the opportunities that online programs present to students by transcending constraints of time and space. California's AB 294 is a law that enables the establishment and growth of supplemental online learning programs in a way that allows the state department of education to track these programs. One specific element of the law allows school districts to contract with one another to offer online courses. Nevada has a similar provision. Another part of Nevada's policy states, "A program of distance education may include … an opportunity for pupils to participate in the program …. For a shorter school day or a longer school day than that regularly provided for [and] during any part of the calendar year."

Kansas cyber charter school policies allow schools to substitute student work for the online equivalent of seat time. It is one of the few states, along with Florida, that has a formal policy of tracking student *achievement* for enrollment and funding purposes instead of using electronic logs, time tracking, or other equivalents of seat time. Many states maintain a policy of counting students' "seat time" for funding purposes.

In a limited exception to the general requirement that teachers be state certified, Alabama and Oklahoma allow faculty of post-secondary institutions to teach online courses without state certification. Oklahoma also allows teachers of online courses to be certified in another state. (Interestingly, Alabama also has a *restrictive* provision requiring that a student take an online course during a regularly scheduled class period.)

Online education policies are a mix of restrictive and enabling, appropriate and not. As online education policies evolve, states should look to regulate online programs in ways that are specific and appropriate to online education, and not continue to regulate online programs with policies created for physical schools. Policies will have to evolve if students are to benefit from the full potential of online learning.

SECTION 9 | *Summary and Implications*

9. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

About 50 percent of all states have one or both of:

- *A statewide online learning program with developed policies and practices.*
- *State-level policies that govern online learning programs across the state.*

States that have programs and/or policies regarding online learning fall into three categories: (1) states with a statewide online learning program and state-level policy governing online learning programs, (2) states with a statewide online learning program but no additional state-level policy, and (3) states with state-level policy but no statewide online learning program.

Generally, the states with statewide online learning programs and state-level policy have the most policy activity; however, some of the states without statewide online learning programs have extensive and well-thought-out policies. Examples include Kansas, Texas, Washington, Ohio, and Minnesota. In addition, some statewide online learning programs have developed, or are governed by, extensive policies that can serve as examples for state-level policies. The law creating the Idaho Digital Learning Academy is one example; other examples are the set of processes and internal policies concerning quality assurance created by Colorado Online Learning and the Florida Virtual School.

9.1 Summary Tables

STATES WITH A STATEWIDE ONLINE LEARNING PROGRAM AND STATE-LEVEL POLICY

State	Statewide Program	Legislation/Policy[116]
Alabama	Alabama Online High School	Education code has several provisions specific to online courses and programs.
Arkansas	Arkansas Virtual High School	The Arkansas Department of Education published rules governing distance learning in 2003.
California	University of California College Prep	Legislation creates a pilot of supplemental online programs offered by school districts and sets requirements for the online programs.
Colorado	Colorado Online Learning	Legislation sets a lower level of FTE funding for cyber charter school students and sets requirements for cyberschools.
Florida	Florida Virtual School	Legislation creates a pilot program of two K–8 cyberschools and prohibits schools from denying access to Florida Virtual School.
Louisiana	Louisiana Virtual School	The Louisiana Department of Education published state standards for distance education in 2000.
Maryland	Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities	State prohibits cyber charter schools.
Nevada	Clark County Virtual High School	Nevada statutes govern distance learning and require the Nevada Department of Education to maintain a list of providers that meet its requirements.

STATES WITH STATEWIDE ONLINE LEARNING PROGRAM BUT NO STATE-LEVEL POLICY

State	Statewide Program
Georgia	Georgia Virtual School[117]
Hawaii	E-School[118]
Idaho	Idaho Digital Learning Academy
Illinois	Illinois Virtual High School
Iowa	Iowa Learning Online
Kentucky	Kentucky Virtual High School
Michigan	Michigan Virtual High School
Mississippi	Mississippi Online Learning Institute
North Dakota	North Dakota Division of Independent Study
Utah	Electronic High School
Virginia	Virtual Advanced Placement School
West Virginia	West Virginia Virtual School
Wisconsin	Wisconsin Virtual School

STATES WITH STATE-LEVEL POLICY BUT NO STATEWIDE PROGRAM

State	State-Level Policy
Arizona	Legislation created Technology Assisted Project Based Instruction Programs
Indiana	State prohibits cyber charter schools.
Kansas	State has extensive requirements for cyber charter schools and district programs with out-of-district students.
Minnesota	State has extensive policies creating requirements for cyber charter schools.
Montana	State requires distance-learning providers to register with the state.
New York	State prohibits cyber charter schools.
Ohio	State has extensive policies creating requirements for eCommunity schools, which are cyber charter schools, and in 2005 passed a moratorium on new eCommunity schools.
Oklahoma	State code requires that local school boards have a policy for online courses and sets requirements for the policy.
Pennsylvania	State has extensive cyberschool activity governed by cyber charter school law.
South Carolina	State prohibits home-based instruction for charter schools.
Tennessee	State prohibits cyber charter schools.
Texas	State has an online program, the Electronic Course Pilot, created by legislation and tracked by the state education agency.
Washington	State passed a law in 2005 creating requirements for online programs.

Well-developed policies exist in a few states and can serve as examples for other states.

There are now enough states with comprehensive policies governing online learning programs to provide examples to other states that are just beginning online policy development. No single state has the ideal set of policies—and it is impossible at this early stage to know what the ideal policies would be. But states now starting to look into policy development should begin by reviewing the existing policies in other states.

Policymakers are often unprepared to develop online learning policy because they lack sufficient knowledge and understanding of the issues.

Online education is new and, in some states, remains largely unrecognized by the legislators and policymakers who are tasked with creating the appropriate laws and regulations to govern online programs. Some states are successfully addressing this challenge by working collaboratively with online education programs to develop suitable regulations, sometimes informally and sometimes through formal working groups and stakeholder collaborations. It is in the best interests of students, educators, policymakers, and the online programs to continue these collaborations where they exist, and begin them where they do not.

Online education issues continue to evolve; policymakers should consider including adaptive-management components.

Some of the most challenging issues in public education are just beginning to be addressed in online education, and policies in these areas are often particularly lacking. Examples include accessibility for students with disabilities, and equity to ensure that online education is available to all public school students.

Basic research is needed to inform online education policies.

There are two main areas in which not enough basic information is known: (1) the effectiveness of online education and (2) the costs of online education. In the first category, although there is a body of evidence that shows no significant difference between online and face-to-face education,[119] there are so many differences between the types of online education that additional research is needed to better understand what works in teaching and learning online. In addition, there are myriad specific questions to be addressed: How are at-risk students best served in the online environment? What factors improve student pass rates? How can students with disabilities be reached most effectively? Some of the larger programs have done studies of their programs that provide data in response to these questions, but few studies have been done across programs.

In the second category, because so many education policy issues revolve around costs, additional research into the cost of online programs is necessary. There have been few studies done on the cost of online education, and of those, many have been based on studies of programs that were developed with a set budget, therefore skewing the cost analysis. In other words, if a cyber charter school receives state funding of $5,000 per student, it is highly likely that an analysis of its costs would reveal that it costs $5,000 per student to deliver online learning. Cost analyses that start with a blank slate are needed. Individual programs have done costs analyses of some of their operations, which should serve as a starting point for further study.

"Research and policymaking requires common measures that don't yet exist" also relates to cost analysis because simple costs analyses currently do not have common measures to compare programs. A simple comparison of costs of programs, or cost per student, is misleading.

Research and policymaking requires common measures that do not exist yet.

It is impossible to compare programs across states, and often impossible to compare programs within states, because there are no common measures. Although many programs track and report drop rates, completion rates, and pass rates, these measures do not have a common definition across programs so cannot be compared. For example, is a course completion rate based on the number of students who start the course, or the number who are still in a course on a census date? And how are self-paced course completion rates calculated? The development of common standards would benefit research and policymaking.

Programs would benefit from sharing of best practices.

Leading programs often have similar approaches to issues such as student support, serving at-risk students, and professional development for teachers. There is informal sharing of ideas through the North American Council for Online Learning, the annual Virtual School Symposium, and other efforts, and the willingness and effort to share information among programs is commendable. However, these efforts have not yet been formalized, and to date there have been no attempts to document best practices across programs in many areas. Quality indicators and reviews have focused on two areas: course content and technology. While these two areas are undeniably important, other subjects have received less attention.

A few states now have the reporting requirements in place that will yield useful data for study in the next several years.

California, Kansas, Florida, and Minnesota are among the states that now have online program reporting requirements detailed enough to produce a body of knowledge in the next few years that will be very useful towards informing the next generation of online education policy. Continuing research into these programs, and the development of policies in other states, will be an iterative process that can produce advances in online learning policy and practice fairly quickly, if these states continue to evolve their policies, and if other states adapt and build on existing policies. If other states start from scratch and rehash the issues, advances will take much longer.

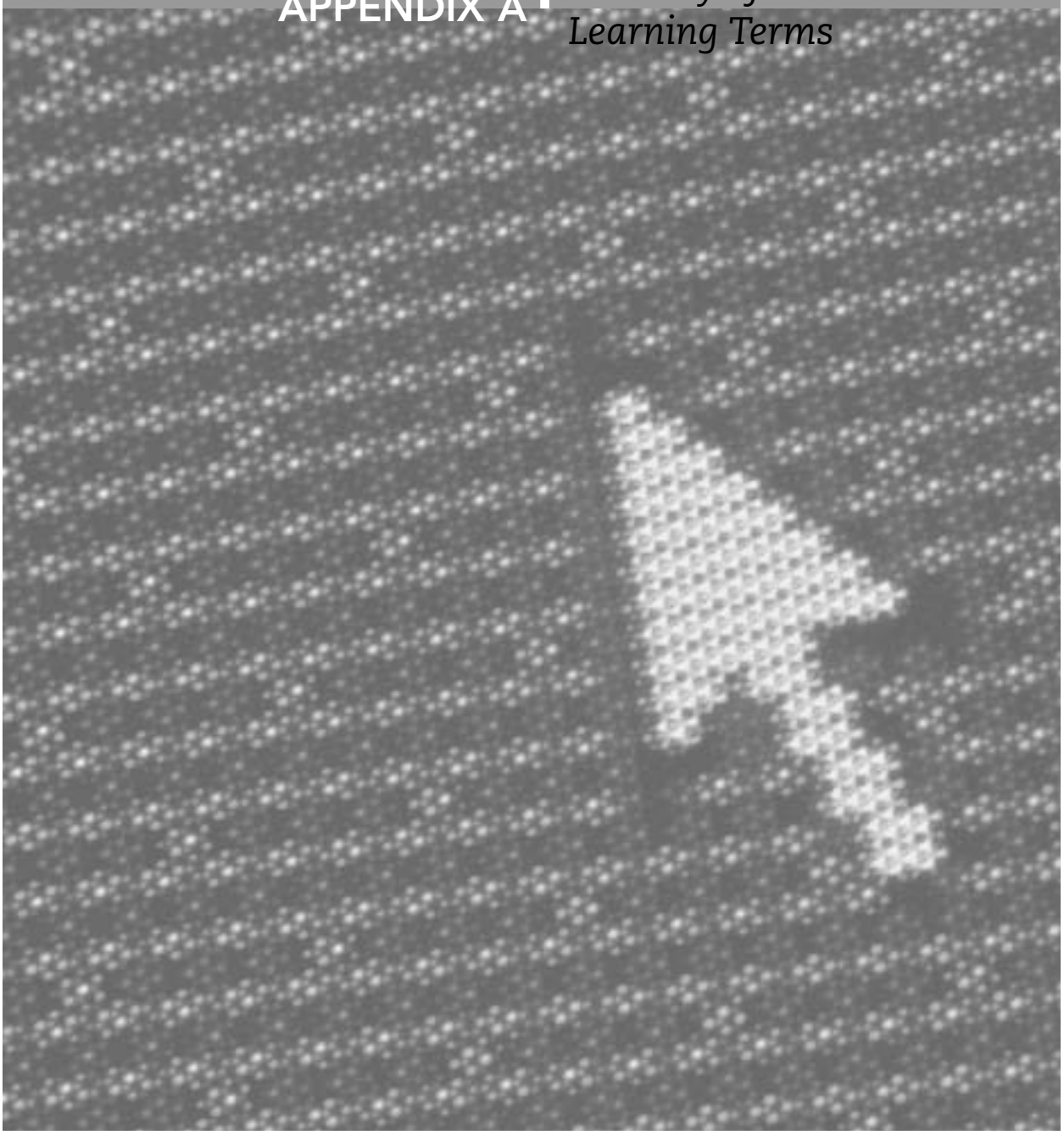
Conclusion

In 2004, based on a review of 11 states, *Keeping Pace* reported that the long-term sustainability of online education is threatened by the ad hoc manner in which online learning policy is developing.

The research in 2005 extending to all 50 states gives cause for both concern and optimism. The concern is based on the status of many states that have few or no online education policies despite the growth of online programs; or alternatively, have restrictive policies based largely on outmoded ways of thinking about education. The optimism, however, is based on the states and programs that are leading the way in determining how online learning should grow and develop and are putting the effort into creating appropriate policies to guide this growth.

The future of education will almost certainly include online courses and virtual schools. The benefits of online courses are clear, both in terms of providing students with courses that they otherwise would not have access to, and also in terms of helping students develop skills critical for success in the future, such as 21st century information and communications technology skills. But will these benefits be equitable and accessible, in keeping with principles of public education? And will online education be integrated in a sustainable way into existing education systems? In order for the benefits of online education to be fully realized, online programs must be sustainable, and online learning policy needs to be further developed to ensure this sustainability. This report begins the dialogue—describing the variety of statewide online education programs that currently exist, and the policies that have been developed to foster and sustain those programs. It also highlights where policies are lacking or are restrictive to the development of online education. To be most effective, this report must be seen as the beginning of a process, not an end product to be read and shelved. State policymakers, school administrators, and community members must now begin the work of building on the knowledge gained from this report, to develop and disseminate effective policies that foster, support, and enhance online learning opportunities for all students, and to develop new and existing models of sustainable online programs that develop 21st century citizens with the capacity for lifelong learning and productivity.

APPENDIX A | *Glossary of Online Learning Terms*



APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF ONLINE LEARNING TERMS[120]

Accreditation: The process used in U.S. education to "ensure that schools, postsecondary institutions, and other education providers meet, and maintain, minimum standards of quality and integrity regarding academics, administration, and related services." (U.S. Network for Education Information, n.d.)

Americans with Disabilities Act: The Americans with Disabilities Act gives "civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, State and local government services, and telecommunications." (U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, 2002)

Asynchronous communication: Communication in which the participants interact in varied time spaces (e.g., e-mail, threaded discussions, homework, message boards).

Average daily attendance (ADA): ADA is "(i) the aggregate number of days of attendance of all students during a school year; divided by (ii) the number of days school is in session during such school year." (U.S. Department of Education, 2002)

Average daily membership (ADM): ADM is the total days of attendance and absence divided by the number of days taught. The ADM reflects the number of students the district must be prepared to serve. (Arkansas Department of Education, n.d.)

Course management system (CMS): The technology platform through which online courses are offered. A CMS includes software for the creation and editing of course content, communication tools, assessment tools, and other features designed to enhance access and ease of use.

Cyber charter school: Similar to a brick-and-mortar charter school but instruction is primarily delivered over the Internet.

Cyberschool (virtual school): An online learning program in which students enroll and earn credit towards academic advancement (or graduation) based on successful completion of the courses (or other designated learning opportunities) provided by the school. (See online learning program; see supplemental online program.)

Distance learning: Educational activity in which the participants are separated by space (e.g., correspondence courses, online learning, videoconferencing).

Dual enrollment: A program that allows high school students to simultaneously earn college or vocational credit toward a postsecondary diploma, certificate, or degree at a state public institution that also will count as credit toward a high school diploma.

E-learning: Instruction and content delivered via digital technologies, such as online or CD-ROM, or learning experiences that involve the use of computers. E-learning often (incorrectly) is used as another term for *online learning*.

Enrollment: A single student being counted by a school towards the school's share of state FTE funds—based on the student's attending the school and taking courses. (Enrollment is distinguished from registration, which in this report means that a student signs up to take a course from a supplemental online program.)

Full-time equivalent (FTE): The number of students at a given institution, if every student were full-time. "Full-time" status is determined by the institution according to the total number of credit hours a student takes.

Multidistrict online program: Program administered by multiple districts, often in a formal consortium. Not to be confused with a program that is administered by a single district even though it accepts students from multiple districts.

Online learning: Education in which instruction and content are delivered primarily via the Internet. Online learning is a form of distance learning.

Online learning program: An educational organization that develops and offers online instruction and content. An online learning program may be a cyberschool, or it may provide supplementary learning opportunities for students enrolled in physical schools or cyberschools.

Per-pupil revenue (PPR): An FTE funding model that sets a minimum level of funding, which is adjusted upward based on a number of factors (primarily district size).

Registration: A single student signing up to take a course in an online program. (Registration is distinguished from enrollment, which in this report means that a student is counted by a school towards the school's share of state FTE funds.)

Seat time: The actual physical presence of a student in a brick-and-mortar school setting.

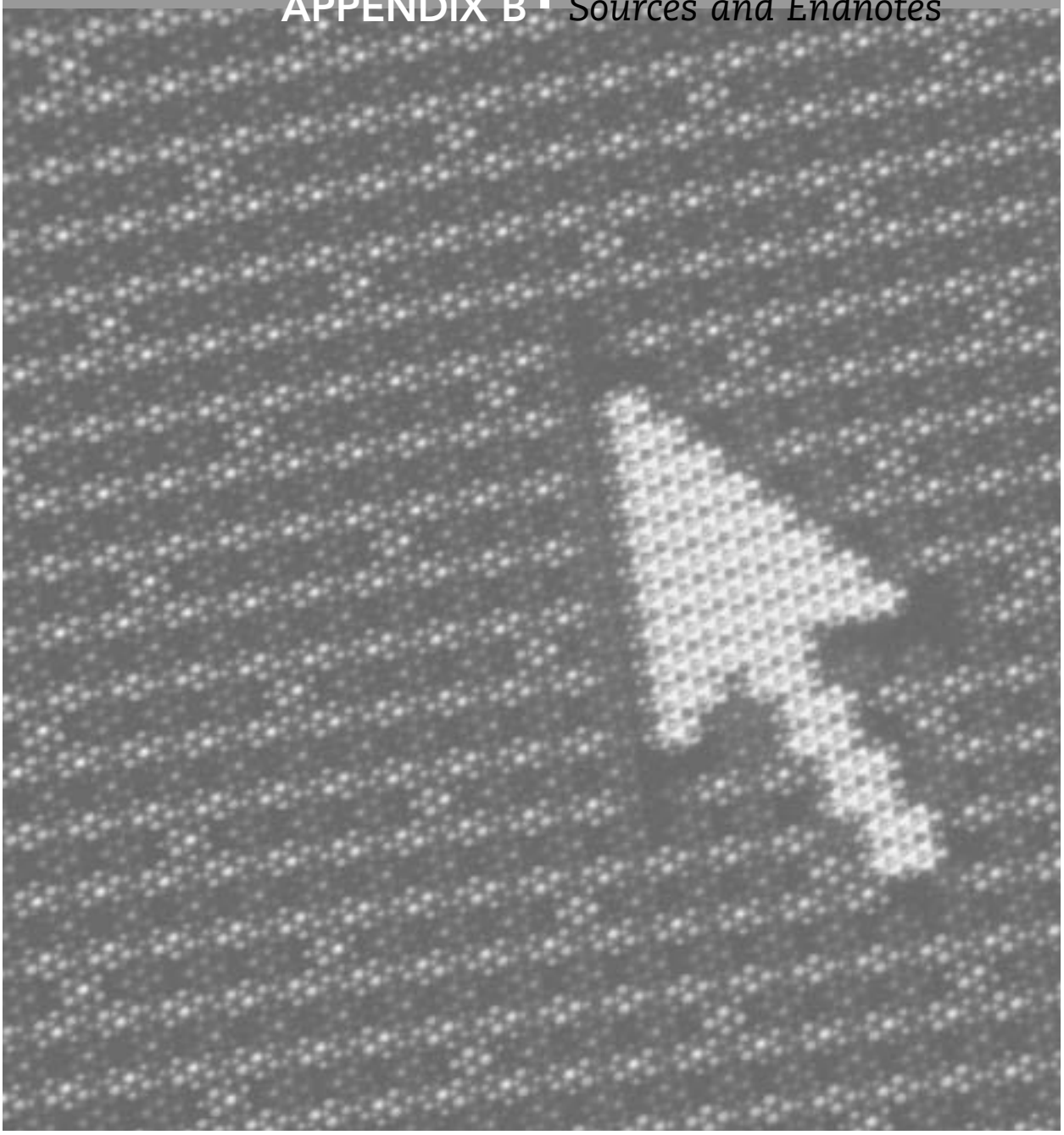
Single-district online program: Program administered by a single district and provided to students within that district.

Supplemental online program: An online learning program that offers courses or other learning opportunities to students who are otherwise enrolled in physical schools or cyberschools; credit for successful completion of these learning opportunities is awarded by the physical school or cyberschool in which each student is enrolled.

Synchronous communication: Communication in which the participants interact in the same time space (e.g., telephone calls, face-to-face meetings, physical classrooms, chat rooms, videoconferencing).

Virtual school (cyberschool): An online learning program in which students enroll and earn credit towards academic advancement (or graduation) based on successful completion of the courses (or other designated learning opportunities) provided by the school.

APPENDIX B | *Sources and Endnotes*



APPENDIX B: SOURCES AND ENDNOTES

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[3] National Association of State Boards of Education. (2001). *Any Time, Any Place, Any Path, Any Pace: Taking the Lead on e-Learning Policy*. Retrieved June 26, 2005, from http://www.nasbe.org/Organization_Information/e_learning.pdf

[4] *Keeping Pace with K–12 Online Learning: A Snapshot of State-Level Policy and Practice*, May 2004, guided and funded by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, Colorado Department of Education, Illinois Virtual High School, and Wisconsin Virtual School.

[5] Education Week Technology Counts 2005. *Electronic Transfer: Moving Technology Dollars in New Directions*. Education Week Research Center, May 5, 2005.

[6] *Southern Regional Education Board Report on State Virtual Schools*. Retrieved June 26, 2005, from http://www.sreb.org/programs/EdTech/onlinelearning/docs/ReportOnStateVirtualSchools.pdf

[7] See, for example, the reviews of courses and course management software available at the Web site of the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (www.edutools.info); the National Education Association's *Guide to Online High School Courses*, (www.nea.org/technology/onlinecourseguide.html); the Center on Education Policy's *Preserving Principles of Public Education in an OnlineWorld*, (www.ctredpol.org/democracypublicschools); and the Southern Regional Education Board's *Essential Principles of Quality Checklist*, (www.sreb.org/programs/EdTech/pubs/PDF/Principals_of_Quality_Checklist.pdf)

[8] Throughout this report, the term "registration" is used to describe a student signing up to take a course and participating in that course. Registration is distinguished from enrollment, which in this report means that a student is counted by a school towards the school's share of state full-time equivalent (FTE) funds.

[9] In addition to the research done for this report, two sources were used in determining the list of statewide programs: Education Week's Technology Counts 2005 report (*Electronic Transfer: Moving Technology Dollars in New Directions*. Education Week Research Center, May 5, 2005), and the Southern Regional Education Board's Report on State Virtual Schools.

[10] This information comes from a phone interview with Cheryl Sundberg, manager, Alabama Online High School.

[11] Unless otherwise noted, information is from a survey returned by Sandy O'Reilly, manager, Arkansas Virtual High School. Direct quotes are taken from the Arkansas Virtual High School Assurance Policies. Retrieved June 9, 2005, from http://arkansashigh.k12.ar.us/assurances/assurances.pdf

[12] Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing Distance Learning. Retrieved June 30, 2005, from http://arkedu.state.ar.us/rules/pdf/current_rules/ade_159_distance_learning.pdf

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[14] An explanation of the standards is available at http://www.montereyinstitute.org

[15] Unless otherwise noted, information comes from a survey returned by Dr. Tim Snyder, executive director of Colorado Online Learning.

[16] Colorado Online Learning's Quality Assurance Program. Retrieved May 29, 2005, from http://www.col.k12.co.us/aboutus/qap.html

[17] Six courses were developed by instructors, who retain copyright to the courses. Colorado Online Learning pays standard teaching fees for these courses and does not pay a course licensing fee.

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[20] This and other direct quotes taken from Florida Education Code, 1102.37, retrieved May 30, 2005, from http://www.flsenate.gov/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=Ch1002/Sec37.HTM&StatuteYear=2004&p=1

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[24] Unless otherwise noted, information is based on a survey response by Matthew Wicks, director, Illinois Virtual High School.

[25] Motion passed by the Illinois State Board of Education, explained on the *IVHS* Web site, retrieved May 28, 2005, from http://www.ivhs.org/index.learn?action=other

[26] Unless otherwise noted, information is from a survey filled out by Gwen Wallace Nagel, assistant director, Iowa Learning Online.

[27] Information is from the KVHS Web site (www.kvhs.org) and from the Southern Regional Education Board's *Report on State Virtual Schools*, June 2005.

[28] Kentucky Board of Education administrative regulations 158.622. Retrieved July 19, 2005, from http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/KRS/158-00/622.PDF

[29] Unless otherwise noted, information is from a survey filled out by Ken Bradford, Educational technology consultant, Louisiana Department of Education.

[30] The Web site of the Algebra I Online Project is http://lvsportal.doe.state.la.us/?algebra

[31] *Louisiana Virtual School Site Facilitator's Guide 2004–05*.

[32] Unless otherwise noted, information is from a survey filled out by Liz Glowa, coordinator of MVLO.

[33] See, for example, the *Local School Planning and Implementation Guide* (mdk12online.org/5Syst/sysHNDBK.pdf) or the *Practices and Procedures Manual for Local School Systems and Schools*, (mdk12online.org/6Form/MVLOPPM.pdf)

[34] Maryland Code: Education: Title 7. Public Schools: Subtitle 10: Maryland Technology Academy: § 7-1002. Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities Program. Retrieved June 29, 2005, from http://198.187.128.12/maryland/lpext.dll?f=templates&fn=fs-main.htm&2.0

[35] Unless otherwise noted, information is based on personal communication with MVHS leaders. Additional information comes from the *Report to the Michigan Department of Education on the Development and Growth of the Michigan Virtual High School, 1999–2005*, published by Michigan Virtual University. Retrieved June 12, 2005, from http://www.mivhs.org/upload_2/MDE_DevelopmentandGrowth_MVHS1999–2005.pdf

[36] Michigan Department of Education. (2001). *Guidance on Virtual Learning*. Retrieved July 6, 2005, from http://www.michigan.gov/documents/virtual02_2002_18549_7.pdf

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[38] Unless otherwise noted, information is from a survey filled out by Jhone Ebert, director, Magnet Schools and Distance Education with CCSD VHS leaders: Kim Loomis, Jami Miller, Allison Powell, and Tom Stanley.

[39] Unless otherwise noted, information is from a survey filled out by Neil Howe, state director.

[40] Unless otherwise noted, information is from a survey filled out by Richard M. Siddoway, principal, Electronic High School.

[41] Unless otherwise noted, information is from a survey filled out by Greg Weisiger, Virginia Department of Education.

[42] Information comes from a survey response provided by Liz Pape, president and CEO of Virtual High School.

[43] Direct quotes not otherwise footnoted are taken from West Virginia State Board of Education Policy 2450 § 126-48-7. Retrieved May 24, 2005, from http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/p2450.html. Information not quoted directly and not footnoted is based on Pamela Hoppe, West Virginia Virtual School coordinator, personal communication, May 24, 2005.

[44] http://virtualschool.k12.wv.us/vschool/about.html

[45] House Bill 4319. Retrieved May 24, 2005, from http://www.legis.state.wv.us/Bill_Text_HTML/2002_SESSIONS/rs/BILLS/hb4319percent20enr.htm. Section 18-2E-9 refers to the Virtual School.

[46] http://virtualschool.k12.wv.us/vschool/faqs.html

[47] http://virtualschool.k12.wv.us/vschool/faqs.html

[48] Information comes from a survey response provided by Dawn Nordine, director of the Wisconsin Virtual School.

[49] Information in this section, unless otherwise noted, comes from surveys that were sent to statewide programs.

[50] Marty Karlin, former director of Oregon Online, personal communication.

[51] Where possible this report tracks both the number of unique students and the number of course registrations, but not all programs are able to report both. Because statewide programs are primarily or entirely supplemental, in which each student takes one or a small number of courses, the number of unique students and the number of course registrations tend to be similar.

[52] Michigan Virtual University. *Report to the Michigan Department of Education on the Development and Growth of the Michigan Virtual High School, 1999–2005*. Retrieved May 26, 2005, from http://www.mivhs.org/upload_2/MDE_DevelopmentandGrowth_MVHS1999-2005.pdf

[53] Michigan Virtual University. *Report to the Michigan Department of Education on the Development and Growth of the Michigan Virtual High School, 1999–2005*. Retrieved May 26, 2005, from http://www.mivhs.org/upload_2/MDE_DevelopmentandGrowth_MVHS1999-2005.pdf

[54] http://www.sreb.org/programs/EdTech/pubs/PDF/Principals_of_Quality_Checklist.pdf

[55] www.nea.org/technology/onlinecourseguide.html

[56] Idaho House Bill 534, Idaho Digital Learning Academy Act of 2002, Section 33-506. Retrieved May 28, 2005, from http://www3.state.id.us/idstat/TOC/33055KTOC.html

[57] http://virtualschool.k12.wv.us/vschool/faqs.html, retrieved May 28, 2005.

[58] Idaho House Bill 534, Idaho Digital Learning Academy Act of 2002, Section 33-506. Retrieved May 28, 2005, from http://www3.state.id.us/idstat/TOC/33055KTOC.html

[59] West Virginia House Bill 4319. Retrieved May 27, 2005, from http://www.legis.state.wv.us/Bill_Text_HTML/2002_SESSIONS/rs/BILLS/hb4319percent20enr.htm

[60] Idaho House Bill 534, Idaho Digital Learning Academy Act of 2002, Section 33-507. Retrieved May 28, 2005, from http://www3.state.id.us/idstat/TOC/33055KTOC.html

[61] Florida Education Code, 1102.37. Retrieved May 30, 2005, from http://www.flsenate.gov/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=Ch1002/Sec37.HTM&StatuteYear=2004&p=1

[62] Determination of presence or absence of cyberschools is largely based on Education Week Technology Counts 2005. *Electronic Transfer: Moving Technology Dollars in New Directions*. Education Week Research Center, May 5, 2005.

[63] This and other sections on state-level policies are based on state laws obtained from the North American Council for Online Learning's Online Clearinghouse, a project funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Additional information on online schools is available at http://www.nacol.org

[64] Tennessee Public Charter Schools Act of 2002, 49-13-106. Retrieved July 7, 2005, from http://198.187.128.12/tennessee/lpext.dll?f=templates&fn=fs-main.htm&2.0

[65] *Distance Education: What You Need to Know*. Retrieved July 8, 2005, from http://www.myscschools.com/downloads/de_guidebook.pdf

[66] Southern Regional Education Board's *Report On State Virtual Schools*, June 2005.

[67] This section is based on Alabama Code 290-3-1-.02. Retrieved July 15, 2005, from http://www.alabamaadministrativecode.state.al.us/docs/ed/3ED1.htm

[68] Retrieved June 30, 2005, from http://dlc.k12.ar.us/pdf/Academic_Info/ADE_159_Distance_Learning.pdf

[69] House Bill 2566. Retrieved June 30, 2005, from http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/ftproot/bills/2005/public/hb2566.pdf

[70] Information in this section is updated from *Keeping Pace 2004* and was reviewed by Melinda Crowley of the Florida Department of Education.

[71] *State Standards for Distance Education,* January 2000, published by the Louisiana Department of Education, retrieved July 14, 2005, from http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/738.pdf

[72] Determination of presence or absence of cyberschools is largely based on Education Week Technology Counts 2005. *Electronic Transfer: Moving Technology Dollars in New Directions*. Education Week Research Center, May 5, 2005.

[73] This and other sections on state-level policies are based on state laws obtained from the North American Council for Online Learning's Online Clearinghouse, a project funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Additional information on online schools is available at http://www.nacol.org

[74] Vermont Statutes Title 16, Chapter 3 § 166. Retrieved July 6, 2005, from http://www.leg.state.vt.us/statutes/fullsection.cfm?Title=16&Chapter=003&Section=00166

[75] Maryland State Education Code § 9-102. Retrieved July 6, 2005, from http://mlis.state.md.us/cgi-win/web_statutes.exe

[76] New Hampshire Education Code § 306.22. Retrieved July 6, 2005, from http://www.ed.state.nh.us/education/laws/Ed306Adopted.htm

[77] Retrieved July 6, 2005, from http://www.state.nj.us/njded/grants/docs/05-CC17-B05.doc

[78] Vermont Statutes 16 V.S.A. § 166. Retrieved July 19, 2005, from http://www.leg.state.vt.us/statutes/fullsection.cfm?Title=16&Chapter=003&Section=00166

[79] Information in this section is updated from *Keeping Pace 2004* and cyber charter school application documents (www.pde.state.pa.us/charter_schools/cwp/view.asp?a=147&Q=60553&charter_schoolsNav=|567|)

[80] Pennsylvania Act 88 (House Bill 4). (2002). Retrieved July 19, 2005, from http://www2.legis.state.pa.us/WU01/LI/BI/BT/2001/0/HB0004P4196.pdf. Direct quotes are taken from this law.

[81] Determination of presence or absence of cyberschools is largely based on Education Week Technology Counts 2005. *Electronic Transfer: Moving Technology Dollars in New Directions*. Education Week Research Center, May 5, 2005.

[82] This and other sections on state-level policies are based on state laws obtained from the North American Council for Online Learning's Online Clearinghouse, a project funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Additional information on online schools is available at http://www.nacol.org

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[89] Legislative Committee on Education Oversight. *The Operating Costs of Ohio's eCommunity Schools*. Retrieved July 12, 2005, from http://www.loeo.state.oh.us/Operating_Costs_of_Ohio_eCommunity_Schools.pdf

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[92] Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (2003). *Legislative Report on Charter Schools*. Retrieved June 28, 2005, from http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dfm/sms/pdf/cslegr02.pdf

[93] Determination of presence or absence of cyberschools is largely based on Education Week Technology Counts 2005. *Electronic Transfer: Moving Technology Dollars in New Directions*. Education Week Research Center, May 5, 2005.

[94] This and other sections on state-level policies are based on state laws obtained from the North American Council for Online Learning's Online Clearinghouse, a project funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Additional information on online schools is available at http://www.nacol.org

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[96] *Policy Brief: Distance Education in Oregon*. Education Commission of the States, October 2004. Retrieved July 20, 2005, from http://www.ode.state.or.us/initiatives/elearning/ecs_policybrieffinal.pdf

[97] Montana Distance Learning Standard A.R.M. 10.55.907, summarized on the *Montana Office of Public Instruction* Web site (www.opi.state.mt.us)

[98] http://www.mselc.org

[99] Information and quotes in this section are based on Arizona Revised Statutes 15–808. Technology assisted project-based instruction program. Retrieved July 18, 2005, from http://www.azleg.state.az.us/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/ars/15/00808.htm&Title=15&DocType=ARS

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[101] California Statute AB 294. Retrieved July 5, 2005, from http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/03-04/bill/asm/ab_0251-0300/ab_294_bill_20030922_chaptered.pdf

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[108] Information in this section is based on two sources: the Nevada Revised Statutes, 388.820 through 388.874 (www.leg.state.nv.us/law1.cfm) and the *Nevada Department of Education* Web site Distance Education page (www.doe.nv.gov/programs/disted.html)

[109] Information in this section is based on Oklahoma State Code 210:35-21-2: Alternative Instructional Delivery Systems.

[110] Information in this section is updated from *Keeping Pace 2004*.

[111] Information regarding the eCP may be found at www.tea.state.tx.us/taa/comm120604.html

[112] Information is based on the DLC Web site at http://www.learningcommons.org

[113] Senate Bill 5828, Digital Learning Programs. Retrieved August 10, 2005, from http://www.leg.wa.gov/pub/billinfo/2005-06/Htm/Bills/Sessionpercent20Lawpercent202005/5828-S.SL.htm

[114] Legislative Committee on Education Oversight. *The Operating Costs of Ohio's eCommunity Schools*. Retrieved July 12, 2005, from http://www.loeo.state.oh.us/Operating_Costs_of_Ohio_eCommunity_Schools.pdf

[115] Arkansas policy demonstrates understanding of the difference between regulating synchronous and asynchronous courses, with a class-size limit for synchronous courses and a teaching-load limit for asynchronous courses.

[116] In addition to legislation creating the statewide virtual program.

[117] The Georgia Virtual School is beginning operations as of 2005 and is not profiled in this report.

[118] Information on E-School was not available and the program is not profiled in this report.

[119] See, for example, Russell, T. (1999). No *Significant Difference Phenomenon*. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina State University.

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Research supported by:
Clark County School District
Florida Virtual School
Illinois Virtual High School
Virtual High School

Written by:
John Watson

LEARNING POINT Associates™
North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
800-356-2735 > www.learningpt.org
1120 East Diehl Road, Suite 200 > Naperville, IL 60563-1486
682_10/05