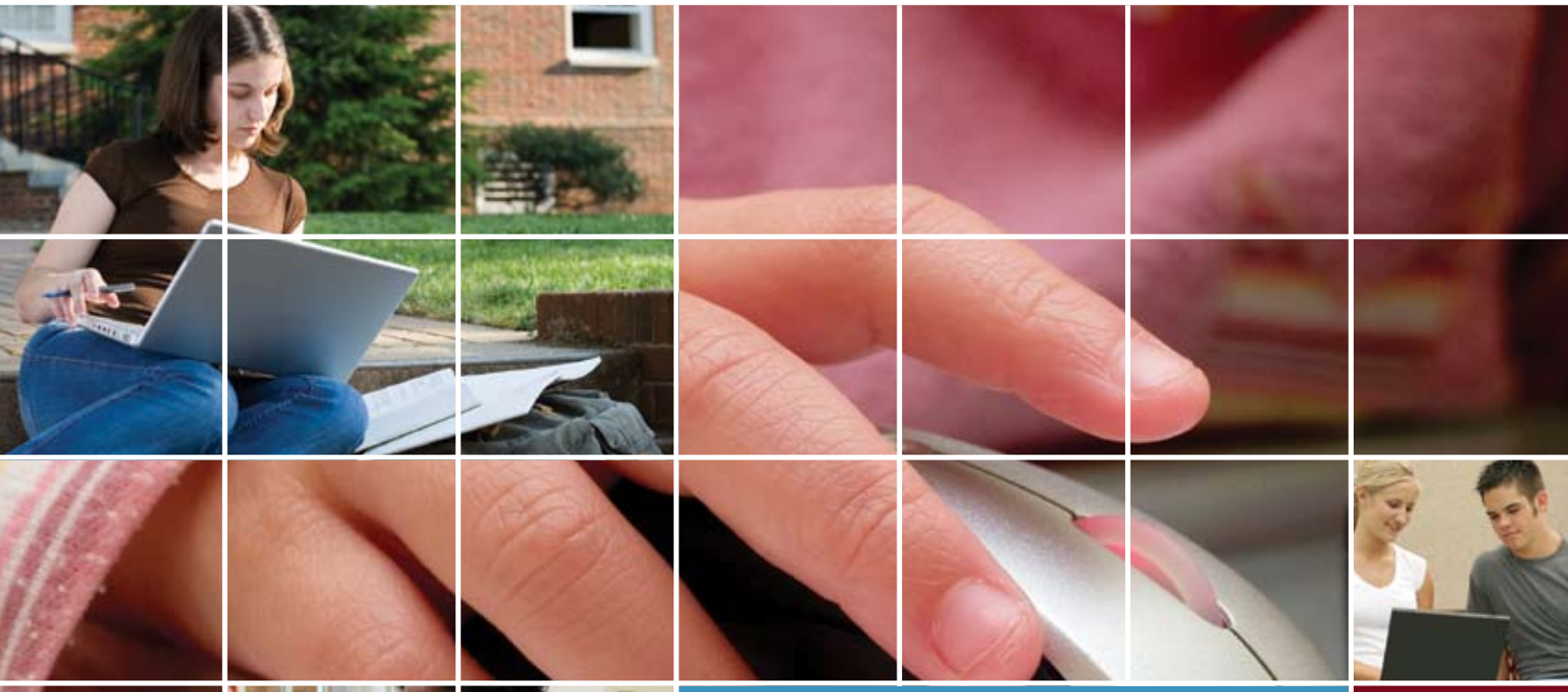

Keeping Pace with K – 12 Online Learning

A Review of State-Level Policy and Practice

2006

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Keeping Pace with K – 12 Online Learning:

A Review of State-Level Policy and Practice

October 2006

History of *Keeping Pace*

This is the third annual *Keeping Pace* report. The first *Keeping Pace* was published in 2004, in response to a request for timely online education policy information by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). Stevan Kalmon, then of the CDE, was a strong advocate for the report, and helped with raising funds, writing and editing. Cathy Gunn, then of Learning Point Associates, was instrumental in suggesting and overseeing publication and distribution. The four funding organizations in the first year were the CDE, Illinois Virtual High School (IVHS), Learning Point Associates, and Wisconsin Virtual School. The 2004 report was a smaller effort than subsequent years, surveying 22 states and conducting in-depth research into 11 of them.

In 2005 *Keeping Pace* expanded to review all 50 states, largely in response to the vision of Matthew Wicks of IVHS. IVHS and Learning Point Associates again provided funding, joined by Clark County School District, Florida Virtual School, and Virtual High School. For the 2006 report, funders are Clark County School District, Connections Academy, Florida Virtual School, Illinois Virtual High School, Texas Education Agency, Virtual High School, and Wyoming Department of Education. The North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL) has been a significant partner in fund raising and the BellSouth Foundation has contributed funds to help with dissemination of the report.

In all three years of the report, the funding organizations have provided critically important expertise and guidance. The report is very much a collaborative effort that builds on the leadership and experience of the following people:

Jhone Ebert, Clark County School District

Kate Loughrey, Texas Education Agency

Chuck Mitchell, Wyoming Department of Education

Liz Pape, Virtual High School

Mickey Revenaugh, Connections Academy

Matt Wicks, Illinois Virtual High School

Julie Young, Florida Virtual School

Susan Patrick of the North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL) has contributed valuable expertise in all areas of K-12 online learning, including programs, courses, evaluation, certification, policy, and administration.

Another set of key contributors to the report are the people associated with an online program or education agency who gave their time to provide the information that is the basis for *Keeping Pace*. We have been consistently surprised by the amount of time and quality of responses we receive from people around the country. This report would not be possible without their input.

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

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Executive Summary

1 Executive Summary

1. Introduction

Online learning continues to grow rapidly across the country as an increasing number of educators and policymakers recognize the benefits of learning unconstrained by time and place. As of September 2006, 38 states have either state-led online learning programs, significant policies regulating online education, or both. In the past year, numerous states have added new state-led programs or passed online learning laws, including Missouri, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Nebraska. Growth of the number of students in many existing programs has been sustained, with Louisiana Virtual School growing by 18%, Virtual High School by 24%, Florida Virtual School and Idaho Digital Learning Academy by over 50%, and Ohio's eCommunity Schools collectively by 22%.

This report is the third in a series of annual reports looking at the state of online education across the country. It is sponsored and guided by seven organizations with expertise in online learning: Clark County School District (Las Vegas, Nevada), Connections Academy, Florida Virtual School, Illinois Virtual High School, Texas Education Agency, Virtual High School, and Wyoming Department of Education.

Keeping Pace focuses on two distinct areas: state-led online programs and state-level policies governing online education. State-led online programs are those created by legislation or by a state-level agency, and/or administered by a state education agency, and/or directly funded by a state appropriation or grant for the purpose of providing online learning opportunities across the state. They are reviewed because in many states the state-led programs are the drivers of online education practice (primarily) and policy (secondarily). State-level policies are laws and formal regulations, for example administrative rules created by state education agencies, which affect online education. Most states that have online learning policies but do not have a state-led program have major district-level online programs and/or cyberschools.

2. National snapshot

As of September 2006 there are:

- 24 states with state-led online education programs
- 26 states with significant state policies for online learning
- 12 states with neither a state-led program nor significant state policies

Another way to look at the data is:

- 12 states have state-led online education programs **and** significant state policies that govern district-level online programs or cyberschools.
- 12 states have state-led programs but **no** significant state-level policies that govern district-level online programs or cyberschools.
- 14 states have significant state-level policies that govern district-level online programs or cyberschools but **no** state-led programs.
- 12 states have neither a state-led program nor state policies.

Numerous states created new state-led programs and/or passed significant new laws in late 2005 or 2006. These include:

- Michigan passed a law creating an online learning experience requirement for high school graduation.
- Georgia passed a law allowing cyber charter schools.
- North Carolina created the North Carolina Virtual Public School.
- Missouri passed a law to create a new state-led program to open Fall 2007 that will include both full-time and part-time students in grades K-12.
- Washington issued guidelines for its "alternative learning experience" policies, which govern most online learning programs in the state.

3. Key issues

Among the many important online learning policy and practice issues, *Keeping Pace* has focused on several that are discussed below: program models, funding, professional development, program tracking, and accountability for student outcomes.

Models of state-led online programs

There are different models for state-led programs, including:

- Within/under the state education agency (many, including Alabama ACCESS and Idaho Digital Learning Academy)
- Within/under the State Board of Education (Illinois Virtual High School)
- As an independent entity (Colorado Online Learning)
- As a separate local education agency or school district (Florida Virtual School)
- Housed in a university (University of California College Prep Online)

These models are not necessarily static; a program can evolve from one type to another. The Florida Virtual School began as a project between two school districts, then was supported by appropriations over several years, and now is funded by state public education FTE funds.

There are advantages and disadvantages with each type of organization. The most common model, with the state-led program housed in the state education agency, offers the benefit of efficiencies and economies of scale, reduction of duplication of resources and expense across the state, and the ability to take advantage of agency offices and services, such as general counsel, public relations, and office space, often at reduced or no cost to the program. The main downside to being part of the state education agency is in possible restrictions, such as in state procurement and contracting policies and the need to vet decisions through a formal and perhaps lengthy command structure, which can limit flexibility and growth.

Funding

How much online education should cost, and how to fund it, remains one of the top issues facing policymakers. Many state-led programs are funded primarily by legislative appropriations, including programs that are relatively new (e.g., North Carolina, Alabama, Georgia) and older programs (e.g., Michigan). Some state-led programs are funded by state or federal funds that flow through the state education agency. In Illinois, for example, the state board of education has allocated part of its educational technology funds to the Illinois Virtual High School. Many practitioners feel that funding via annual appropriation is not a sustainable funding model because it is subject to states' economic and budget cycles.

Many state-led programs charge course fees to schools, districts, and/or parents. Typically these fees are in the range of $100 to a few hundred dollars per student per semester. Usually the course fees are below the level needed to cover the marginal cost of the course, and in all cases course fees do not cover overhead costs of the program.

Florida Virtual School was the first state-led program to be funded via state public education FTE funding. This funding change, from a legislative appropriation previously, has helped fuel the growth of the program because FTE funding is more predictable year to year, and because it is directly tied to the number of course registrations.

For full-time programs, funding is almost always based on FTE funding. Many full-time online programs are cyber charter schools, which may receive charter school funding at a different rate (usually lower) than the typical district rate. In some states a lower funding level is applied to cyberschools regardless of whether they are charter schools or not.

Teaching and teacher professional development

Online education practitioners recognize that teaching online requires a unique set of skills in addition to skills for teaching in a face-to-face classroom. Most programs have developed extensive professional development (PD) in teaching online, and find that it is more effective to hire and train teachers with prior face-to-face teaching experience than to expect new teachers to master both sets of skills simultaneously. Many programs approach PD needs with a mix of online and face-to-face training. At the Illinois Virtual High School, online teachers combine a four-week professional development online course and a three-day face-to-face course.

The amount of time a new teacher is expected to spend on PD varies widely. Virtual High School, which calls for teachers to take one of two online professional development courses of either 135 hours or 270 hours, has one of the longer requirements. The distinction in the number of hours required is between teachers who are teaching a pre-developed course versus teachers who are developing and teaching a new course. In both courses, the

emphasis is on the development of effective online teaching skills, emphasizing online classroom pedagogy and management skills such as fostering online teams and group projects, creating and sustaining online community, and fostering online discussions in constructivist, student-centered learning.

The need for highly qualified teachers is one of the drivers of online education, as some schools, especially in rural districts, are unable to provide highly qualified teachers in all subjects. Federal guidance on meeting these challenges has included the suggestion that districts consider using online learning. State-led online programs recognize the value of being able to provide highly qualified teachers, and all programs have teachers who meet the definition of highly qualified in their states, including appropriate state certification.

Few states have policy requirements for online teacher professional development. Most states require that online teachers meet the same licensure as face-to-face teachers but few go beyond this requirement. A few exceptions that dictate online teaching professional development requirements include Kansas, Alabama, and South Dakota.

In most states, an online teacher must be licensed by the state and there are limited opportunities for teachers to teach across state lines. Most states have policies in place to address teacher reciprocity as teachers relocate from one state to another; extending those policies to address reciprocity for online teaching would remove a major policy barrier to online teaching.

Online program accountability

For state-led programs, two measures of accountability are achieved through accreditation and/or evaluation by an external evaluator. Programs are split fairly evenly between having one, both, or neither.

There are myriad ways that states oversee non state-led online programs, varying by state and by type of online program, and there are few patterns that hold for more than a few states. Some states have rules governing all types of distance learning. These rules often pre-date online courses and programs, focusing instead on print-based correspondence programs or two-way interactive video. In states without generic distance education rules, district online programs that serve students within their own districts are often free from state oversight. Programs that serve students out of their district are more likely to be subject to online learning policy. Many states with charter school laws neither specifically prohibit cyber charter schools, nor have regulations that specifically govern cyber charters separate from brick-and-mortar charters.

Given the overall lack of patterns in state oversight of online programs, the examples of a few states with significant oversight are illuminating.

- Washington governs online programs through policies for “alternative learning experiences” (ALE), which are any non-school based programs, including online. Online ALE programs must be accredited by the state, and ALE programs must submit an annual report that provides FTE enrollment.
- Pennsylvania has 11 cyber charter schools that are authorized by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), which has created the Pennsylvania System of Cyber Charter Review (PASCCR). Cyber charter school oversight is regulated by a combination of charter school law that oversees all charter schools, and regulations specific to cyber charters.

- Kansas is one of the few states with a program registration requirement that allows the state to maintain basic information about online programs. For online programs to claim FTE funding for their students, they must register with the state, allowing the Department of Education to maintain a current list of programs, among other requirements.

Accountability for student achievement

Across public education, accountability for student achievement is increasingly based on results of state assessments mandated by No Child Left Behind. State assessments are the responsibility of the school in which the student is enrolled. No states allow fully web-based, distributed testing, which means that test administration can be a complex task for an online program. This challenge is exacerbated by the need for students to travel to testing sites during the customary testing dates set by the state. In some states, cyberschool students test at their local traditional public school, where cost savings and increased convenience are sometimes counterbalanced by confusion over correctly routing the students' scores.

Because state-led programs are mostly supplemental, they are not responsible for student participation in state assessments. They are, however, responsible for student achievement in various other ways. In many cases, because a student's participation in online courses is at the discretion of the local school, the school's decision to allow participation and grant credit becomes the oversight mechanism.

4. Looking ahead

Many analyses looking at the growth of online education have concluded that online learning will have, or is having, a tremendous impact on the evolution of education. The proliferation of the Internet is challenging the limitations of education's traditional methods of teaching and learning.

Many online programs began in response to the need to transcend limitations of time and place and increase availability of courses to students in rural and urban schools. With the growth of online learning across much of the country, virtual schools are expanding options for students in a way that no other delivery model can, allowing for focus on student needs and supporting school reform and redesign efforts. In addition to these valuable benefits, practitioners are increasingly noting an additional, largely unplanned, advantage of online learning: promoting 21st century skills and global citizenship.

Recognition of the importance of 21st century skills, and the inherent advantage of online courses in teaching 21st century skills, is the main reason that the Michigan legislature in 2006 passed the requirement that all students have an "online learning experience" prior to graduating high school. Taking an online course requires that the student understand how to get online, communicate and collaborate via email and discussion boards, and access information via the Internet—all skills that are tremendously important throughout most professional careers. In addition, online courses may include students from across the country or even beyond. Students interacting in these classes will not only gain the course content skills being taught, but will also learn about their online classmates, gaining online collaboration and global citizenship skills.

Web-enhanced classrooms

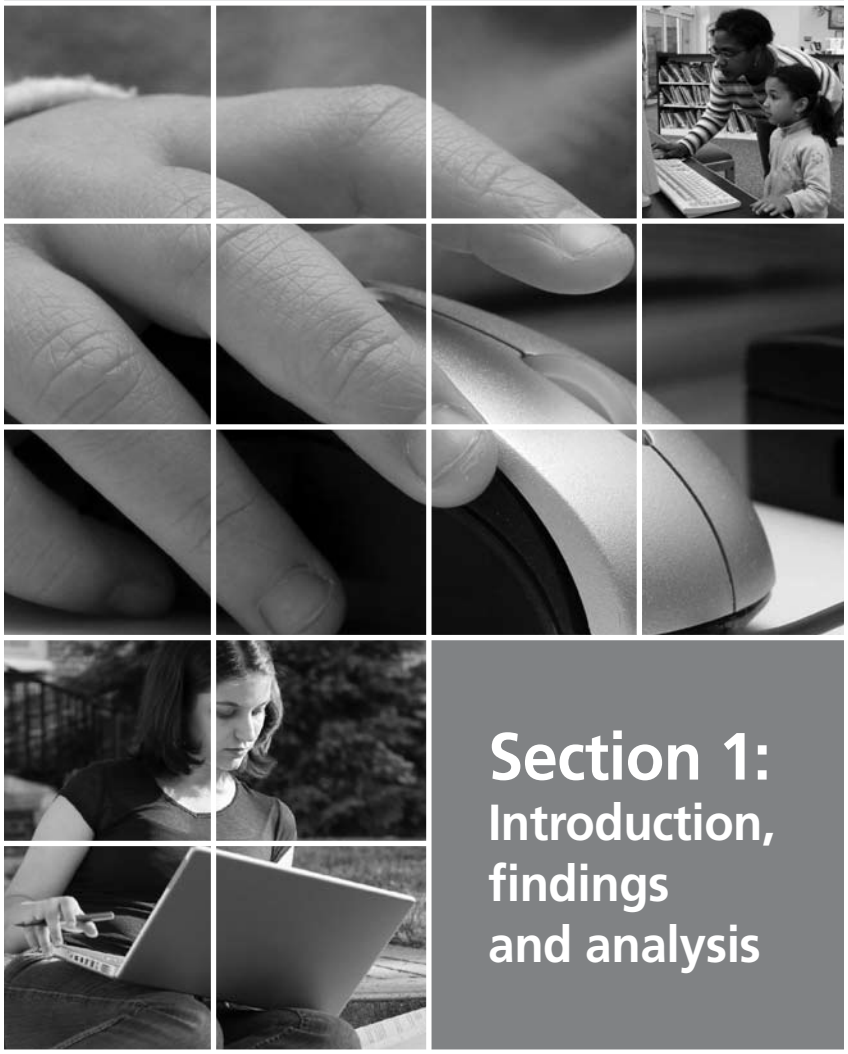
Another unplanned aspect of online learning is the increased blending of classroom-based and Internet-based instruction, which is being promoted in various ways by state programs and policies. The Louisiana Virtual School's Algebra I program, for example, combines blended learning and professional development. Unlike most online courses, the Algebra I Online course content and instruction is delivered via the Internet to students in a classroom of a physical school that lacks a highly qualified math teacher. The highly qualified teacher is online, and the in-class teacher facilitates the class while working towards mathematics certification. Other examples of state programs to assist in creation of web-enhanced classrooms are Maine's student laptop program, recently expanded to reach over 70,000 middle school students and over 4,000 teachers across the state, and the Massachusetts Online Network for Education (MassONE), which offers online tools for teachers and students. These tools include virtual hard drive space, professional development courses for teachers, and a platform for teachers to communicate with students online and extend the classroom.

Conclusion

With technology and online education practice changing so rapidly, attempting to suggest—yet alone create—an appropriate policy framework is a challenge. Most practitioners, however, recognize that some regulation is necessary for the long-term sustainable growth of online education.

A necessary first step is removing the barriers, the policies that simply do not make sense in the online environment. Online course delivery across borders highlights how 20th century funding and policy models can hinder 21st century models of teaching and learning. Policies that dictate that students must be taught by state-certified teachers residing in the state may be appropriate for place-based teaching, but online course delivery transcends such barriers. Similarly, seat time requirements make little sense in an environment where true educational outcomes can be easily tracked and substituted instead.

Many state agencies and programs are taking a smart, measured approach to policy and planning—a significant change from the policy landscape several years ago, when the field was so new that many stakeholders were not even able to formulate the right questions. In viewing the status of online education across the country at the end of 2006, there are numerous reasons to be optimistic about the future of online learning. Numerous states have added state-led programs, and many have created new online education policies. Online education is growing, expanding access to all students, exposing students to 21st century skills, and providing highly qualified teachers in areas of need. The barriers of outdated policies still exist in many places, and the obstacles to removing them persist, but the momentum towards new and smarter policies and programs is strong. The continuing evolution of online education, including web-enhanced instructional practices in K-12 classrooms, suggests that online and classroom instruction are no longer seen as separate entities, but rather part of a continuum of approaches to education which support individualized instruction for every student and strengthen public education.



Section 1:
Introduction, findings and analysis

1 Introduction

Online learning continues to grow rapidly across the country as an increasing number of educators and policymakers recognize the benefits of learning unconstrained by time and place. As of September 2006, 38 states have either state-led online learning programs, significant laws or policies regulating online education, or both.[1] In the past year, numerous states have added new state-led programs or passed online learning laws, including Missouri, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Nebraska. Many existing programs have sustained growth in student enrollment. For example, Louisiana Virtual School has grown by 18%, Virtual High School by 24%, Florida Virtual School and Idaho Digital Learning Academy by more than 50%, and Ohio's eCommunity Schools collectively by 22%. The overall increase in the number of students taking online courses country-wide is unknown because there is still so little systematic tracking of online programs.

This report is the third in a series of annual reports looking at the status of online education across the country. It is sponsored and guided by seven organizations with expertise in online learning: Clark County School District (Las Vegas, Nevada), Connections Academy, Florida Virtual School, Illinois Virtual High School, Texas Education Agency, Virtual High School, and Wyoming Department of Education. These organizations believe that online learning benefits students by increasing educational opportunities, and recognize that the sustainable growth of online learning requires that appropriate policies and practices be in place.

The impetus for the first *Keeping Pace* report was the concern, well stated by the National Association of State Boards of Education in 2001,[2] that the growth of online learning was outstripping state policies and regulations meant to guide education. The first *Keeping Pace*, published in 2004, reviewed 22 states; for 11 of those states, the report provided in-depth information. In 2005 the research expanded to all 50 states, and the nationwide focus continues in this year's report.

Keeping Pace focuses on two distinct areas: state-level policies governing online education and state-led online programs.

- State-level policies are laws and formal regulations that affect online education, such as administrative rules created by the state education agencies. The primary focus of *Keeping Pace* is on laws and regulations that are explicitly addressing online education or distance learning. In some states, however, online education is guided by laws passed to regulate face-to-face schools or classes. Common examples of this are charter school and independent study policies. These policies are reviewed for

[1] Judging state policies as "significant" is inherently a subjective exercise. Chapter two lists the states that we consider to have significant policies, and the state profiles explain why we think specific policies are significant.

[2] National Association of State Boards of Education, 2001, *Any Time, Any Place, Any Path, Any Pace: Taking the Lead on e-Learning Policy*; retrieved August 11, 2006, from http://www.nasbe.org/Organization_Information/e_learning.pdf

states with a significant amount of online learning activity and without explicit online learning policies.

- State-led online programs are reviewed because in many states the state-led programs are the drivers of online education practice (primarily) and policy (secondarily). Florida, Michigan, Illinois, and California are examples where the state-led program has been a key organization—perhaps the key organization—in developing online education in the state. (A definition of state-led programs is provided in chapter 2.)

1.1 Methodology

Keeping Pace 2006 builds on the research conducted in the past two years, and relies heavily on the information about state-led programs and state policies shared by program administrators and education agency personnel. The research into state-led programs was done via a written survey and phone interviews of most programs. For research into state policies, web research and reviews of state laws were combined with interviews of education agency personnel. For both the state-led programs and state policies, creating the profiles was an iterative process that often required multiple emails and phone calls. Initial responses frequently led to further questions and reviews of initial drafts. In most cases, the final version of the profile was reviewed for accuracy by the program or state education agency.

Three other sources of information were used extensively:

- The sponsoring organizations for *Keeping Pace* provided extensive expertise and knowledge of the state of online learning across the country. Their familiarity with existing research and significant developments in online learning nationwide was a key source of information for this report.

- The North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL) was an informal partner to *Keeping Pace*. As the leading association most familiar with nationwide K-12 online learning developments, NACOL provided valuable assistance in research, planning and providing contacts. NACOL's Online Clearinghouse, a project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, was a valuable source of information regarding online education laws and programs. Additional information on online schools is available at http://www.nacol.org/resources/.

- The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) collects information regarding online education in its member states, and was a valuable source of data and policy ideas that are applicable across the country.

The goal of *Keeping Pace* is to be a useful document for policymakers and practitioners, and as such it takes a journalistic approach to research and writing instead of an academic approach. Most state profiles include footnotes that reference state laws, state policies, and websites of programs. In some cases, however, the information is general and was gathered through numerous website reviews and phone interviews with state agencies; in these cases footnotes are not included. The intent of footnotes is primarily to provide the source documents that will be most valuable to readers.

In a field that is growing and changing as rapidly as online education, timeliness of information is imperative, and indeed timeliness has been one of the drivers of interest in *Keeping Pace*. Research for this year's report was conducted from May through August of 2006, and every effort has been made to ensure currency of information as of September 2006.

1.2 How to read this document

This report has two goals: first, to add to the body of knowledge about online education policy and make recommendations for advances; and second, to serve as a reference source for information about programs and policies across the country. With these twin goals in mind, the report starts with sections exploring key issues such as funding, teaching, and accountability, including analysis and recommendations. The second part of the report includes information on programs and policies across the country, broken down by regions and states. Profiles are provided for over 80% of states; for the remaining states, insufficient information did not warrant a profile.

Although presented first, the key issues section of the document builds on the state profiles in the second section. The state profiles contain most of the footnotes and references to source documents.

The following document outline may further help the reader understand the layout of the report:

Executive summary

Section 1 Introduction, findings and analysis This is a narrative section that analyzes the issues and expounds upon the research into state-led programs and state policies.

Chapter 1: Introduction: rationale, methodology, and other background

Chapter 2: National snapshot of online learning

Chapter 3: Issues analysis, including funding, program governance, and accountability

Chapter 4: Looking ahead

Section 2 State profiles Each chapter begins with a map of the region and a summary statement about each state in the region. State profiles, provided for most states, include summary data, a description of the state-led program (if present), and an explanation of state policies (if present).

Chapter 4: Southeastern states

Chapter 5: Northeastern states

Chapter 6: Central states

Chapter 7: Western states

Section 3 Appendices

Appendix A: Definitions

Appendix B: Key resources

2 National snapshot

As of September 2006 there are:

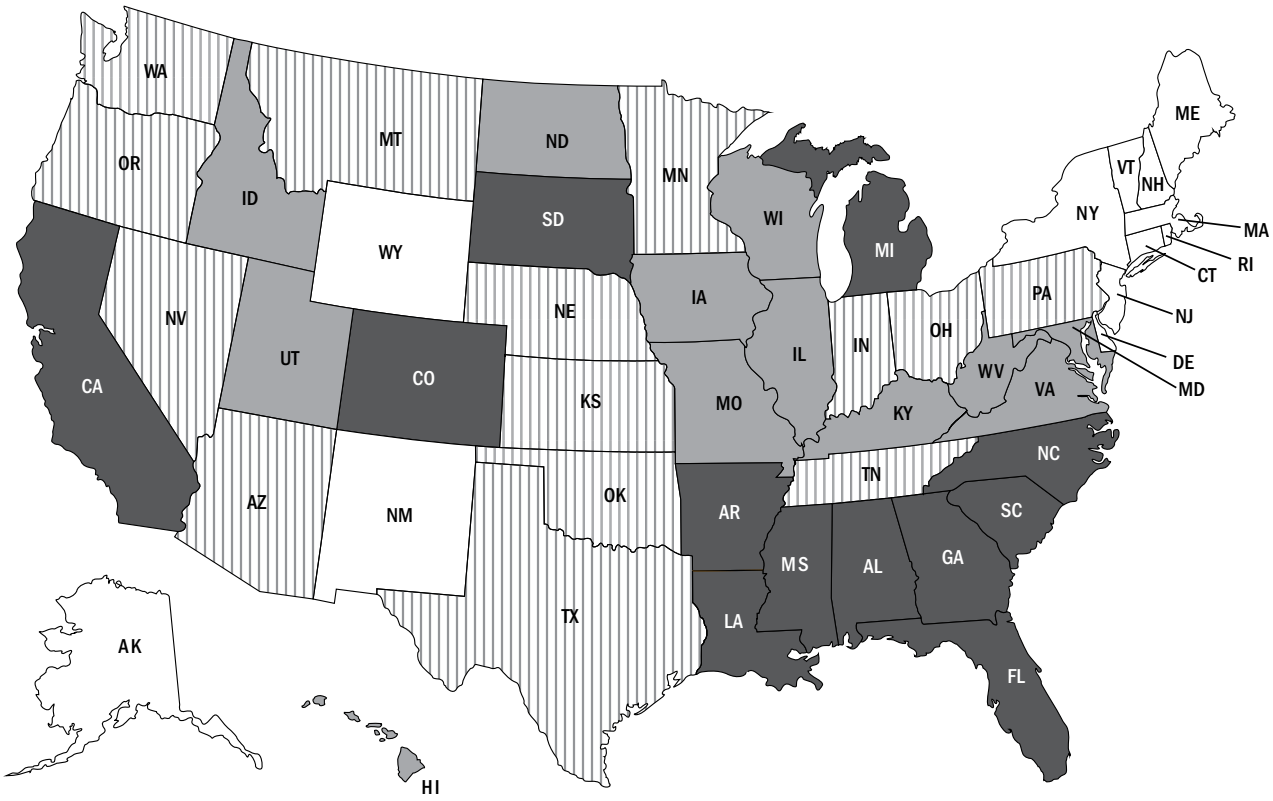
- 24 states with state-led online education programs (solid dark and light gray states on the map below)
- 26 states with significant state policies for online learning (solid dark and striped states on the map below)
- 12 states with neither a state-led program nor significant state policies (white states on the map below)

Another way to look at the data is:

- 12 states have state-led online education programs **and** significant state policies that govern district-level online programs or cyberschools (dark gray states).
- 12 states have state-led programs but **no** significant state-level policies that govern district-level online programs or cyberschools (light gray states).
- 14 states have significant state-level policies that govern district-level online programs or cyberschools but **no** state-led programs (striped states).
- 12 states have neither a state-led program nor state policies.

Numerous states created new state-led programs and/or passed significant new laws in late 2005 or 2006:

- Michigan passed a law creating an online learning experience requirement for high school graduation.
- Georgia passed a law allowing cyber charter schools.
- Mississippi created the Mississippi Virtual Public School Program, which replaced the smaller Mississippi Online Learning Institute.
- North Carolina created the North Carolina Virtual Public School.
- South Carolina Virtual School had its first students in a pilot program in Summer 2006.
- Missouri passed a law to create a new state-led program to open in Fall 2007 that will include both full-time and part-time students in grades K-12.



States with a state-led online education program and significant state policies governing other online programs (includes states where state-led program has been created but is not yet operating)

States with a state-led program but without other state policies

States with state policies but no state-led program (some may have multiple cyberschools)

States with no state-led program and no significant state policies

- Nebraska passed a distance education law to lay the groundwork for an expansion of distance learning offerings.
- South Dakota created the South Dakota Virtual High School.
- Washington issued guidelines for its "alternative learning experience" policies, which govern most online learning programs in the state.

This list provides a snapshot of the activity occurring around the country, and is not meant to be exhaustive.

These programs and policies, and others, are explored in detail in the state profiles in Section 2.

Definitions

State-led program: An online learning program created by legislation or by a state-level agency, and/or administered by a state education agency, and/or directly funded by a state appropriation or grant for the purpose of providing online learning opportunities across the state. State-led programs are typically supplemental, offering courses for students who are otherwise enrolled in a traditional school setting. Examples of state-led online programs include the Illinois Virtual High School, Kentucky Virtual High School, and University of California College Prep Online. Because online programs evolve, some programs are categorized as state-led that do not fit the definition presently, but did in important stages of their development. Florida Virtual School, for example, is now independent and funded via the state's full-time equivalent (FTE) public education funding, but previously received funding via legislative appropriation.

Cyberschool: An online learning program, typically full-time, 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. Many cyberschools are charter schools.

State-level policies include legislation, education code, and formal rules promulgated by the state education agency. This report is primarily interested in policies that were created to address online learning in its various forms, but also includes policies that were created for brick-and-mortar schools, or other types of distance learning, that are used to regulate online learning in the absence of online-specific policy. Most states that have online learning policies but do not have a state-led program have major online programs and/or cyberschools.

The absence of a state-led program and state-level policies does not necessarily mean there is no online learning activity in the state—although most states with neither have limited online learning activity, at most. In these states there may be district programs, or the state may be in the process of creating programs or policies.

3 Key issues

Among the many important online learning policy issues, *Keeping Pace* has focused on several that are discussed below: program models, funding, professional development, program tracking, and accountability for student outcomes. The discussion for each of these issues is based on the research into each state and builds on the state and program profiles presented in Section 2.

3.1 Distinctions among online courses

The many different types of online programs can lead to confusion among educators, policymakers, and parents. Programs may be full-time or supplemental, operate statewide or be limited to one school district, be synchronous or asynchronous, have courses that are self-paced or run in cohorts—and each of these issues (and many others) have policy implications.

Dr. Susan Lowes of Columbia Teachers College has suggested a valuable distinction between what she calls virtual resources, virtual courses, and virtual classrooms.[3]

- Virtual resources are delivered via the Internet but are likely to be used in face-to-face classrooms as often as in online courses. These resources, which include simulations, document archives, and electronic textbooks, are increasing in sophistication and availability.
- Virtual courses include virtual resources, are delivered over the Internet, and generally come in two forms: self-paced with minimal teacher involvement, similar to a classic correspondence course; and self-paced with ongoing, one-on-one teacher-student interaction, generally by phone, email, chat, or other digital means.
- Virtual classrooms include virtual resources and teacher-student interaction but also incorporate extensive student-student interaction, generally through the use of the course management system's discussion forums. Because of the student-student interaction, these courses are not self-paced, although they usually are asynchronous. Virtual classrooms have a cohort of students, follow a course calendar, and use a set of discussion forums as the main sites of student-student and teacher-student interaction. Programs that are primarily synchronous are a subset of virtual classrooms.

[3] Much of this analysis is directly adapted from Dr. Susan Lowes' chapter, *Professional Development for Online Teachers*, in the forthcoming book *What Works in K-12 Online Learning*, an edited volume with 19 chapters exploring elements of success in online learning; Cathy Cavanaugh and Robert Blomeyer, editors, International Society for Technology in Education

Some online programs, such as Michigan Virtual High School, offer different types of courses, with some fitting the definition of virtual courses and others best described as virtual classrooms. In other programs, many courses fall in between virtual courses and classrooms, with more interaction than a virtual course but perhaps not enough student-student interaction to fit the definition of a virtual classroom. Clearly, the classifications blur within programs, but the categories may be valuable in describing online programs.

3.2 Models of state-led online programs

This report defines a state-led program as created by legislation or by a state-level agency, and/or administered by a state department of education, and/or directly funded by a state appropriation or grant for the purpose of providing online learning opportunities across the state. Within this definition there are different models for state-led programs, including:

- Within/under the state education agency (many, including Alabama ACCESS and Idaho Digital Learning Academy)
- Within/under the State Board of Education (Illinois Virtual High School)
- As an independent entity (Colorado Online Learning)
- As a separate local education agency or school district (Florida Virtual School)
- Housed in a university (University of California College Prep)

Some states allow statewide charter schools that could become a model for a state-led program. University of California College Prep has created a charter high school and is planning to add more in the coming years, and may eventually create a statewide charter. (California already has many multi-county cyber charter schools but none operating statewide.)

These models are not necessarily static; a program can evolve from one model to another. Colorado Online Learning evolved from a consortium of districts into an independent entity, and the Florida Virtual School began as a project between two school districts, then was supported by appropriations over several years, and now is funded by state public education full-time equivalent (FTE) funds.

There are advantages and disadvantages with each type of organization. The most common model, with the state-led program housed in the state education agency, offers the benefit of efficiencies and economies of scale, reduction of duplication of resources and expense across the state, and the ability to take advantage of agency offices and services, such as general counsel, public relations, and office space, often at reduced or no cost to the program. The main downside to being part of the state education agency is in possible restrictions, such as in state procurement and contracting policies and the need to vet decisions through a formal and perhaps lengthy command structure, which can limit flexibility and growth.

State-led program	Governance
Alabama	AL Department of Education
Arkansas	AR Department of Education
California	University of CA Santa Cruz
Colorado	Independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with a governing board
Florida	Independent, operates as a special school district
Georgia	GA Department of Education
Idaho	ID Department of Education
Illinois	IL State Board of Education and the IL Mathematics and Science Academy
Iowa	IA Department of Education
Kentucky	KY Department of Education
Louisiana	LA Department of Education and the LA School for Mathematics, Science, and the Arts
Maryland	MD Department of Education
Michigan	Part of Michigan Virtual University, a private not-for-profit corporation governed by an independent board of directors
North Dakota	Independent state agency
Utah	UT State Office of Education
Virginia	VA Department of Education
West Virginia	WV Department of Education
Wisconsin	Local education agency

3.3 Funding

How much online education should cost, and how to finance online programs, are two central issues which concern policymakers across the country.

Resources exploring cost and funding of online programs

Two recent publications explore cost and funding issues of online programs:

The BellSouth Foundation has published a report examining costs of online programs, available at www.bellsouthfoundation.org/publications.aspx

Cost Guidelines for State Virtual Schools was published by the Southern Regional Education Board in August 2006 and is available at www.sreb.org

Funding state-led programs

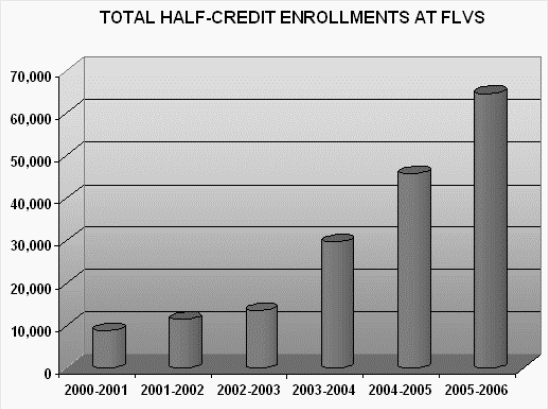
Many state-led programs are funded primarily by legislative appropriations, including programs that are relatively new (e.g., North Carolina, Alabama, Georgia) and older programs (e.g., Michigan). Some state-led programs are funded by state or federal funds that flow through the state education agency. In Illinois, for example, the state board of education allocated part of its educational technology funds to the Illinois Virtual High School, while in New Mexico the state is using federal Enhancing Education Through Technology money to fund the start-up of its state-led program.

Designing for growth: policy implications for growing state-led programs

Twenty-four states have created state-led online programs. Some of these programs are very new, such as in North Carolina and Missouri, which are in the planning and development stages. Others have been around for several years, with many launched between 1999 and 2004. Few have been around for as long as Florida Virtual School (FLVS), or have grown nearly as large. While most programs have between a few thousand and 7,000 course registrations, FLVS has experienced rapid and sustained growth in the number of students and course registrations. From its inception in 1997 with 77 course registrations, Florida Virtual School had 31,000 students and more than 68,000 course registrations in 2005-2006.

There are several reasons that FLVS has grown so quickly and consistently. One is that key community and legislative advocates for the program recognized advantages to centralizing a program at the state level rather than growing online programs through individual district initiatives. They sought to avoid the duplication of resources such as course content, software, and teacher professional development programs. As FLVS has grown, it has been able to take advantage of economies of scale not just to lower the cost of online education, but perhaps more importantly to act as a research, development, and training ground for best practices in online and emergent technology integration across the state.

A second reason for FLVS' growth is the state legislature and governor translated state support for FLVS into appropriations totaling over $20 million during its first seven years. This level of funding is at the upper end of state-led program funding and has allowed FLVS to grow in response to demand from students.



In 2003 the Florida legislature took its support of FLVS a large step further by changing the funding formula for FLVS so that the program is funded via the state's per-pupil funding model. Funding is based on course completions, instead of course registrations, and students from across the state are able to choose a FLVS course. This approach addresses the limitation that many other state-led programs have in trying to serve as many students as possible with a set funding appropriation, and ties funding to growth such that FLVS can continue to grow and not be concerned about outgrowing its funding.

State-led program funding based on states' per-pupil funding is slowly gaining momentum, with Georgia, Missouri, and North Carolina among the states that are considering this approach. This type of funding has met resistance in some states, especially those with a tradition of local control, but the success of FLVS demonstrates the growth potential of a well-funded program.

This approach to funding programs continues to be common, even though many practitioners feel that funding via annual appropriation is not a sustainable model because it is subject to a state's economic and budget cycles. Despite these concerns, most state budgets have recovered from the economic downturn of the early part of this decade, and with more money in state coffers, more funding is again available to online education programs.

Many state-led programs charge course fees to schools, districts, and/or parents. Typically these fees are in the range of $100 to a few hundred dollars per student per semester. Usually

the course fees are insufficient to cover the marginal cost of the course, and in all cases course fees do not cover overhead costs of the program.

Florida Virtual School was the first state-led program to be funded via state public education FTE funding. This funding change, from a legislative appropriation previously, has helped fuel the growth of the program because FTE funding is more predictable year to year, and because it is directly tied to the number of course registrations. While use of FTE funding for state-led programs is not widespread, a few other programs have implemented or will be implementing this approach. 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 a distance-learning course and uses this revenue to fund the virtual high school and other distance learning programs. A new law passed in Missouri in 2006 stipulates a small portion of FTE funding (in addition to an appropriation) for the state-led program, which will have both full-time and part-time students. The Georgia Virtual School will also rely on FTE funding in future years, although in 2006 the legislature has also provided an appropriation of $1.385 million. North Carolina's new program is not FTE-funded, but the program's vision calls for it to switch to an FTE funding model within three years.

FTE funding is controversial in some states because if the online program receives FTE funding, the funding to the student's home district may be reduced. States have taken different approaches to meet this challenge. In Florida, schools must allow their students to take a Florida Virtual course, potentially reducing their funding. Unlike in most other states, students may take an extra FLVS course and generate more than 1.0 FTE, meaning that a student taking a FLVS course does not necessarily reduce the school district's funding. In Georgia, schools are not required to allow students to take an online course when they offer an equivalent course, and the legislature has appropriated funding to the virtual school to allow the program to grow while schools become accustomed to the idea of passing along some of their funding to the online program. One advantage to FTE funding from the state, however, is that state funding eliminates the need for schools, districts, or parents to pay the online program directly, reducing accounting and transaction costs.

Creative state-led program funding

Some state-led programs have variations on typical funding models. In 2006 Colorado passed a law that creates a unique funding mechanism for supplemental online programs.[4] The legislature appropriated just over half a million dollars to the state Department of Education to be used to reimburse small districts (less than 3,000 students) and charter schools for the cost of purchasing a supplemental online course. Among the limits on the funding are that the course provider must use Colorado-licensed teachers, and district or charter schools must not provide their own online courses to students outside their geographic boundaries. The amount that can be reimbursed to each district is capped at ten dollars per district enrollment in grades 6-12. If the district, for example, has 600 students in these grades, it can be reimbursed up to $6,000. Although the law applies to all supplemental programs, Colorado Online Learning, the state-led program, is likely to be the main beneficiary.

[4] Colorado House Bill 06-1008; retrieved July 2, 2006, from http://www.leg.state.co.us/clics2006a/csl.nsf/fsbillcont3/B4270585F78ABF15872570AD0057C329?Open&file=1008_enr.pdf The fiscal note, available at http://www.leg.state.co.us/clics2006a/csl.nsf/fsbillcont3/B4270585F78ABF15872570AD0057C329?Open&file=HB1008_r2.pdf, provides a summary of the bill.

The Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA) is implementing a change to course fees that addresses the need of supplemental programs to have strong support from the local school that the student attends. IDLA is reducing course fees from $100 per student per semester to $50 for students in school districts that have a site coordinator who has taken IDLA's online site coordinator course, thus lowering IDLA's cost of supporting its students.

The North Dakota Division of Independent Study offers site licenses to schools as an alternative to charging course fees. Site licenses range from $800 for sites with 11–30 users to $2,850 for sites with 151–300 users. Schools with site licenses provide the teacher for their students.

Private grant funding for state-led programs

Some state-led programs have received funding through non-governmental grants, although in past years this was a rare source of funding. The Idaho Digital Learning Academy received $1 million from the Albertson Foundation to begin operations in 2002, and Iowa Learning Online received $400,000 for course development from a private foundation, but this type of funding was unusual. In the last couple of years, however, the BellSouth Foundation has funded the state-led programs in Louisiana and Mississippi with $2.5 million each, with smaller grants of between $15,000 and $90,000 to the state-led programs in Georgia, Alabama, and Florida. The Foundation has also provided $100,000 each to Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Tennessee to expand online learning initiatives; including the state-led online programs.

Cyberschool/full-time program funding

For cyberschools and other full-time programs, funding is almost always based on FTE funding. Many full-time online programs are cyber charter schools, which may receive charter school funding at a different rate (usually lower) than the typical district rate. In some states a lower funding level is applied to cyberschools regardless of whether they are charter schools or not. In Colorado, for example, FTE funding (called PPOR for per-pupil operating revenue) starts at a base rate that is adjusted upward by a number of student- and district-specific factors, and that must reach at least a state-mandated minimum funding level. Full-time online students are funded at this state minimum, regardless of the student's district of residence.

One exception to the FTE funding is the Arkansas Virtual School, which is funded by a federal grant through the Voluntary School Choice Program.

Some states recognize that the student's home district may incur some costs even if the student is enrolled in a full-time program elsewhere or taking a course in a supplemental program, and divide online program funding between the online program and the student's home district. Minnesota has this provision for full-time programs, with the student's home district receiving 12% of the student funding. Georgia has a similar provision for its supplemental state-led program, subject to appropriation from the legislature.

Public funding for previously home-schooled students

Funding of full-time cyberschool students who were previously home-schooled is a concern in some states (e.g. Arizona, Colorado) which believe that an influx of new public school students could cause a significant increase in education funding costs. Many other states do

not have policies that reflect this concern. Some of these states believe that the budget impact will not be large enough to be of concern, while others believe that the state should be educating any students who want to be in the public education system, and therefore welcome the addition of formerly home-schooled students.

FTE funding divisions

States' funding models differ in terms of the division of FTE funding. States such as Florida, Georgia and Minnesota split their funding into increments of one-sixth, allowing easy accounting and funding shifts for students taking one online course while enrolled elsewhere. In other states, such as Colorado and Idaho, funding is split only into half-time and full-time increments, meaning that for these states shifting funding on a per-course basis to a supplemental online program would present more of an accounting challenge. In some of these states districts are permitted to enter into contracts to split student funding as they see fit when a student is enrolled in one school and taking supplemental courses from another.

3.4 Synchronous vs. asynchronous programs

A small but significant subset of online programs use synchronous teaching and learning for a substantial part of their curriculum. Examples range from the many programs that are primarily asynchronous, but have a synchronous component, to a few programs that are entirely synchronous. Programs that are mostly or entirely synchronous face and create some policy and practice issues different from asynchronous programs.

Among programs that are primarily asynchronous, most have synchronous technology capability through text-based chat, at a minimum. Other programs add one- or two-way audio and video, whiteboard, application sharing, and other real-time instructional methods. Another set of programs, such as Iowa Learning Online, combine asynchronous web-based learning with a synchronous video component. Some of these programs leave the use of synchronous technology to the choice of the teacher, while others require a synchronous component. Students in the Clark County School District's Virtual High School, for example, are required to meet for an hour and fifteen minutes each week for every online course in which they are enrolled. Students log in to a virtual classroom to collaborate and interact with their teachers and classmates to build on the asynchronous content.

The real-time forum presents students with a number of benefits not easily afforded by asynchronous learning, especially if teachers are not given appropriate professional development for asynchronous online course delivery:

- Students feel they are instantly connected to one another and to their teacher, fostering a stronger sense of participating in a classroom. The ability of students and teachers to interact in a live forum allows students to ask impromptu questions, open spontaneous conversations, and share ideas as those ideas are being formed.
- Through synchronous interaction, students and teachers are supported by audio and video to create a rapport that will aid in the ability of the student to ask for help if needed and help the teacher to recognize moments of struggle and success.
- Teachers are given an opportunity for audio and video instant feedback during formative assessment in the live format. By making available more opportunities for additional types of both formal and informal assessments, teachers are able to continually monitor and improve their quality of instruction.

Adding a synchronous component to a program also creates some challenges. Online teaching practices are commonly taught for asynchronous technology, and synchronous teaching requires both an understanding of a new technology and different teaching practices. Synchronous technology often requires additional hardware, such as microphones and headphones, and some types of synchronous courseware do not work well on dial-up connections. In addition, a required synchronous component requires students to be available on a planned schedule, which partially negates the flexibility of an asynchronous program.

3.5 Teaching and teacher professional development

Online education practitioners recognize that teaching online requires a unique set of skills in addition to skills for teaching in a face-to-face classroom. Because few pre-service teaching programs include skills in teaching online, most new teachers do not know how to teach online, while classroom veterans rarely have the opportunity to develop these online skills on the job. Most programs, therefore, have created extensive professional development in teaching online, and find that it is more effective to hire and train teachers with prior face-to-face teaching experience than to expect new teachers to master both sets of skills simultaneously.

Full-time versus part-time teachers in state-led programs

State-led programs usually employ teachers on part-time contracts in order to maintain flexibility of options in the number and types of courses being taught. Programs sometimes employ a mix of full-time and part-time teachers, but in most cases they have more part-time teachers than full-time. Florida Virtual is an exception, with over 300 full-time teachers and about 175 part-time. At the other extreme, Michigan Virtual has about 375 teachers, all of whom are part-time.

State-led program	Number and types of teachers
Arkansas	3 full-time, 21 part-time
Colorado	33 part-time
Florida	301 full-time teachers, 175 adjuncts
Georgia	126 part-time
Idaho	100 part-time
Illinois	86 part-time
Kentucky	2 full-time, 45 part-time
Louisiana	15 full-time, 55 part-time
Maryland	7 part-time
Michigan	375 part-time
North Dakota	14 full-time; 8 half-time
Utah	98 part-time
West Virginia	2 full-time, 16 part-time
Wisconsin	33 part-time

Highly qualified teachers

The need for highly qualified teachers is one of the drivers of online education, as some schools, especially in rural districts, are unable to provide highly qualified teachers in all subjects. Federal guidance on meeting these challenges has suggested that districts consider using online learning.[5] State-led online programs recognize the value of being able to provide highly qualified teachers, and all programs responded that all of their teachers meet the definition of highly qualified in their states, including appropriate state certification.

Professional development for online teachers in state-led programs

As noted above, state-led programs recognize that their first-time teachers are unlikely to have much, if any, experience in teaching online. In response they have developed extensive professional development (PD) programs. For instance, Louisiana Virtual School has an in-depth five-phase program for new teachers:[6]

Professional Development for Louisiana Virtual School Online Teachers	
Phase I Prospective Instructor	Train a pool of teachers for future growth
Phase II Teacher Assistant (TA)	Plays the role of an online student teacher serving in a mentee teacher assistant role
Phase III Induction Year	Delivers one online course for the Louisiana Virtual School
Phase IV Experienced Instructor	May deliver more than one online course for the Louisiana Virtual School
Phase V Mentor Program	Mentor a new Teaching Assistant (TA) for the Louisiana Virtual School

Alabama ACCESS has an extensive PD component to the state's online education efforts. ACCESS has awarded grants to three support centers to provide training and support to online teachers as well as school administrators, facilitators, counselors, and technology coordinators. They receive instruction in the use of the learning management system, web casting, interactive video conferencing, distance learning policies and guidelines, and effective pedagogy.

Many programs approach PD needs with a mix of online and face-to-face training. Florida, for example, has new teachers spend 10-15 hours in an online course before either 1 day (adjuncts) or 2 days (full-time) of intensive face-to-face training, followed by a structured series of 15-20 'just in time' trainings provided by FLVS mentors over the next 6-8 months. Similar to Louisiana, structured mentoring is also a key component of supporting new FLVS teachers, with each teacher assigned to a mentor who guides them through a formalized

[5] Glenn Kleiman, *Meeting the Need for Highly Qualified Teachers through E-Learning*, U.S. Department of Education Secretary's No Child Left Behind Leadership Summit, http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/os/technology/plan/2004/site/documents/Kleiman-MeetingtheNeed.pdf

[6] Chart developed and provided by the Louisiana Virtual School administration.

program designed to increase their effectiveness as online teachers. In Illinois, online teachers combine a four-week professional development online course and a three-day face-to-face course.

The amount of time a new teacher is expected to spend on PD varies widely. Virtual High School, which requires one of two online professional development courses of either 135 hours or 270 hours, is one of the longest. The distinction in the number of hours required is between teachers who are teaching a pre-developed course versus teachers who are developing and teaching a new course. In both courses, the emphasis is on the development of effective online teaching skills, emphasizing online classroom pedagogy and management skills, such as fostering online teams, online group projects, creating and sustaining online community, and fostering online discussions in constructivist, student-centered learning. Clark County's Virtual High School makes a similar distinction, with teachers 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.

Resources for online teacher professional development

Two valuable publications explore issues of teaching online:

Standards for Quality Online Teaching was published by the Southern Regional Education Board in August 2006, and is available at http://www.sreb.org

The Guide to Teaching Online Courses is being published by the National Education Association and will be available in November 2006.

State policies regarding online teaching and professional development requirements

Most state policies focus on accountability via outcomes of state assessments, and there are few states with policy requirements for online teacher professional development, especially compared to the number of state-led programs that have extensive PD requirements. Most states require that online teachers meet the same licensure as face-to-face teachers but few go beyond this requirement. Even states with extensive online program requirements do not stipulate online teaching professional development for online teachers.

A few states, including Kansas and Alabama, do have online teaching professional development requirements. In Georgia the State Board of Education issued a rule requiring that Georgia Virtual School online instructors must successfully complete a virtual training course, addressing the pedagogy of online learning and instruction as well as the policies and procedures specific to Georgia Virtual School's program. Trainees who successfully complete the online learning program are then given the opportunity to mentor with an experienced online instructor before teaching their own courses. This helps insure the quality and consistency of online instruction. Similarly, South Dakota requires that online teachers demonstrate proficiency in using the distance learning technology.

A National Education Association policy statement recognizes the need for professional development for online teachers:

> "Although licensure in the subject matter being taught is a necessary condition for any teacher, it is not a sufficient condition for a teacher involved in distance education. Teachers who provide distance education should in addition be skilled

> in learning theories, technologies, and teaching pedagogies appropriate for the online environment. Moreover, because of the rapidly changing technology, these skills should be continuously updated through professional development."[7]

Teaching across state lines

In most states, an online teacher must be licensed by the state and there are limited opportunities for teachers to teach across state lines. This is a barrier that the National Education Association policy statement addresses when it suggests that for online teachers

> "[t]he license need not be from the state in which the educational services are received by students because this would have the practical effect of eliminating the multi-state use of distance education, nor is there any educationally sound reason why the teacher should be licensed in the state in which the educational services originate. Because NEA does not value a teaching license from any one state over that from any other state, it should be acceptable if a teacher who provides distance education to elementary/secondary school students is licensed in any state in the subject matter being taught."[8]

To help meet growing teacher shortages in high need schools and subject areas, teachers in any state, with certification and subject area expertise, should be allowed to teach the subject online in any state with reciprocity. Most states have policies in place to address teacher reciprocity as teachers relocate from one state to another; extending those policies to address reciprocity for online teaching would remove a major policy barrier to online teaching.

Teaching requirements

Although there are relatively few formal policies around teacher PD requirements, many state-led programs and some state policies set requirements around the act of teaching online. For example many state-led programs, and some state policies, include a formal requirement for communications between teachers and students. Requirements may be tied to a maximum response time for teachers, or a minimum amount of communication between teachers and students. For example:

- Nevada state policy requires weekly communication between teacher and students; additionally, Clark County Virtual High School requires that its teachers respond to student communications within 24 hours during the school week. Colorado Online Learning and the Idaho Digital Learning Academy, among others, have the same 24-hour response time requirement, and FLVS has a 48-hour response time.
- Kansas has a 24-hour response time rule for its online learning providers, and requires that providers have a back-up plan for communicating with students when teachers are not available.

Some states set limits on teacher-student ratios. Minnesota legislation states "unless the commissioner grants a waiver, a teacher providing online learning instruction must not instruct more than 40 students in any one online learning course or program." Alabama rules state that "Class size regulations shall be the same as for courses not taught online."

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[7] National Education Association policy statement: 13. Distance Education; retrieved June 30, 2006, from http://www2.nea.org/he/policy13.html

[8] Ibid.

Online professional development for classroom teachers

Although not a focus of this report, *Keeping Pace* has found numerous examples of states using online learning to provide professional development opportunities to brick-and-mortar classroom teachers. Some of these are run through the state-led program. Michigan Virtual High School, for example, has teamed with the Michigan Department of Education to develop Michigan LearnPort,[9] a new web-based professional development system for educators. The Michigan LearnPort catalog currently contains over 175 online courses or professional development modules, 82 of which are available at no cost to Michigan educators. More than 9,000 active users have joined Michigan LearnPort as of July 2006. The program is especially relevant for Michigan now because the requirement that students have an online learning experience before graduating is creating a greater demand for educators who are able to teach online.

Alabama Access is another state-led program using the Internet to provide PD opportunities through its three support centers, and New Mexico and South Dakota have state initiatives to offer PD online. New Mexico, in particular, has a unique approach in this area, emphasizing the importance it places on online professional development by tying PD directly to the laptop initiative. All of the 188 teachers who are provided with a computer through the initiative are required to take a number of hours of online professional development courses provided through the program.

The Massachusetts Department of Education provides MassONE (Massachusetts Online Network for Education), an online teaching and learning portal, free of charge to all teachers and students. In addition to offering online professional development courses for teachers, MassONE provides classroom teachers with web-based tools for communication, collaboration, and curriculum planning, enabling classroom teachers to extend the school day and school year through web-enhanced instruction.

3.6 Online program accountability

Accountability of online programs falls into several categories, which correspond to the following questions:

- For state-led programs, what body or agency oversees the program?
- For state-led programs, are they accredited and do they undergo an external evaluation?
- What is the oversight, if any, for other (non state-led) online programs?
- Does the state track online programs?
- What course or content accountability measures are reported by the online program?

Because students and districts participate in online programs by choice, many program practitioners feel that the ultimate sources of accountability are the students and districts who participate in the programs. Growing in response to increased demand is perhaps the best measure of accountability for these programs.

[9] http://learnport.org/

Governance and accountability of state-led programs

Most state-led programs are housed in the state's education agency (Department of Education, Public Instruction, etc.). At least one is an independent 501(c)3 organization, and a few are jointly run between the state education agency and another program.

Two measures of accountability are achieved through accreditation and/or evaluation by an external evaluator. Major programs are split fairly evenly between having one, both, or neither. For most programs, accreditation is awarded by a broad-based accrediting body such as the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA) and/or a regional accreditor such as Northwest Association of Accredited Schools; in a few states the education agency has an accreditation process for schools that is used to accredit the state-led online program as well.

State-led program	Accredited/External Evaluation
Alabama	External evaluation
Arkansas	Department of Education accreditation
California	External evaluation
Colorado	Accredited and annual external evaluation
Florida	Accredited and annual external evaluation
Georgia	Accreditation candidate
Idaho	Accredited and external evaluation every third year
Illinois	External evaluation
Iowa	Neither
Kentucky	Neither
Louisiana	Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education evaluation
Maryland	External evaluation
Michigan	Accredited and external evaluation
North Dakota	Accredited
Utah	Accredited and annual external evaluation
Virginia	Neither
Virtual High School	Accredited and annual evaluation
West Virginia	Neither
Wisconsin	Neither

Oversight and accountability of non state-led online programs

States oversee non state-led online programs in numerous ways which vary by state and type of online programs. There are only a few common approaches—and even these don't always hold true.

- If state policies regulate all online programs in a state, it is likely because the state has rules governing all types of distance learning. These rules often pre-date online courses and programs, focusing instead on print-based correspondence programs,

State tracking of online programs: The Kansas example

Many states are wrestling with the issues of if and how to track online programs; few states track online programs in any comprehensive way. Some of these states believe that there is no need to do so, that online programs don't need oversight that is different than the existing state assessments and perhaps accreditation that are already in place. Other states, and some online programs, believe that in order to create and implement appropriate policies, states should know basic information about online education such as the number of programs and students, and basic quality information about these programs.

States that are considering what to track, and how to track, often don't know where to start. For these states, the way in which the Kansas Department of Education tracks online programs may be instructive. Kansas is one of the few states that has a large number of online programs and a registration requirement that allows the state to maintain basic information about the programs.

For online programs to claim FTE funding for their students, Kansas has a few reporting requirements and several additional program requirements. Each program must:

Register with the state, allowing the Department of Education to maintain an up-to-date list of programs;

Conduct an annual "desktop audit," in which the program certifies that it has complied with all online program regulations;

Submit an annual report that provides the number of students in the program, along with related data.

Kansas also stipulates extensive program requirements, specifically in the types of personnel that must be employed by the program. The goal is to ensure, among other things, adequate communication with students and parents, participation in state assessments, professional development in teaching online, and active student participation in their courses.

Additional information about these requirements is in the Kansas profile in Section 2, and on the Department of Education website at www.ksde.org/outcomes/chartindex.html.

two-way interactive video, and the like. These distance learning requirements are often generic, do not reflect emerging research in online learning, and set very broad standards for local school districts to meet, often without any formal oversight provision. In these states there is usually recognition that the growth of online programs threatens to outpace the effectiveness of distance education rules that were designed with print and video-based courses in mind.

- In states without generic distance education rules, district online programs that serve students within their own districts are often free from state oversight. State education agencies are often aware that these programs exist, but usually anecdotally instead of via any formal tracking requirement. Programs that serve students out of their district are more likely to be subject to online learning policy.
- Many states with charter school laws neither specifically prohibit cyber charter schools, nor have regulations that specifically govern cyber charters separate from brick-and-mortar charters. The main mechanism for oversight of cyber charter schools is tracking of state assessment scores. This approach is consistent with the goal of charter school laws to allow the schools flexibility and hold them accountable via student outcomes.

Given the overall lack of patterns in state oversight of online programs, the examples of a few states with significant oversight are illuminating.

- Washington governs online programs through policies for "alternative learning experiences" (ALE), which are any non-school based programs, including online. Online ALE programs must be accredited by the state, and ALE programs must submit an annual report that provides FTE enrollment. Each ALE student must have an individual alternative experience learning plan, and communication between teacher and student must occur at least weekly.
- Pennsylvania has 11 cyber charter schools that are authorized by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), which has created the Pennsylvania System of Cyber Charter Review (PASCCR). Cyber charter schools are regulated by a combination of charter school law that oversees all charter schools, and regulations specific to cyber charters. The PASCCR was developed by the PDE's charter school team to specifically address cyber charter school issues. Collectively, PASCCR, the charter school's annual report to the state, and the original charter school application to PDE explain how the school meets Pennsylvania's academic standards and assessment requirements, what technical support will be given to students, how student work will be monitored, what type of communication will take place with students and parents, and how often.
- Montana 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, provide program and course descriptions, demonstrate that students have "ongoing contact" with the online teacher, and verify teachers' qualifications. As of August 2006, Montana is revising the application process for online providers, moving the process online and changing some requirements, including possibly a differentiation between online classes taken at a school versus taken at home or elsewhere.

Accountability of online courses and content reported by online programs

Whether state-led or not, all online programs can and should track and report data on the effectiveness of their online courses. AP exam and end-of-course exam pass rates and course completion rates are measures of accountability of online courses as well as of online programs.

3.7 Accountability for student achievement

Across public education, including brick and mortar schools, accountability for student achievement is increasingly based on results of state assessments mandated by No Child Left Behind. State assessments are the responsibility of the school in which the student is enrolled.

Washington has a different approach to student achievement accountability. Online programs are governed by a set of "alternative learning experience" (ALE) policies, and programs must have an alternative learning experience plan for each student in an ALE program. Student achievement is based on the meeting the learning plan goals, in

addition to state assessments. A teacher must conduct a monthly progress review of the student, which must include "direct personal contact" (defined to include communication over the Internet). The teacher must document progress toward the student learning plan, or establish an intervention plan and/or change the original learning plan. California takes a similar approach, in which the accountability for many students in online programs is via independent study policies.

Accountability for student achievement in cyberschool/full-time programs

Like all other public schools in America, cyberschools must participate in state standardized testing as required under No Child Left Behind. Cyberschools are fully responsible and accountable for the results of their students' state tests, and therefore they must be sure that their students are prepared and participate at acceptable rates.

No states allow fully web-based, distributed testing, which means that test administration can be a complex task, especially for programs serving most or all of an entire state. This challenge is exacerbated by the need for students to travel to testing sites during the customary testing dates set by the state, leaving the best-laid testing plans vulnerable to early spring snowstorms and other weather challenges. In some states, cyberschool students test at their local traditional public school, where cost savings and increased convenience are sometimes counterbalanced by confusion over correctly routing the students' scores. Some cyberschools must also combat a higher than average level of test resistance among students and parents.

In past years cyberschools were not very good at rising to these challenges, and many had rather dismal testing participation records. In Colorado, for example, the three largest online programs had assessment participation rates of between 63% and 84% in 2003-2004. Other online programs around the country had participation rates that were even lower. Many states had no formal policies for cyberschool students' participation in state assessments.

In recent years some states, and many online programs, have recognized the previous failures of policy and practice. Some states have responded with a regulatory approach that seems to place extra burden on online programs for no clear reason. South Carolina's proposed law, for example, requires that students of cyber charter schools take state assessments at the school site. Oklahoma's code regarding alternative instruction, which applies to all types of distance learning, has a similar requirement. These policies are restrictive and it is unclear why the states do not allow online schools to set up distributed satellite sites for students to take state assessments.

Arizona's pilot online program has a more effective way of handling state assessments. Students must participate in state assessments; if a student does not take the state assessment and the school has less than 95% participation in the assessments, the student may not continue in the online program. Ohio legislators recently added a similar provision for that state's "e-community" charter schools.

Most importantly, many cyberschools have recognized the need to increase participation rates. The national network of Connections Academy virtual public schools, for example, had participation rates of 96% and higher in 2005-2006, in part by reminding reluctant students and their families that active participation in testing is one way to ensure that the public cyber school choice remains available to them.

Accountability for student achievement in state-led programs

Because state-led programs are mostly supplemental, they are not responsible for student participation in state assessments. They are, however, responsible for student achievement in various other ways. In many cases, because a student's participation in online courses is at the discretion of the local school, the school's decision to allow participation and grant credit becomes the oversight mechanism.

The Georgia Virtual School is unusual in that its students take end-of-course exams that are common across the state, and tracked by the state, potentially allowing for a comparison of test scores of students in online courses against state averages. A few other states and programs, including Kentucky, have or are considering using end-of-course exams. Advanced Placement courses also have end-of-course exams, and many programs track the results of their students' AP exams. Online programs have shown success in this measure,

Program metrics: The need for common measures

The rapid growth of online education programs has challenged policymakers responsible for overseeing public education in numerous ways. One of the challenges that policymakers face is the lack of common measures of outcomes and quality in online programs. Although most programs track student outcomes and other measures of quality, these measures are not consistent across programs; and a metric with the same name (e.g., course completion rate) used by two programs may not in fact measure the same thing. This lack of consistency makes measuring outcomes across programs difficult and hinders development of appropriate policies.

There are some common issues surrounding measures of success, which include:

Inputs vs. outcomes: many quality assurance measures historically used in education have been inputs, such as teacher/student ratios and state content standards. Education policy is increasingly moving towards outcomes-based assessments, such as graduation rates and performance on state assessments.

Outcomes measures may be divided into two categories: those specific to the online program, and those that transcend the program and can be used to compare results across programs. The latter may include measures that compare online programs to face-to-face schools. One example is scores on Advanced Placement exams for students who have taken an online AP course; another is results of state assessments. An example of the former is the course completion rate of the program.

Course completion rates provide a good example of inconsistencies between programs. Course completion rate, simply defined, is the number of students completing the course divided by the number who started the course. There are, however, unresolved questions inherent in this measure. Should the number of students starting the course be calculated at the very beginning of the course or after a no-penalty drop date? Does a student who finishes the course with a failing grade count as a course completion? If some students are given extra time to complete a course, when are they eventually counted?

Based on *Measuring Outcomes in K-12 Online Education Programs: The Need for Common Metrics*, written by Liz Pape, Mickey Revenaugh, Matthew Wicks, and John Watson, published in the Fall 2006 edition of *Distance Learning*, a publication of the US Distance Learning Association.

with Virtual High School exceeding the national average of the percentage of students receiving a score of three or higher on their AP exams and Florida Virtual High School students exceeding the national average in 7 of 11 subjects.[10]

3.8 Dual enrollment programs

Dual enrollment programs in many states allow high school students to take a course that earns credit towards a post-secondary degree or certificate and counts as a credit towards a high school diploma as well. (In some states, "dual enrollment" also refers to the ability of students in one school to take any course and/or extra-curricular activity in another school; while this kind of dual enrollment also has implications for online learning, this section is focusing specifically on dual enrollment for post-secondary credit.) While dual enrollment programs are not necessarily online, and online programs do not necessarily have a dual enrollment component, there is overlap between online programs and dual enrollment programs, and some programs and policies address both online learning and dual enrollment. This overlap is evident, for example, in the 2006 Mississippi law that creates both the Mississippi Virtual Public School program and a dual enrollment program. The Mississippi law is representative of other state laws in several ways:

- Students must be formally enrolled in the dual enrollment program and must meet the admission requirements of the post-secondary institution.
- In Mississippi tuition may be charged to the student, but if the school district pays the tuition, it will generate ADA funding for the student.
- The aim of the program is to allow a high school student to gain credit for the equivalent of one semester of college courses.
- The state is charged with developing template agreements for school districts and post-secondary institutions.

Oregon also has dual enrollment programs. A policy brief written by the Education Commission of the States notes that in Oregon:

> "College High School (CH) programs are voluntary cooperative educational program agreements between high schools and colleges to offer college-level courses for credit in the high school. CH programs were first developed in Oregon in the 1970s. Courses are taught by high school teachers and students earn dual credits—both high school and college. Colleges are responsible for the curricular content and standards, administrative support and program monitoring."[11]

The Louisiana Virtual School, in conjunction with Northwestern State University, and Oklahoma State University are two additional providers of online dual enrollment courses.

Data from the National Center for Education Statistics from 2003[12] suggest that access to dual enrollment is limited for low-income and minority students, as schools with the highest minority enrollment were the most likely to indicate that they did not offer dual credit courses. In addition, only 5% of institutions with dual enrollment programs, or 2%

[10] FLVS AP exam scores provided by FLVS, personal communication. VHS AP exam results available at http://www.govhs.org/Pages/WhyVHS-Home

[11] Education Commission of the State, Policy Brief: Distance Education in Oregon, October 2004; retrieved August 17, 2006, from http://www.ode.state.or.us/initiatives/elearning/ecs_policybrieffinal.pdf

[12] Dual Credit and Exam-Based Courses in U.S. Public High Schools: 2002-03, National Center for Education Statistics 2005-009

of all institutions, targeted at-risk students. In 2003 very few dual enrollment courses were taught at a distance (4%),[13] although the percentage has likely increased since then. Online learning has the potential to help close the gap in access to dual enrollment courses if virtual school programs focus on serving high needs schools and populations.

Quality assurance: An inputs-based approach to accountability

Supplemental programs have few outcomes-based accountability measures. Many programs address this lack of outcomes-based measures by focusing on inputs in curriculum development, teaching, and communications requirements. Almost all states set baseline policy by requiring that online courses meet state academic content standards, and teachers be state licensed. Few states have requirements that are specific to online needs, for example, setting guidelines for online courses and course content, or professional development requirements for teaching online.

In the absence of state policies, many programs have created extensive quality assurance (QA) programs that cover content development, professional development in teaching online, and communication requirements between teachers and students. These QA programs have two goals: to ensure quality in teaching and learning, and to demonstrate the quality of the program to external stakeholders. Because of the ongoing nature of teaching and learning, good quality assurance programs are iterative, continually reviewing and updating course content, pedagogy, and professional development.

Colorado Online Learning (COL) has an extensive quality assurance program (QAP) that represents some of the best quality assurance efforts by similar programs. Important elements of its QAP include:

- Statements of purpose and values, to explain the intent of the program. For example, one purpose is to "assure high quality standards-based courses via initial course approval and continuous curricular and pedagogical improvement."
- A set process to ensure quality of content and teaching, with responsibilities assigned to specific personnel that include teachers, content specialists, and COL instructional leaders.
- Formal reporting templates for course structure, content, and pedagogy.
- Feedback from students via student surveys.
- Ongoing review of courses to ensure that each course is reviewed every third year.

COL also requires that during a course teachers be in their online course every school day, and respond to student inquiries within 24 hours. COL's quality assurance program is representative of the efforts undertaken by top-tier online programs to ensure high standards in teaching and learning.

Virtual High School's quality assurance program uses both input and output-based benchmarks, which are reported annually in its program evaluation, and used in the development and revision of its strategic plan. Output-based measures for course quality include AP exam participation and pass rates, course completion, and credit recovery rates. VHS's extensive course design standards are input-based and include project-based assessments, student-centered discussions, development of online collaboration skills and fostering online classroom community. Program measures of quality include member retention and course utilization rates, as well as communication of mission and belief statements. VHS's professional development and online teacher quality input-based measures include its Professional Growth Model, a four-year program of peer review, self-evaluation, course evaluation and on-going professional development training, as well as delivery standards for frequency and tone of teacher feedback and communications.

[13] National Center for Education Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/ssbr/pages/dualcredit.asp?IndID=26

4 Looking ahead

Many analyses looking at the growth of online education have concluded that online learning will have, or is having, a tremendous impact on the evolution of education. The metaphor of evolution is commonly used to describe change over time, and in fact a deeper understanding of evolutionary processes may be instructive in viewing the present education landscape.

Evolution is commonly, and mistakenly, seen as a slow and gradual process of change. Most biologists, however, believe that evolutionary change happens in short, volatile bursts that transform species. Punctuated equilibrium, as this theory is called, sees evolution as long periods of stasis interrupted by rapid explosions of change. These periods of change lead to adaptive radiation as one species changes into many, taking advantage of newly available ecological niches.

In natural selection, these transformations are often caused by environmental modifications and stresses: drought, rising temperatures, or the introduction of a new competitive species. In human society, similar transformations often start with technological change: electricity, the internal combustion engine, the Internet. As with natural selection, the response to the changing societal landscape is a variety of adaptations, some more suited for the new conditions than others. As with natural selection, the demise of the old ways of doing things may be caused by the changing landscape, or by competition with those embodying new ways.

The proliferation of the Internet is the changing environment that is challenging the limitations of education's traditional methods of teaching and learning. Adaptive radiation is represented by the many types of online programs that are developing in response. Unlike natural selection, human societies and organizations can will themselves to change, to incorporate the transformations necessary to survive, and indeed to improve themselves.

In addition to possessing the will to adapt, human societies and organizations differ from natural systems in their awareness of change. The finch with the slightly longer beak does not realize it is better adapted to the drought, and does not will its beak to grow longer. In contrast, education agencies, policymakers, and other stakeholders are aware of the need for change, and they are creating numerous ways of attempting to adapt.

4.1 Varieties of online programs

An increasing number of states have or are planning state-led programs, including new programs in North Carolina, South Dakota, and Missouri. As more states begin the policy and planning efforts to develop state-led virtual schools, many are exploring the various

models of providing online courses. The most common approach is having the state-led program run out of the state education agency, providing courses and teachers and working in conjunction with local school districts.

Other types of approaches also exist. Oregon is creating the Oregon Virtual School District (OVSD) within the Oregon Department of Education, funded at $2 million over two years. OVSD will act as a portal for finding and accessing courses and providers and lead in the development of future state online learning policy. The portal will include an aggregated course catalog, links to registered online course providers, and a teacher professional development site. The Digital Learning Commons in Washington State is a similar portal approach being led by the state.

Some of the New England states are taking a different, cooperative approach, with many schools across several states using Virtual High School, a collaborative of nearly 400 high schools in 29 states and 20 countries. The VHS cooperative operates by having each member school agree to release one of its teachers for one period a day to teach a VHS online course. In exchange, the school is able to register its students in any VHS courses.

In some states, VHS is providing online courses nearly statewide by virtue of the large number of schools in the state that are members of VHS. In Massachusetts, although there is no state-led policy or program, over 100 high schools (more than one-third of public high schools) are members of VHS and are working together through the VHS collaborative to meet students' individual learning needs. The state has used grant funding to support the professional development costs of training classroom teachers for online instruction and has developed MassONE, its online portal which is available free to all MA teachers and students. The state is now funding the development and delivery of professional development courses to give classroom teachers the tools and skills needed for every classroom teacher to teach with web-enhanced classroom resources. In Connecticut, the six educational service agencies have partnered to provide VHS membership to schools at reduced rates, and, in three years, have grown VHS membership to nearly 25% of all CT schools. In these and other states, districts and local education agencies are finding creative methods of achieving economies of scale in the absence of state-level action.

4.2 Building 21st century skills

Evolutionary change sometimes confers unexpected benefits on organisms. In an example of a process that biologists call exadaptation, birds first evolved feathers to stay warm, and only later found that feathers were also useful for flying. Similarly, many online programs began in response to the need to transcend limitations of time and place; increase availability of courses to students in rural and urban schools; allow for flexibility in students' schedules; and reach different types of learners who are not responding well to face-to-face instruction in brick-and-mortar schools. In addition to these valuable benefits, practitioners are increasingly recognizing two additional, largely unplanned, advantages of online learning: promoting 21st century skills and global citizenship.

Recognition of the importance of 21st century skills, and the inherent advantage of online courses in teaching 21st century skills and applying them to learning, is the main reason that the Michigan legislature in 2006 passed the requirement that all students have an "online learning experience" prior to graduating high school. Taking an online course requires that the student understand how to get online, communicate and collaborate via email and

discussion boards, and access information via the Internet—all skills that are tremendously important throughout most professional careers.

Online courses commonly include students from across a state, and sometimes from across the country or even beyond. Virtual High School provides its students the chance to take courses through participation in online classrooms with students globally. Because VHS member schools are around the globe, a VHS course often consists of as many as 25 students from 25 different schools among 29 states and 20 countries. Students interacting in their VHS classroom will not only gain the course content skills being taught, but will also learn about their online classmates, gaining online collaboration and global citizenship skills. In a similar vein, the Michigan Virtual High School offers a semester-length online Chinese language course that introduces both language and culture to beginning Chinese language learners. A qualified native Chinese-speaking instructor with expertise in second language learning teaches the MVHS course. The course employs a task-based language-learning curriculum that focuses on enhancing basic communication skills and cross-cultural understanding.

4.3 Web-enhanced classrooms

In some cases, evolution involves formerly separate species interbreeding, thus mixing genetic advantages from different sources and leading to better-adapted offspring. Similarly, some online learning practitioners believe that online education will evolve towards a blend of classroom-based and Internet-based instruction. As one article states, blending both forms of instruction in web-enhanced classrooms combines

> "ways of communicating with students, both asynchronous and synchronous, and …classroom instruction with online instruction. The role of the teacher as facilitator of the student learning process is better supported in a blended learning model, where the online component can foster exploration and the development of independent learning skills in students. Blended learning spans the area between the traditional classroom model where everything happens in the classroom, and the online instructional model, where course instruction is either delivered over the Internet or through two-way video conferencing."[14]

While web-enhanced classroom instruction is often implemented at the school or district level, it can also be promoted in various ways by state programs and policies. For example:

- Maine has the nation's largest student laptop program, recently expanded to reach more than 70,000 middle school students and over 4,000 teachers across the state with laptop computers. The program includes professional development for teachers to help integrate use of the computers in classrooms.[15] South Dakota is beginning a laptop initiative, Classroom Connections, as a pilot project in 2006-2007.[16] Twenty school districts, serving 5,046 students, have been selected as pilot sites for the project.

[14] Liz Pape, *"From Bricks to Clicks—Blurring Classroom/Cyber Lines,"* The School Administrator, Number 7 Vol. 63, August 2006

[15] *Maine extends laptop program with Apple*, eSchool News, August 2006

[16] More information on the laptop initiative can be found at http://www.2010education.com/WhatsNew.htm

- The Louisiana Virtual School's Algebra I Online Program promotes blended learning and professional development in a different way. As opposed to the typical virtual school setting where learners from various locations have the opportunity to become "connected" in a course, the Algebra I Online Program targets entire classrooms of students who are being taught by uncertified teachers. Students benefit by having two teachers, the certified online teacher and the in-class teacher. In addition, the program provides the uncertified mathematics teacher (in-class teacher) with professional development opportunities that assist with the facilitation of the in-class Algebra student learning activities and support his/her efforts toward mathematics certification.

- Alabama ACCESS blends online learning with brick-and-mortar schools, in part by combining hardware infrastructure funding with the other, more typical elements of an online program (e.g., software, teaching, course development). The online and video courses are delivered to school sites that are being developed to receive the distance courses. California's classroom online pilot program also delivers online courses to students in schools, and in policy draws a distinction between these online courses and others where students are not in a physical classroom.

- The Oregon Department of Education, as part of its Oregon Virtual School District, has issued an RFP for digital content for use in classrooms and online courses. Respondents to the RFP are asked to suggest "professional development proposals to instruct teachers how to optimize the provided content."[17]

- The Massachusetts Online Network for Education (MassONE) offers online tools for teachers and students. These include virtual hard drive space, professional development courses for teachers, and a platform for teachers to communicate with students online and extend the classroom.[18] MassOne is also designed as a communication tool between teachers and schools.

- New Mexico has recognized the importance of blended learning and included it in an RFP in Summer of 2006. New Mexico's program, which is creating four teams to collaboratively develop a state-led online program, quotes research that suggests that blended learning courses are more effective than pure online courses.[19]

4.4 Conclusion

Humans' evolutionary heritage can sometimes betray us, because our surroundings have changed faster than our ability to adapt. We evolved with a scarcity of food; therefore we crave fats and sweets in a way that is unhealthy in an age of abundance. Similarly, online programs have grown and evolved in ways that have left the policy framework behind. Human societies, however, have the ability to catch up, and indeed many states are doing so.

With technology and online education practice changing so rapidly, attempting to suggest—yet alone create—an appropriate policy framework is a challenge. Most practitioners, however, recognize that some regulation, if done appropriately, is necessary for the long-term sustainable growth of online education.

[17] http://www.ode.state.or.us/initiatives/elearning/ovsd/ovsd_rfp_digital_content.pdf

[18] http://massone.mass.edu/

[19] http://www.nmlites.org/programs/laptop/documents/NMETCA6.16.doc

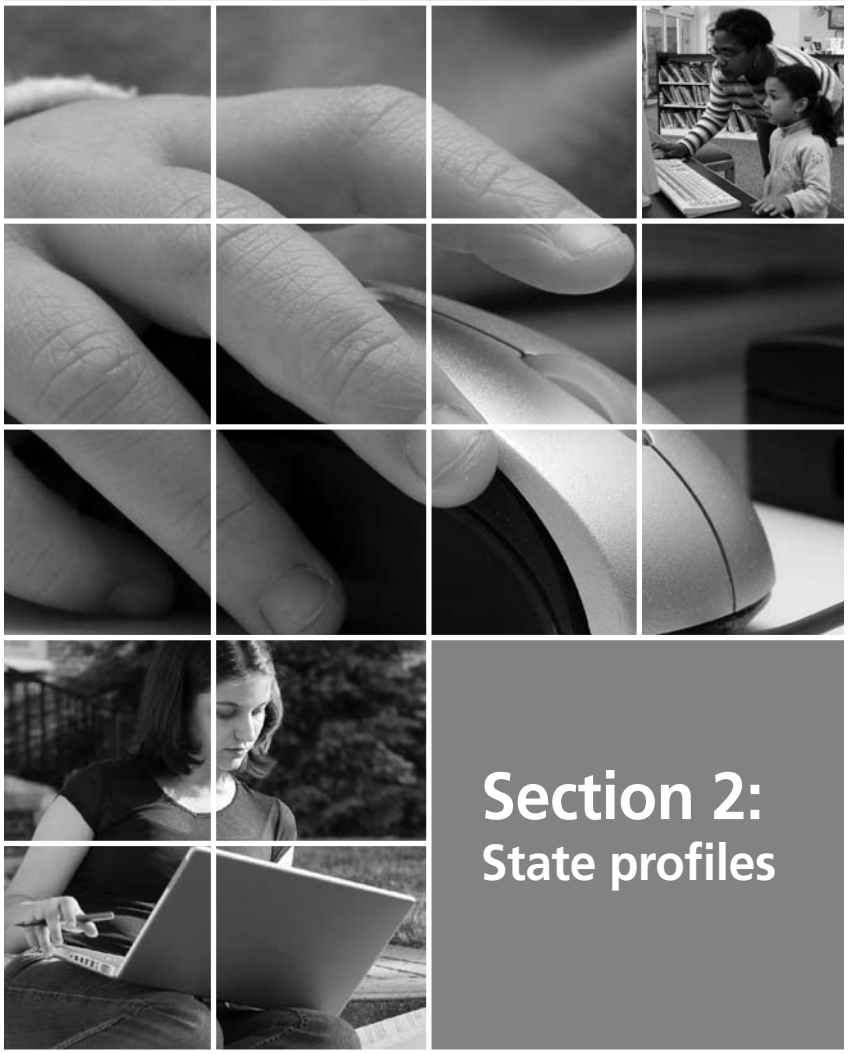
A necessary first step is removing the barriers—the policies that simply do not make sense in the online environment. Online course delivery across state and national borders highlights how 20th century funding and policy models can hinder 21st century models of teaching and learning. State educational policies that dictate that students must be taught by state-certified teachers residing in the state may be appropriate for place-based teaching, but online course delivery transcends such barriers. Similarly, seat time requirements make little sense in an environment where seat time is hard to measure, and more importantly where true educational outcomes can be easily tracked and substituted instead.

The research for this report has revealed many state agencies and programs taking a smart, measured approach to policy and planning—a significant change from the policy landscape several years ago, when the field was so new that many stakeholders were not even able to formulate the right questions. The willingness of experienced practitioners to share their knowledge, and the willingness of newcomers to the field to learn from others and import ideas, is demonstrated in the considered approach that many states are taking to creating new programs and policies.

In the 2005 report, *Keeping Pace* concluded:

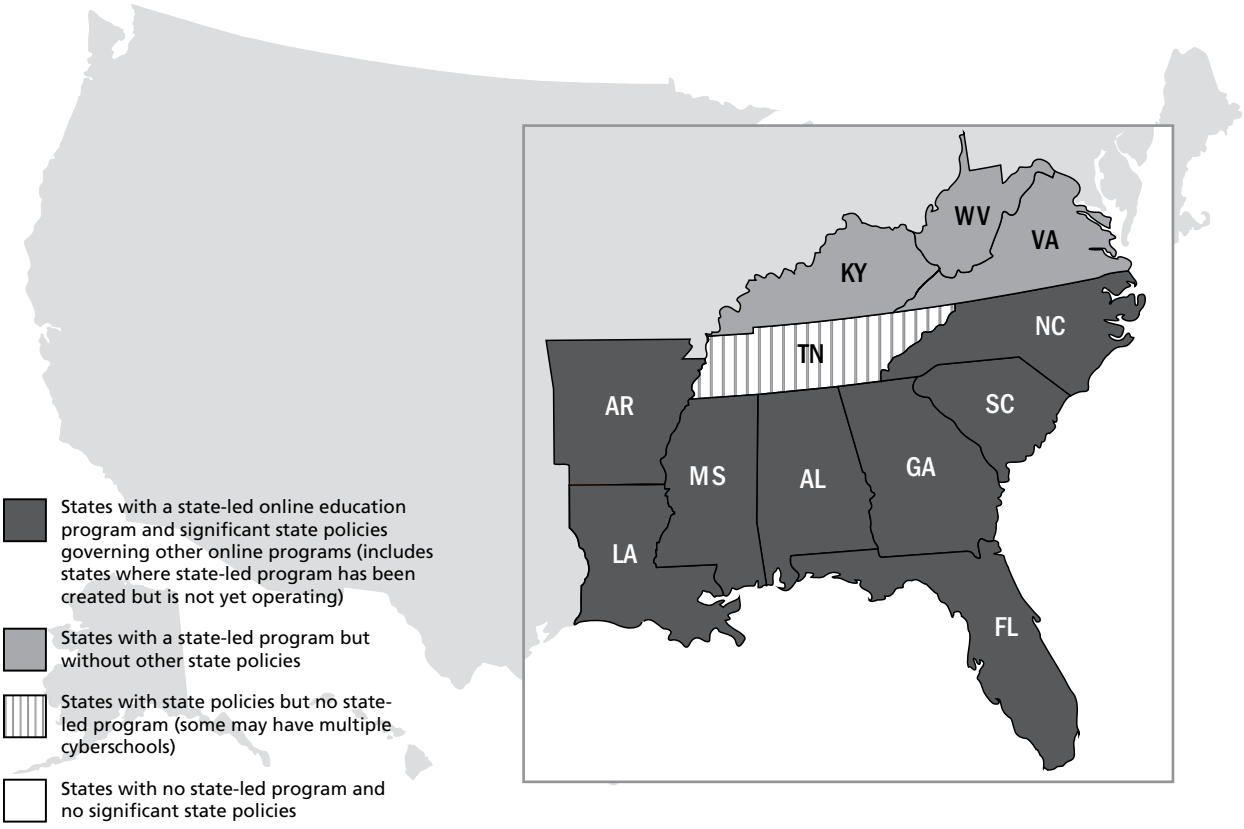
> "In 2004, based on a review of 11 states, *Keeping Pace* reported that the long-term sustainability of online education is threatened by the ad hoc manner in which online learning policy is developing.
>
> The research in 2005 extending to all 50 states gives cause for both concern and optimism. The 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."

In viewing the status of online education across the country at the end of 2006, the opportunities for optimism outnumber the causes of concern. Numerous states have added state-led programs and created new online education policies. Online education is growing, expanding access to all students, exposing students to 21st century skills, and providing highly qualified teachers in areas of need. The barriers of outdated policies still exist in many places, and the obstacles to removing them persist, but the momentum toward new and smarter policies and programs is strong. The continuing evolution of online education, including web-enhanced instructional practices in K-12 classrooms, suggests that online and classroom instruction are no longer seen as separate entities, but rather as part of a continuum of many approaches to education which support individualized instruction for every student and strengthen public education.



Section 2:
State profiles

5 Southeastern states



Alabama
Alabama ACCESS is a well-funded ($10.3 for FY 2006 and FY 2007) program that combines course development with technology infrastructure; no charter school law; state code includes numerous provisions regarding online courses

Arkansas
State-led AR Virtual High School, also one full-time pilot/special grant program with federal funding; state code has rules governing distance learning

Florida
FL Virtual School is largest in the country, also K-8 Virtual School Program; both created/governed by legislation

Georgia
GA Virtual School created via legislation; online charter schools allowed via 2006 amendment to charter school law but none in operation, several suburban Atlanta districts have online programs

Kentucky
KY Virtual High School; district program in Jefferson County

Louisiana
LA Virtual School; LA Department of Education has rules on distance education

Mississippi
2006 legislation authorized Mississippi Virtual Public School Program to replace/expand previous Mississippi Online Learning Institute among other initiatives

North Carolina
NC Virtual Public School is new state-led program created by legislation in 2006; several other district programs

South Carolina
SC Virtual School had first students in 2006, proposed legislation creates possibility of cyber charters; ten districts have online programs

Tennessee
e4TN is a state program funding development of online courses in eight school districts

Virginia
VA Virtual Advanced Placement School, district programs

West Virginia
WV Virtual School governed by State Board policy

5.1 Alabama[1]

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	ACCESS Distance Learning
Other major programs or cyberschools	No	No charter school law
State-level online education policy	Yes	State code includes numerous provisions regarding online courses; these provisions govern ACCESS.

Alabama is in the first full year of implementing a wide-reaching distance learning initiative called ACCESS (Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, & Students State-led), funded at a total of $10.3 million for FY 2006 and 2007. The program provides access to instruction and coursework by providing approved Internet-based courses and the technical infrastructure to deliver courses via the Internet. ACCESS blends Internet- and video-based coursework with Alabama certified teachers from delivery school sites to receiving school sites that otherwise would not have an Alabama certified teacher to instruct the course. The Alabama Online High School, the previous state-led program, has been folded into ACCESS. The University of Alabama, which had run the Alabama Online High School, is now one of the support centers for ACCESS. The main difference between ACCESS and other state-led programs is the focus of ACCESS on development of the technology infrastructure for receiving online and video courses at school sites throughout the state. ACCESS also has a blended learning component, as one of its objectives is to provide teachers with additional multimedia and technology tools to enhance instruction.

Key strategies of ACCESS are:

- By Summer 2006, increase connectivity to approximately 50% of high schools and central offices and by Summer 2007, increase connectivity to all high schools
- Develop blended course model through development of 24 pilot sites
- Create three professional development centers to support distance learning

A key distinction of ACCESS is that it provides online courses to students in public school classrooms, during a set school period, not primarily at home. The funding to pilot high schools includes bandwidth and tablet computers, and ACCESS provides funding for professional development.

Alabama does not have a charter school law, and therefore no cyber charter schools, and essentially all the online education activity in Alabama is through ACCESS.

[21] Information about Alabama ACCESS available at the Alabama ACCESS website at http://accessdl.state.al.us. A document titled "About ACCESS" by the Alabama Department of Education, dated November 2005 and available on the website, was particularly helpful, as was the listing of frequently asked questions at http://accessdl.state.al.us/showaccess.php?lnk=accessFAQ.

Alabama ACCESS

Operations	
Year started	Fall 2006 (the Alabama Online High School existed previously)
Program type	Supplemental
Grade level	9-12
Number of course registrations/ students	1,224 course registrations in Fall 2005–Spring 2006
Funding	
Funding sources	▪ $10.3 million state appropriation for each of FY 2006 and 2007 ▪ Federal funding of $1 million for 12 additional pilot sites was obtained by the Alabama Department of Education from a federal grant awarded by the Appalachian Regional Commission
Course fees	None
Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	32; 15 homegrown and 17 purchased
Number of teachers	27
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	ACCESS has awarded grants to three support centers (Madison City, University of Alabama, and Troy University) to provide training and support to e-teachers as well as school administrators, facilitators, counselors, and technology coordinators. They receive instruction in the use of the learning management system, web casting, interactive video conferencing equipment, distance learning policies and guidelines, and effective pedagogy.
Formal evaluation process for teachers?	Online teachers are evaluated by support center personnel. Additionally, support center personnel are trained in the teacher assessment system for the state. The assessment of online teachers mirrors requirements for teachers in traditional classrooms and currently online teachers are assessed with the state's assessment instrument.
Teacher communication requirements?	Teachers are required to: ▪ have daily communication with students and provide feedback on assignments within 48 hours during the regular school week. ▪ have personal contact, preferably by telephone, at least once a month. ▪ have personal contact, if at all possible, with parents, preferably by phone. ▪ provide progress reports on a regular basis as specified by the local school.
Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	Student outcomes are measured in several ways: success in the course, success in external examinations (Advanced Placement exams where appropriate), and field notes from instructors.
Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	AP exams
Governance	Alabama Department of Education

Accreditation/Evaluation	An external review team from the International Society for Technology in Education is conducting an external evaluation to include comparison of completion/success rates of distance education students versus students in traditional settings, comparison of success rates of students taking distance education Advanced Placement courses versus students in traditional settings, and satisfaction surveys.
Equity and access	
Types of students	ACCESS provides students in rural and underserved schools with courses not available in local schools. ACCESS Expansion Site grants were targeted to high poverty rural schools.
Any equity initiatives	ACCESS currently provides remediation modules and practice examinations for the Alabama High School Exit Exam in science and mathematics; modules and practice examinations in English language arts, social studies, and reading are under development.

State policies

State code includes a section on online education that governs ACCESS; quotes below are from this code.[2]

Teaching and curriculum

- Courses must be from institutions accredited by one of several accrediting organizations.
- Students must take 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 on-line courses shall have an adult facilitator who has completed professional development in on-line methodology and technical aspects of web-based instruction and serves as a liaison to on-line teachers and providers."
- Teachers must be certified, 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 on-line delivery."
- Core courses must be "approved and registered" by the state department of education; elective courses do not need to be approved but must be registered.
- "On-line 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"—at least 140 "clock hours" for a one credit course.

Governance and tracking

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

Accountability for student achievement

None beyond the quality assurance measures; ACCESS is supplemental.

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."

[2] Section 12 of Alabama Code 290-3-1-.02; retrieved June 21, 2006, from http://www.alabamaadministrativecode.state.al.us/

5.2 Arkansas

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	Arkansas Virtual High School
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	One; the Arkansas Virtual School is a pilot school using the K12 curriculum funded by a federal grant through the Voluntary School Choice Program.
State-level online education policy	Yes	House Bill 2566

Most forms of distance learning in Arkansas 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. Most online courses are run through the Arkansas Virtual High School; there is also a pilot school, the Arkansas Virtual School, which is funded by a federal grant through the Voluntary School Choice Program and uses the K12 virtual school curriculum. The Department of Education published *Rules Governing Distance Learning* in August 2003,[3] and a bill passed in 2005 puts these rules into law.[4] 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.

Arkansas Virtual High School

Operations	
Year started	Spring 2000
Program type	Both supplemental and full-time, courses have set start and end dates
Grade level	9-12
Number of course registrations/ students	2,651 course registrations from Summer 2005 to Spring 2006
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
Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	35, all homegrown
Number of teachers	3 full-time, 21 part-time
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	12 hours per year, delivered face-to-face

3 Arkansas Department of Education, *Rules Governing Distance Learning*; retrieved August 3, 2006, from http://arkansased.org/rules/pdf/current/ade_210_distance_learning.pdf

4 Arkansas House Bill 2566; retrieved August 3, 2006, from http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/ftproot/bills/2005/public/hb2566.pdf

Formal evaluation process for teachers?	No
Teacher communication requirements?	Unwritten requirements—teachers must answer email every day and grade work within a reasonable time
Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	Basic student participation monitored by the course management system
Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	End-of-course exams, these have not been tracked to compare outcomes of online courses against face-to-face courses
Governance	Arkansas Department of Education
Accreditation/Evaluation	Accredited by the Arkansas Department of Education
Equity and access	
Types of students	No particular student populations are focused on in practice or policy, student demographics are not tracked.
Any equity initiatives	All courses are available to any school district in the state. No students have been turned away due to lack of funding.
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.

State policies

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.

Teaching and curriculum

- All "required" courses must be approved by the department of education if the course originates "from an offering institution located outside 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." There are no professional development or teaching requirements specific to online learning.
- 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 no more than 150 students per day.

Governance and tracking
All forms of distance learning are coordinated at the state level by the state Department of Education's Arkansas Distance Learning Development Program.
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.

5.3 Florida

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	The Florida Virtual School is one of the two largest online programs in the country (31,000 students)
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	The K-8 Virtual School Program, with two schools in 2006 and expanding in 2007-2008
State-level online education policy	Yes	Legislation creating the Virtual School Program

Florida has a large online public school, Florida Virtual School (FLVS), and two cyberschools, Florida Virtual Academy and Florida Connections Academy. Online education legislation in Florida pertains to either FLVS or the K–8 Virtual School 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.

In 2003, the Florida Legislature funded the K–8 Virtual School Pilot Program. Legislation[5] in 2006 removed the "pilot" designation and provided for the continued participation of the two schools already in the Virtual School Program for the 2006-2007 school year, with full program implementation in the following school year. Additional legislation increased the number of students and the per-student funding in the program. As of August 2006 the Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice is developing a request for proposal to begin the evaluation process as they consider expanding to more schools in 2007, dependent on funding.

Although there are state policies and legislation pertaining to both Florida Virtual School and the K-8 Virtual School Program, for clarity the next section details FLVS, and the following section discussing state policies details the Virtual School Program.

[5] State of Florida Chapter Law 2006-48, Senate Bill 1282, K-8 Virtual School Program; retrieved July 20, 2006, http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=32564

Florida Virtual School

Operations	
Year started	Fall semester 1996
Program type	Primarily supplemental, some full-time. FLVS has rolling enrollment, allowing students to begin courses at any time during the year. Each course has a recommended pace chart so that students can complete each half-credit in approximately 18 weeks. The pace charts are flexible, with extended, accelerated, and traditional options; students do not have a firm end date.
Grade level	6-12
Number of course registrations/ students	▪ 68,000 half-credit enrollments during the 2005-2006 school year ▪ 31,000 students during the 2005-2006 school year
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. ▪ 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. ▪ 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.
Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	65, all homegrown although content from outside sources is sometimes used
Number of teachers	▪ 301 full-time teachers ▪ 175 adjuncts ▪ 110 additional non-instructional employees serve the teaching staff
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	FLVS trainings are both online and face-to-face. New teachers spend 10-15 hours in an online course before coming for either one day (adjuncts) or two days of intensive face-to-face training. Structured mentoring, which imbeds just-in-time-training for one full year, is also a key component of training and supporting new FLVS teachers, and after one year FLVS offers a peer coaching program.

Formal evaluation process for teachers?	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.
Teacher communication requirements?	Teachers must speak to each student AND his/her parent/guardian at least once each month. Additionally, teachers provide 24 hour response time to all telephone calls and emails and send course progress reports at least once each month. Students are not able to begin their online courses until a welcome telephone call has been conducted where the teacher speaks to both the student and the guardian.
Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	▪ Course completion rates ▪ AP exam results ▪ Teacher contact logs
Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	AP exam results
Governance	FLVS operates under the guidance of a board of trustees created by statute, with members appointed by the governor.
Accreditation/Evaluation	▪ Accredited by The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation ▪ Annual program evaluation
Equity and access	
Types of students	▪ FLVS is legislatively mandated to offer priority placement to students from high-minority, low-performing, or rural schools. The purpose of FLVS is to offer expanded course access to higher-level courses. ▪ During the 2005-2006 school year, 8% of FLVS students were from rural districts, 16% attended low-performing public schools, and 21% attended schools in high-minority areas of the state. ▪ FLVS is legislatively bound to serve students seeking accelerated access in order to obtain a high school diploma at least one semester early. ▪ School districts may not limit student access to courses offered through FLVS.
Any equity initiatives	▪ Policies exist to give students in rural, high-minority, and low-performing schools priority access to FLVS courses. ▪ FLVS is striving for 508 conformance in all FLVS-produced content and web sites. A partnership with the Academic ADL Co-Lab is now in place.
Support for at-risk students	▪ FLVS support mechanisms including tutoring in math courses, FLVS Reading Coach to support teachers serving struggling readers, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Specialist to support teachers of ELL students. ▪ Additionally, the ease of student/teacher communication provides immediate assistance to any student who needs support. Teachers are available to students by email, phone, and instant message.

State policies

Funding

K–8 Virtual Schools are funded by legislative appropriation. For the 2006-2007 school year funding has been increased from $4,800 to $5,200 per student and enrollments have been increased from 1,000 students to just short of 1,400.

Teaching and curriculum

- Local schools, including the virtual schools, must ensure that online content meets Sunshine State Standards.
- Online teachers must be licensed to teach in Florida.

Governance and tracking

The K-8 Virtual Schools Program schools are under contract with the Florida Department of Education and are required to provide regular reports as part of their deliverables.

Accountability for student achievement

- K–8 Virtual Schools must administer the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). To accomplish this, the K-8 Virtual Schools provide the list of students taking the FCAT to school district coordinators of assessment, and the districts assign and test these students. For those grades not required to take the FCAT, students must participate in local assessments and the K–3 state-approved assessment for reading.
- FCAT participation rates among the Virtual Schools improved to almost 98% in 2006.[a]
- The two virtual schools participate in the state's accountability system and receive school grades. They both received a B for the 2005-2006 school year. They also participate in the federal system and both met 95% or more of annual yearly progress (AYP) criteria.

Equity and access

K–8 Virtual Schools must provide a computer, monitor, printer and Internet allowance to enrolled students.

[a] Personal communication, Sally Roberts of the Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice within the Florida Department of Education

5.4 Georgia

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	Georgia Virtual School
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	Online charter schools allowed via 2006 amendment to charter school law, several suburban Atlanta districts have online programs
State-level online education policy	Yes	Legislation creating Georgia Virtual School

Georgia has had several prominent district online programs, primarily in suburban Atlanta. In 2005 the state legislature passed a law creating the Georgia Virtual School (GAVS),[6] a state-led program that works with the pre-existing district programs, and the State Board of Education created the rule that governs the school.[7]

GAVS is unusual in that its students take end-of-course exams that are common across the state, and tracked by the state, allowing for a comparison of test scores between students in online courses and state averages. Because the number of online students is small and cannot be considered a random sample of students across the state, it is too early to draw comparisons between the online classes and face-to-face classes.

There are no online charter schools as of Summer 2006, but the legislature passed a law in 2006[8] that amends charter school law to allow for online charter schools. There are no other policy provisions in the amended charter school law, or other Georgia policy, that are specific to online education, with one exception: the State Board rule calls for the Department of Education to "develop criteria for schools or local school systems to become a Georgia Virtual School Approved Entity" in order to offer an online program.

Georgia Virtual School

Operations	
Year started	Fall 2002 as the Georgia eLearning Program
Program type	Supplemental, courses have set start dates in blocks and semesters
Grade level	9-12
Number of course registrations/ students	2,107 course registrations Summer 2005 through Spring 2006
Funding	
Funding sources	The primary funding source will be FTE funding, in which for each GAVS course taken by a student the FTE funding to the local school is reduced by one sixth. The local school does not have to allow students to take a GAVS course. The Legislature appropriated just under $1.4 million to GAVS to fund approximately 2,000 course registrations while local schools adjust to the shift in funding.
Course fees	Students who want to take a course in addition to their regular course load can pay $300 per half Carnegie unit: 437 students in 2005-2006.

[6] Senate Bill 33; retrieved July 28, 2006, from http://www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/2005_06/versions/sb33_AP_16.htm

[7] 160-8-1-.01 Georgia Virtual School; retrieved July 28, 2006, from http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/_documents/doe/legalservices/160-8-1-.01.pdf

[8] Senate Bill 610; retrieved July 28, 2006, from http://www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/2005_06/versions/sb610_AP_6.htm

Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	142, all home-grown, including some originally developed by other Georgia online programs
Number of teachers	126, all part-time
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	Georgia State Board of Education rule requires that GAVS online instructors must successfully complete a virtual training course, addressing the pedagogy of online learning and instruction as well as the policies and procedures specific to Georgia Virtual School's program. Trainees who successfully complete the online learning program are then given the opportunity to mentor with an experienced online instructor before teaching their own courses. Training is a ten-hour online course followed by a semester practicum, student teaching experience working with an experienced online instructor.
Formal evaluation process for teachers?	Every semester teachers receive written evaluations. For those instructors teaching both Fall and Spring semesters a year long evaluation is completed. Teachers are required to set a goal each semester to improve student achievement and create one course enhancement. Enhancements are evaluated each year to determine if they are adopted into the course template.
Teacher communication requirements?	24-hour turn around of email communications, and three days to grade completed assignments. At least twice per semester a synchronous opportunity such as orientation or final exam review is provided. Most teachers provide weekly opportunities for a synchronous group meeting.
Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	Course completions, grades, end-of-course tests, AP exam scores
Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	AP test scores, end-of-course tests in 8 core subject areas required in Georgia
Governance	GAVS is part of the Georgia Department of Education with the state of Georgia's Board of Education serving as the Board
Accreditation/Evaluation	▪ Accreditation study by Southern Association Colleges and Schools initiated 2005-2006 ▪ First external evaluation planned for 2006-2007
Equity and access	
Types of students	▪ No specific groups are targeted by any policy. ▪ Student information tracked includes public, private, home study, by demographics, by annual yearly progress, by school, by schools designated as Title 1, special education, regular education
Any equity initiatives	School districts must allow their students to take a GAVS course if the local school does not provide the same course on the same schedule.
Support for at-risk students	No specific policies, but GAVS has facilitators working in local schools

5.5 Kentucky

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	Kentucky Virtual High School
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	No charter school law, prominent supplemental program in Jefferson County
State-level online education policy	No	

The Kentucky Virtual High School (KVHS), which was created by the governor in January 2000 and is operated by the state Department of Education, is the main online learning program in Kentucky. The state does not have charter schools or legislation, and therefore no cyber charters. There is a prominent district online program in Jefferson County, but there are no state online education policies governing that program.

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. These online education programs are transitioning to a shared online learning environment, allowing them to collaborate on teacher professional development, content development, content repositories, technical support and training, and program evaluation.

Kentucky Virtual High School

Operations	
Year started	Spring 2000
Program type	Supplemental, courses both self-paced and with set start and end dates
Grade level	Primarily 9-12; high school courses are offered to some middle school students, also some middle school curriculum; math is offered to 4th- through 6th-grade gifted students
Number of course registrations/ students	About 2,200 course registrations in traditional courses and 2,400 in online AP review
Funding	
Funding sources	State Legislative allocation of approximately $500,000/yr
Course fees	$300/credit; if taken for credit recovery fee is $90
Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	55 courses; 40% homegrown, 60% licensed
Number of teachers	45 part-time, 2 full-time
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	Initially six hours of face-to-face orientation and four to six weeks in an online environment, task-based; ongoing, they are obligated to continue PD by contract. Teachers can get financial assistance from a pool of money with KVHS of about $1,500 per year per teacher.

Formal evaluation process for teachers?	No, but have a faculty expectations document as part of part-time contract specific to online teachers. Example: expected turn-around times, privacy protections, class management.
Teacher communication requirements?	24-hour response to student emails and work submission
Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	▪ Course completion rates and pass rates ▪ AP exam scores
Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	▪ AP exam scores ▪ KVHS will participate in implementation of diagnostic and end-of-course assessments in Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II with face-to-face programs
Governance	Kentucky Department of Education
Accreditation/Evaluation	None
Equity and access	
Types of students	About 50% of KVHS students are eligible for free/reduced lunch. KY is implementing a unique student identifier and common course code system, which KVHS will use for planning and program evaluation
Any equity initiatives	▪ Access is one of the reasons behind P-20 initiative (the transition to a state-wide shared learning environment) ▪ Received Advanced Placement Incentive Program (APIP) grants (current expires in September, have applied for new) ▪ Received $100,000 award from National Governors Association for developing online math courses for remedial students. ▪ Work with National Governors Grant for support for students who are at risk and expanded participation in AP ▪ Increase number of teachers of diverse background to be AP teachers using online professional development
Support for at-risk students	▪ Local schools provide a "student contact" for all students taking an online course. ▪ Online students have access to supplemental tutoring and other instructional supports through the state's Extended School Services Program ▪ KVHS partners with a local district to offer enrollment and a diploma to drop outs who are willing to reenroll in school if they are able to study online. Program is also open to home schooled students who will enroll in the public system if they are able to study from home. ▪ State has external researcher under contract to examine alternative placement programs for adjudicated youth and make recommendations to state board. A strong recommendation about online learning is anticipated.

5.6 Louisiana

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	Louisiana Virtual School
Other major programs or cyberschools	No	No
State-level online education policy	No	Louisiana Department of Education has published rules for distance education.

Louisiana has a state-led program, the Louisiana Virtual School (LVS). One notable program of the LVS is its Algebra I Online Program; a hybrid course designed to reach students in districts without certified algebra teachers. 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, including satellite and compressed video.

Louisiana Virtual School

Operations	
Year started	Fall semester 2000
Program type	Supplemental, courses have set start and end dates as semester, block, and full year courses
Grade level	8-12
Number of course registrations/ students	▪ 2,900 course registrations Summer 2005–Spring 2006 ▪ 2,550 students Summer 2005–Spring 2006
Funding	
Funding sources	For 2006-2007 total: $3,439,000. Sources: ▪ BellSouth $1,010,000 ▪ Louisiana Quality Education Support Fund $2,129,000 ▪ State legislature $300,000 (Algebra I)
Course fees	No course fees are charged. LVS uses a three-phase registration system that initially caps course registrations from any single school.
Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	36, all home-grown
Number of teachers	70 teachers; 15 are full-time, 55 are adjunct (part-time)
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	The Louisiana Virtual School has a five-phase PD Induction program that requires teachers to take part in a six-week online professional development course on Designing and Teaching Online Courses and participate in mandatory PD sessions as they teach online for LVS.
Formal evaluation process for teachers?	LVS teachers are evaluated using the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Essential Principles of High-Quality Online Teaching: Guidelines for Evaluating K-12 Online Teachers. Self-evaluations are used to help teachers reflect on their level of quality and how they can improve.

Teacher communication requirements?	Teachers are required to: ▪ Respond to student, parent and school inquiries within 24 hours ▪ Acknowledge submission of work within 24 hours ▪ Post grades within the course in a timely and consistent manner ▪ Check LVS email account at least once every 24 hours M-F ▪ Be available to schedule email or telephone conferences with LVS students, school level LVS facilitators, parents or others by appointment
Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	An external program evaluator measures the success of the program based on identified measurable objectives related to student achievement and enrollment.
Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	Algebra I student outcomes are compared to face-to-face student outcomes.
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.
Accreditation/Evaluation	The Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education has an external program evaluator measure success based on identified measurable objectives related to student achievement and enrollment
Equity and access	
Types of students	▪ LVS courses are available to all students in the state who attend a Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary approved public or non-public school. ▪ Gender, race, eligibility for free/reduced lunch will be tracked, among other student information, beginning in the 2006-2007 school year.
Any equity initiatives	LVS is grant funded and available to all eligible students in the state at no charge. The tuition, textbooks, and materials are all provided.
Support for at-risk students	In FY 2005–2006 the LVS provided 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.

State policies

The Department of Education has published *State Standards for Distance Education*[9] that covers online learning and other types of distance education. 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*." 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 local education agency (LEA). Specific, separate requirements for providers and for schools and LEAs are delineated.

[9] *State Standards for Distance Education*, January 2000, published by the Louisiana Department of Education; retrieved July 31, 2006, from http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/738.pdf

Teaching and curriculum

- 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."
- 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."
- There is no provision for non-licensed or out-of-state teachers.

Governance and tracking

Louisiana Virtual School registrations and vendor provided courses are tracked if funds flow through to districts to pay for the courses.

Accountability for student achievement

Because all courses are supplemental, state assessments are handled through the local school.

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."

Web-enhanced learning

Louisiana's Algebra I Online Project, approaching its fifth year of implementation, provides Louisiana students with a certified Algebra I instructor and a standards-based Algebra I curriculum delivered through a web-based course. This project, a part of the Louisiana Virtual School (LVS), is designed to target those rural and urban areas having schools with one or more sections of Algebra I being taught by an uncertified teacher. Additionally, districts desiring to provide certified teachers with access to pedagogy training and mentoring in order to build capacity for strong mathematics instruction are eligible to participate. The Algebra I Online Project also provides the mathematics teacher with face-to-face and online professional development opportunities that will assist with the facilitation of the in-class Algebra learning activities for students and support their efforts toward mathematics certification. Five participating classroom teachers have earned secondary mathematics certification in four years. An application process is used for selection of participating schools.

5.7 Mississippi

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	Mississippi Virtual Public School
Other major programs or cyberschools	No	
State-level online education policy	Yes	HB 1130 created the MS Virtual Public School program and set guidelines for its operation

In 2006 Mississippi passed Senate Bill 2602[10] and House Bill 1130,[11] creating the Mississippi Virtual Public School Program and requiring that the state Board of Education sponsor at least one virtual school. The first initiative under these bills is the Mississippi Virtual Public School, which takes the place of the previous Mississippi Online Learning Institute. The new virtual school is funded by a state appropriation of $1 million, greatly enhanced by a $2.5 grant from the BellSouth Foundation as part of the Foundation's initiative to strengthen virtual schools. The law creates the Mississippi Virtual School Program, not just the Mississippi Virtual School; allowing for districts as well as the state to sponsor virtual schools. Additional provisions of the law, detailed below, apply to potential new virtual schools. The Mississippi Virtual Public School is operating in 2006-2007, but information about the program was not available and the information below is based on House Bill 1130.

State policies

Funding

Courses must be free to students; there are no other specific funding provisions

Teaching and curriculum

Teachers must meet MS licensure requirements, there are no PD requirements for teaching online

Governance and tracking

A virtual school must be evaluated annually by its sponsor according to:

- The extent to which the school demonstrates an increase in student achievement
- The accountability and viability of the virtual school, as demonstrated by its academic, fiscal and operational performance
- The access of each student in the virtual school to a sequential curriculum that meets or exceeds the state's academic standards
- Whether or not each student achieves the required number of hours of learning opportunities per academic year, or alternatively has demonstrated mastery or completion of appropriate subject areas

Accountability for student achievement

Virtual schools are evaluated in part by the results of state assessments

Equity and access

Most high schools in the state must offer at least one Advanced Placement course in each of four core subjects. Online courses may be used to meet this requirement.

[10] http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/documents/2006/pdf/SB/2600-2699/SB2602SG.pdf

[11] http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2006/pdf/history/HB/HB1130.htm

5.8 North Carolina[12]

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	North Carolina Virtual Public School is in planning stages; first courses will be available in 2007
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	Five online programs offer courses that are funded by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
State-level online education policy	Yes	Session Law 2005-276 Section 7.41[b] created the pilot program for North Carolina Virtual Public School in 2005 and Session Law 2006-66 Section 7.16 funded the program.[c]

North Carolina is in the early stages of creating a new state-led virtual program, the North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS), in response to the recommendations of the elearning commission within the Business Education Technology Alliance (BETA) created by the Lieutenant Governor and the State Board of Education. State Board action in August of 2005 formally created the program. Legislation in July 2006 funded NCVPS with $2.7 million earmarked in the State Board of Education's budget as seed money for the 2006-2007 fiscal year. The legislation also calls for the State Board of Education to develop an allotment formula for funding elearning, which will be based on the number of students in average daily membership (ADM) projected to enroll in elearning. The Virtual Public School is to prioritize course offerings for students in rural and "low-wealth" counties in order to expand available instructional opportunities.

The NCVPS will consolidate public online learning programs in North Carolina. Currently, North Carolina students' online needs are served by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's (DPI) distance learning program. The DPI does not have its own courses, but provides limited funding to allow students to enroll free of charge in one of several providers' online courses. This is the third year that DPI has funded online high school courses in North Carolina. For Fall 2005 through Spring 2006 there were 3,627 course registrations in over 300 online courses. A total of 3,083 students participated in online courses during the school year.

Most state online learning activity is within the DPI program. One exception is the online dual enrollment program of the University of North Carolina – Greensboro (UNCG), known as "I-School." The program was enabled through UNCG establishing relationships with various high schools, creating agreements providing for granting of high school and college credit.

[12] Direct quotes not otherwise footnoted are taken from North Carolina General Assembly Session Law 2006-66 Senate Bill 1741, Section 7.16 North Carolina Virtual Public School; retrieved July 20, 2006, from http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/Sessions/2005/Bills/Senate/HTML/S1741v8.html

[b] North Carolina General Assembly Session Law 2005-276 Senate Bill 622, Section 7.41 Plan and Funding for a Virtual High School by the State Board of Education; retrieved July 20, 2006, from http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/EnactedLegislation/SessionLaws/HTML/2005-2006/SL2005-276.html

[c] North Carolina General Assembly Session Law 2006-66 Senate Bill 1741, Section 7.16 North Carolina Virtual Public School; retrieved July 20, 2006, from http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/Sessions/2005/Bills/Senate/HTML/S1741v8.html

5.9 South Carolina

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	South Carolina Virtual School had its first students in a pilot during Summer 2006.
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	Ten districts offer online courses.[d]
State-level online education policy	No	Proposed legislation authorizing state-led program and creating possibility of cyber charter schools did not pass in 2006 but is likely to pass in 2007.

South Carolina is in the early stages of creating a state-led virtual high school and may soon allow cyber charter schools. The South Carolina Virtual School is housed in the South Carolina Department of Education (SDE) and is conducting a pilot program in Summer 2006 with approximately 1,200 students, expanding to about 35 courses in school year 2006-2007. The Summer and Fall will be a test period, and the program will report results of the pilot to the legislature in December of 2006.

The South Carolina Virtual School is the latest in an extensive elearning planning process by the state. The Department of Education had previously created an online professional development program for educators, called South Carolina Online Professional Development, which had over 50 online courses for educators in 2005. In 2005-2006, the SDE began the virtual school planning process, which included the ten districts previously offering online courses, and culminated in the pilot South Carolina Virtual School offering in Summer 2006.

Proposed legislation authorizing the South Carolina Virtual School[13] did not pass in 2006 but appears likely to pass in 2007. It has several policy provisions:

- Students can take two courses per year, up to ten throughout high school.
- Any students, including private school and home school students, are eligible to take courses, with public school students given priority.
- Students must take state assessments in a proctored environment.
- Teachers must have a teaching certificate or be approved by the Department of Education; all teachers must receive professional development in online teaching.

The same legislation would create some requirements for online programs of charter schools. Most significantly, it would limit the online portion of a student's learning to 75% of the core curriculum. It is unclear, however, whether reading from a textbook or other non-classroom based activities could account for the other 25% of instruction or if this instruction would need to be face-to-face. In addition, the school would have to "adopt a plan by which it will provide frequent, ongoing monitoring to ensure and verify that each student is participating in the program, including at least two proctored assessments per semester in core subjects administered in the charter school, verification of ongoing student attendance in the program… and administer to all students in a proctored setting at the charter school all applicable assessments as required by the South Carolina Education Accountability Act."

[13] South Carolina H. 3187; retrieved July 14, 2006, from http://www.scstatehouse.net/sess116_2005-2006/bills/3187.htm

[d] *South Carolina Department of Education Virtual Learning Initiative*, South Carolina Department of Education, undated

5.10 Tennessee

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	No	
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	e4TN is a state program funding development of online courses in 8 school districts, including the Hamilton County Virtual School and other district programs.
State-level online education policy	No	

Tennessee does not have a state-led program or full-time online programs, but its e4TN is a significant initiative granting $3.4 million per year for three years to eight school districts to develop and offer online courses.[14] The Hamilton County Department of Education, which runs the Hamilton County Virtual School, is receiving the large majority of the funds, $2.7 million per year, to develop the courses.[15] Seven other districts have received $100,000 each to be pilot sites. Course development is beginning in 2006.

5.11 Virginia

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	Virginia Virtual Advanced Placement School
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	District programs in northern Virginia
State-level online education policy	No	

Virginia has several significant district online programs, including programs in Arlington, Fairfax, and Prince William school districts. These are all supplemental programs, and there are no full-time online programs in the state. There is a charter school law but few charter schools, and no online charter schools. Distance learning courses are governed by the Virginia Standards of Accrediting Public Schools,[16] which leaves most policies to the local school board. The Accreditation Standards say only that the distance course should be "equivalent" to a regular school course and that the work must be under the supervision of a licensed teacher, or a person eligible to hold a Virginia teaching license and approved by the school board. Local schools are responsible for administering Virginia's Standard of Learning (SOL) test for each course for which the SOL test is required.

Virginia's 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 2004; in 2005–2006 there were 581 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.

[14] http://shell.reverse.net/~spydar/e4tn/index.htm

[15] http://www.hcschools.org/vhs/e4tn.htm

[16] Retrieved August 10, 2006, from http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Accountability/soafulltxt.pdf

Virginia Virtual Advanced Placement School

Operations	
Year started	Fall semester 2004 (for online courses, program dates to 1983)
Program type	Supplemental, courses have set start and end dates, staggered for schools beginning before Labor Day and for student transfers after.
Grade level	7-12
Number of course registrations/ students	581 online course registrations Summer 2005 through Spring 2006 (1,800 total course registrations, with the balance in video courses)
Funding	
Funding sources	▪ State funding $2.5 million annually ▪ E-rate for Satellite Transmission $200,000/yr ▪ Funding sources are for both online and television; online courses cost about $500,000
Course fees	▪ Between $75 and $300 per Virginia public school student per course, based on local district state funding formula ▪ $375 for Virginia students not enrolled in public schools ▪ $450 per course for out of state students
Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	32, 80% homegrown, 20% licensed
Number of teachers	30 full-time
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	Three-day face-to-face workshop and ongoing online staff development
Formal evaluation process for teachers?	Student evaluations
Teacher communication requirements?	New teacher handbook (in draft form as of August 2006) specifies communication requirements
Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	Course completion rate, AP exam results
Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	Advanced Placement exam results
Governance	State Department of Education
Accreditation/Evaluation	None
Equity and access	
Types of students	80% of students are from rural areas; otherwise not tracked
Any equity initiatives	▪ AP exam fees and tuition paid for Virginia students participating in the "Early College Scholars Program." ▪ Lower course fees for high poverty schools
Support for at-risk students	No formal policies, but a number of incarcerated students are in the program

5.12 West Virginia

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	West Virginia Virtual School
Other major programs or cyberschools	No	No major district programs, no charter school law; some small district programs
State-level online education policy	No	

Most of the online education activity in West Virginia is through the West Virginia Virtual School, a supplemental program serving students in grades 7–12. It was created by legislation in 2000, is housed within the West Virginia Department of Education, and is governed primarily via State Board Policy 2450.[17] Although originally created to offer Advanced Placement courses, it now offers a comprehensive set of 203 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.

There are no other major online programs or initiatives in West Virginia, although some districts such as Kanawha County and Harrison County have online programs.

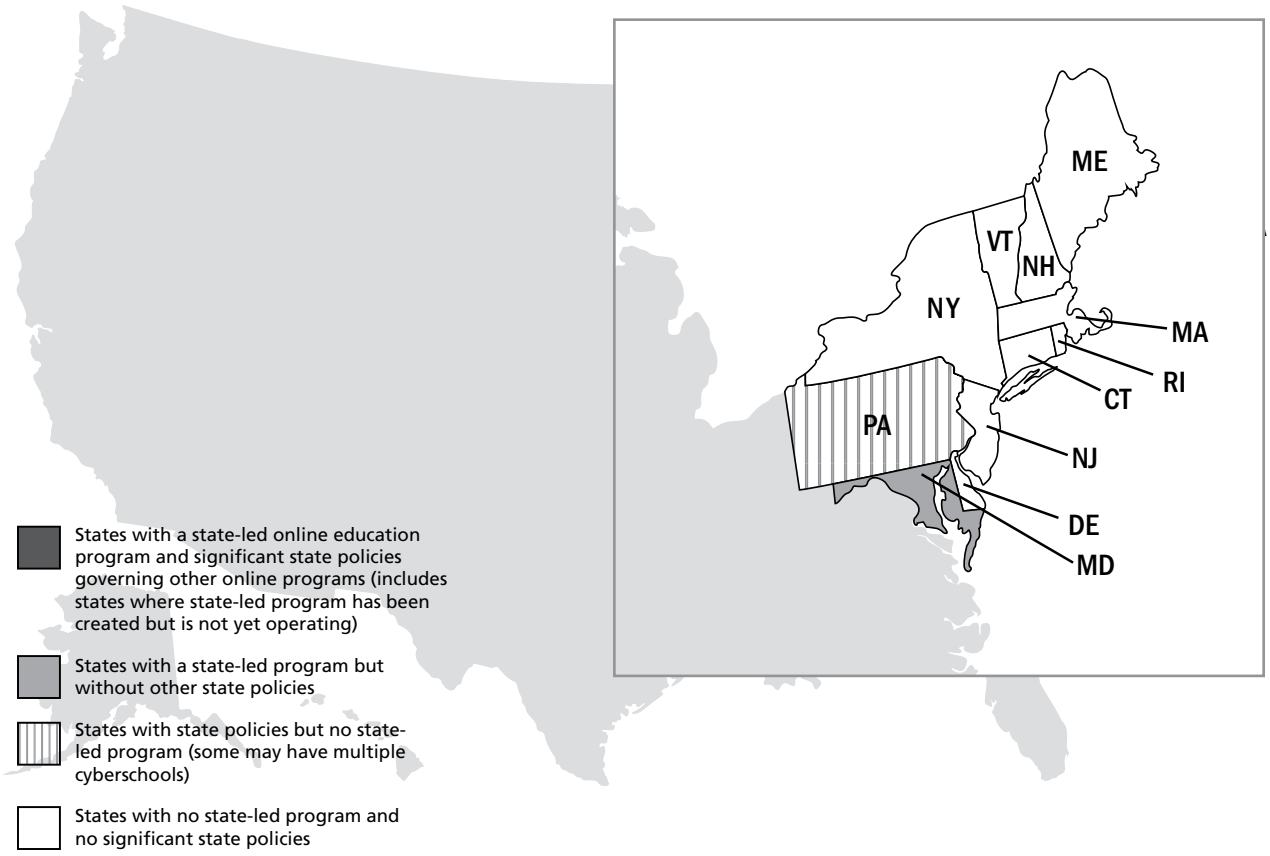
West Virginia Virtual School

Operations	
Year started	Fall 2001
Program type	Supplemental, both self-paced and scheduled courses
Grade level	▪ Primarily 7–12 ▪ A small number of accelerated 5th- and 6th-grade students take advanced mathematics courses for high school credit
Number of course registrations/ students	1,350 course registrations Summer 2005 through Spring 2006
Funding	
Funding sources	▪ State appropriation; in each of FY 2005 and FY 2006, $450,000 ▪ Additional funds from the Educational Broadcast Authority fund student course registration fees and pay course providers.
Course fees	▪ Tuition fees of $400 -$750 (depending on course provider) are paid by WVVS on a first-come, first-served basis. When WVS reaches the limit for how many tuitions 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."

[17] http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/p2450.html

Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	▪ 203 ▪ 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 co-developed with Florida Virtual School and are taught by WVVS teachers.
Number of teachers	▪ Two full-time teachers and 16 adjuncts ▪ Most courses are taught by teachers provided by the course provider.
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	Yes. Face-to-face professional development and on-going mentoring through e-mail, phone calls and face-to-face.
Formal evaluation process for teachers?	Only for the full-time teachers. There is a form that is filled out and a face-to-face discussion takes place with the teachers.
Teacher communication requirements?	WVS has a 48 hour turn around requirement, but students have daily contact with at least one of the staff that delivers the blended model.
Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	Course completions and end-of-course testing
Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	An end-of-course exam for Spanish was compared to the end-of course exam for face-to-face students
Governance	Housed within the Office of Technology and Instructional Services within the West Virginia Department of Education
Accreditation/Evaluation	▪ None ▪ Courses are evaluated and aligned with content standards. If they are on the approved list, then the bricks and mortar school may grant credit for the course.
Equity and access	
Types of students	Not tracked, no particular student populations are focused on in practice or policy
Any equity initiatives	No
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.

6 Northeastern states



Connecticut
Consortium of local education agencies offers courses through Virtual High School

Delaware
No state-led program or online charters, some districts use vendor courses

Maine
Maine Distance Learning Project uses videoconferencing, not Internet

Maryland
Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities is state-led program; cyber charter schools are effectively prohibited by charter school law.

Massachusetts
No formal state policy but over 100 high schools (33%) offer courses via Virtual High School

New Hampshire
State is revising its rules on distance learning

New Jersey
Distance learning is primarily through video

New York
AccelerateU is a consortium offering online courses. Charter cap and past charter denials currently blocking cyber charter development

Pennsylvania
11 cyber charter schools and extensive state oversight

Rhode Island
State beginning use of Electronic Student Portfolios in Fall 2006

Vermont
A couple of independent schools offer online courses; state Department of Education has created a task force looking into distance education issues

The Northeast has less online learning activity than the other regions of the country. Maryland and Pennsylvania have extensive activity, and are profiled below. In addition, Virtual High School, a collaborative of nearly 400 high schools in 29 states and 20 countries, is based in Massachusetts and has many member schools in the northeast. In Massachusetts, although there is no state policy or practice around online course delivery, over 100 high schools are members of VHS. In Connecticut, the six educational service agencies have partnered with VHS to provide VHS membership to schools at reduced rates, and, in three years, have grown VHS membership to nearly 25% of all CT schools.

Vermont, which has several schools using VHS, has created a task force to address policy questions around distance learning, including both video and online. Vermont currently has distance education rules that apply to independent schools,[18] but only a couple of these schools exist and they serve primarily adult learners. The Vermont Department of Education effort is meant to address online learning policy issues for public school students. The Department of Education hopes to have a report to the State Board of Education in October 2006.[19] Vermont does not have a charter school law.

Maine also has no charter school law and no state-led virtual school or state level online education policy. Most distance education at the state level is video conferencing, through the Maine Distance Learning Project (MDLP), which connects 91 classrooms. The state has a web-enhanced learning initiative, the Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI), which has equipped all the state's 7th- and 8th-grade students and teachers with one-to-one access to wireless notebook computers and the Internet for the past four years.[20]

[18] 16 V.S.A. § 166; retrieved August 10, 2006, from http://www.leg.state.vt.us/statutes/fullsection.cfm?Title=16&Chapter=003&Section=00166

[19] Personal Communication, Bill Romond, State Coordinator, Educational Technology, Vermont Department of Education, August 10, 2006

[20] http://www.state.me.us/mlte/

6.1 Virtual High School

Operations	
Year started	Fall 1996
Program type	Supplemental with set start and end dates
Grade level	Primarily 9–12; middle school enrichment courses offered in 12 pre-AP subjects
Number of course registrations/ students	▪ 7,604 course registrations Fall 2005–Spring 2006 ▪ 6,520 students
Funding	
Funding sources	▪ Membership fees (see below) ▪ Online AP Academy grant: $600,000 ▪ Other funding from tuition for teacher training and grants
Course fees	VHS charges schools an annual membership fee of $6,500. Member schools are eligible to enroll 50 students per year in VHS courses.
Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	238, all homegrown
Number of teachers	278; no teachers are employed at VHS; all teachers remain at the member school.
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	Initial online teaching skills are provided in two online professional development courses of either 135 hours or 270 hours. Ongoing professional development is also provided online, approximately 40 hours per year.
Formal evaluation process for teachers?	▪ 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)
Teacher communication requirements?	Communications requirements include daily attendance in online course, response to all student questions within 24 hours, and response to be made in either private or public discussion threads, in order to facilitate review of teacher responses by supervisor. Quality of response is also monitored, particularly in regard to feedback on student work, student questions, and facilitation of online discussions.

Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	▪ Course completion and credit recovery rates ▪ AP exam pass and participation rates
Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	AP exam pass and participation rates
Governance	VHS is a 501c(3) nonprofit, governed by a board of directors.
Accreditation/Evaluation	▪ 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 ▪ External evaluations conducted by Stanford Research International (SRI) during first five years of operation ▪ Annual program evaluation conducted by VHS
Equity and access	
Types of students	▪ No particular student populations are focused on in practice or policy, but many courses are AP, pre-AP, or electives ▪ VHS does not track student demographics, only member school demographics
Any equity initiatives	▪ 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 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. ▪ 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.

6.2 Maryland

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities
Other major programs or cyberschools	No	
State-level online education policy	Yes	Maryland charter school law effectively prohibits online charter schools

Maryland has one online program, Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities, which is part of the state Department of Education and offers supplemental courses. No other major online programs exist in the state. Because a provision of charter school law requires that students be "physically present on school premises",[21] there are no cyber charter schools.

Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities

Operations	
Year started	Fall 2003
Program type	Supplemental; teacher facilitated courses
Grade level	9-12, with courses also offered to middle school students and adults
Number of course registrations/ students	▪ 620 course registrations in FY 2006 ▪ 380 students in FY 2006
Funding	
Funding sources	▪ Internal funding from divisions across MD Department of Education; $300,000 ▪ $25,000 from Federal Title II-D of NCLB (EETT)
Course fees	▪ $15 to $475 per student per course per semester
Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	▪ 50 courses ▪ 7 home grown, 43 from other providers
Number of teachers	7, all part-time
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All, including teachers from other course providers as this was a requirement in an RFP
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	Yes; online three-credit course; online mentoring; staff meeting monthly; group and individual face-to-face or web-based training as needed
Formal teacher evaluation?	Yes
Teacher communication requirements?	Reply to email within 24 hours; calls or web-based conferences with students who need additional help
Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	▪ Course drop rates and passing rates ▪ Scores in state tests for high school assessment courses. ▪ Satisfaction surveys

[21] Maryland State Code § 9-102; retrieved July 5, 2006, from http://198.187.128.12/maryland/lpext.dll?f=templates&fn=fs-main.htm&2.0

Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	AP scores; state assessments; MD has 3 courses directly tied to the state high school assessments in Algebra Data Analysis, Biology, and Government. In Fall 2007, MD will add English 2.
Governance	MVLO is an initiative of the State Department of Education.
Accreditation/Evaluation	Annual external evaluation; courses are from accredited providers
Equity and access	
Types of students	No particular student populations are focused on in practice or policy.
Any equity initiatives	▪ 508 compliance is considered as courses are reviewed and developed. ▪ Guidelines in place for schools with students with IEPs
Support for at-risk students	Local schools provide a mentor for all students taking an online course.

6.3 New Hampshire

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	No	
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	At least one charter school offering a blend of online and face-to-face courses[e]
State-level online education policy	Yes	State has formal rules on distance learning that are being revised as of August 2006.

New Hampshire does not have a state-led program, but has at least one charter school offering online instruction, and state rules on distance learning that are being revised as of August 2006.[22] This section is based on these rules as they exist prior to revision. The rules cover all types of distance learning, not just online.[23] Most of the rules describe policies that the local school board must set for distance learning, without going into much detail. One provision states that the school board must create policies to address "the number of students a teacher may be required to supervise" and "monitoring of student progress, grading of assignments, and testing."

Two proscriptive provisions require that "students earning credit for distance education courses shall participate in all assessments required by the statewide education improvement and assessment program," and "credit courses require students to meet similar academic standards as required by the school for students enrolled in credit courses offered by the school."

[22] Distance learning rules; retrieved August 11, 2006, from http://www.ed.state.nh.us/education/laws/Ed306Adopted.htm

[23] Additional information about distance learning in New Hampshire is available at http://nheon.org/oet/index.htm

[e] Great Bay eLearning Charter School, http://www.gbecs.org/

6.4 New York

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	No	
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	Consortium of education agencies offers courses and professional development through AccelerateU. Charter school cap and past charter denials currently block cyber charter development.
State-level online education policy	No	

New York does not have a state-led program or state policies. A consortium of more than 20 BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services), individual school districts and education agencies have created Project Accelerate and AccelerateU,[24] which provides online courses, professional development and instructional support. More than 75 student courses are offered with rolling enrollments. AccelerateU had approximately 300 enrollments over the past year and expects to double that number in the coming year, and also offers 35 online professional development courses. The project was originally funded through a New York State Title III Technology Grant five years ago. Student courses are now funded by an enrollment fee paid by districts. Districts who meet certain state requirements then receive aid back from the state in the following fiscal year, ranging from 50-75% of the amount paid.

6.5 Pennsylvania

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	No	
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	11 cyber charter schools
State-level online education policy	Yes	Cyber charters are approved by the PA Department of Education, which has a tracking and review process in place.

Pennsylvania has 11 cyber charter schools that are authorized by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).[25] The PDE has a system of cyber charter review in place,[26] which may be partly a result of previous funding controversy surrounding these 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, school districts refused to pay student funds to the cyber charter schools and joined the Pennsylvania School Boards Association in filing a lawsuit that challenged the legitimacy of the cyber charter schools. The school districts lost in court; but, in response to their concerns, Act 88 (2002)[27] was passed. (Direct quotes below are from this legislation.) The new law designated the PDE as the authorizer of any new cyber charter school and of any renewing charter of an existing cyberschool; the law also requires PDE to partially reimburse districts for the students they lose to cyber charters.

[24] Retrieved September 6, 2006, from http://acclerateu.org

[25] http://www.pde.state.pa.us/charter_schools/lib/charter_schools/2006-07_Cyber_List.pdf

[26] http://www.pde.state.pa.us/charter_schools/lib/charter_schools/PASCCR.pdf

[27] http://www2.legis.state.pa.us/WU01/LI/BI/BT/2001/0/HB0004P4196.pdf

Cyber charter school oversight is regulated by a combination of charter school law that governs all charter schools and regulations specific to cyber charters. The Pennsylvania System of Cyber Charter Review (PASCCR) was developed by the PDE's charter school team to specifically address cyber charter school issues. Together PASCCR, the charter school's annual report to the state, and the original charter school application to PDE explain how the school meets Pennsylvania's academic standards and assessment requirements, what technical support will be given to students, how student work will be monitored, what type of communication will be held with students and parents, and how often that communication will take place.

State policies

Funding

- Local school districts provide funding for students enrolled in cyber charter schools based on a per-pupil cost determined by PDE (which includes a 30% reimbursement to the district for each student it sends to a cyber charter).
- 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."

Teaching and curriculum

- 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% of staff meet state certification standards. Teacher evaluations must be done by a supervisor holding a Principal Certificate or Letter of Eligibility with the PDE. There are no special provisions for online teachers, but the PASCCR includes teaching and professional development provisions.

Governance and tracking

All cyber charter schools are authorized by the PDE, and an annual report and quality review specific to online programs (PASCCR) is required.

Accountability for student achievement

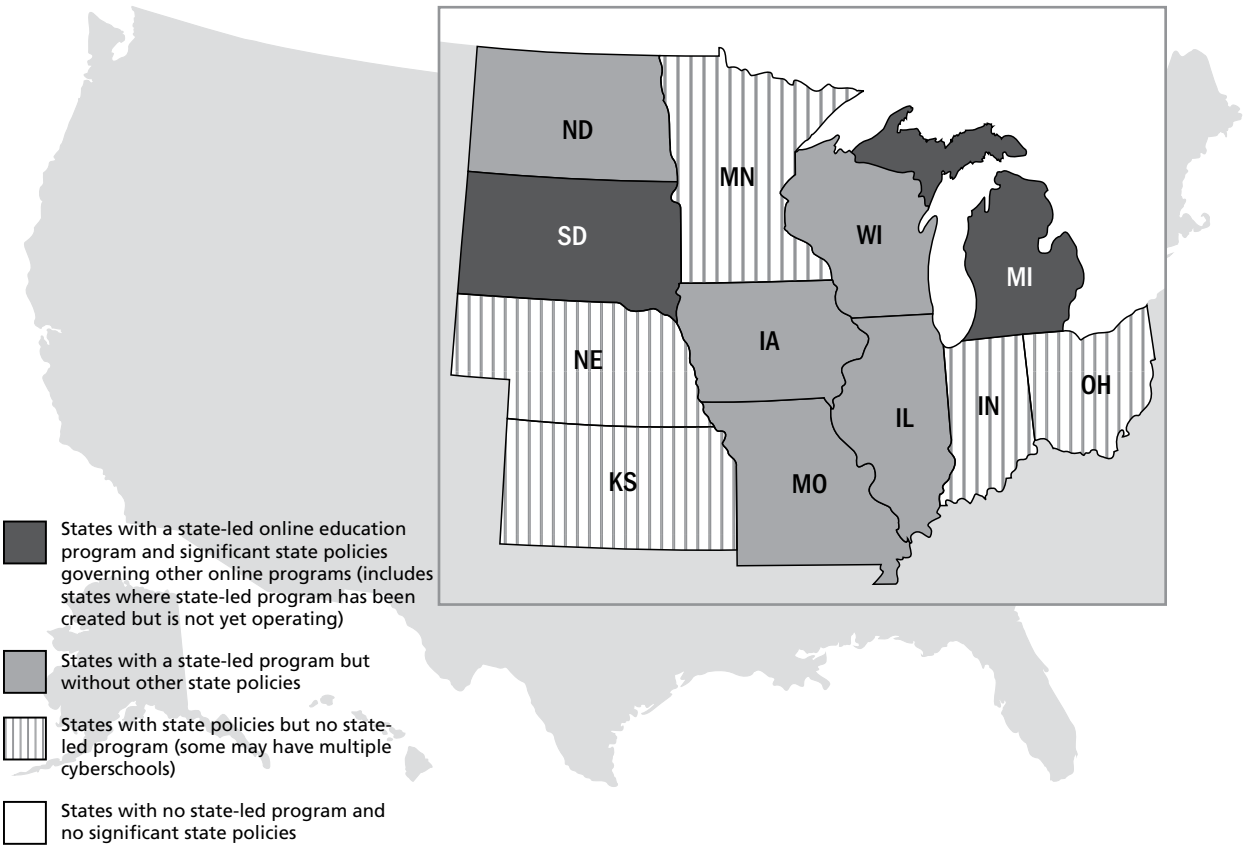
Cyber charter school students are required to take the Pennsylvania state assessment.

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.

7

Central states



Illinois
Illinois Virtual High School; online charter school in Chicago approved in August 2006 by state

Indiana
A few district and regional programs, state considering first cyber charters

Iowa
Two programs fit the definition of state-led, Iowa Learning Online and the Iowa Online AP Academy

Kansas
Many district programs and charter schools and extensive Department of Education oversight

Michigan
In 2006 the legislature passed a requirement that all high school students must have an "online learning experience" to graduate. Michigan Virtual High School is a large state-led program.

Minnesota
Many district programs and charter schools and extensive Department of Education oversight

Missouri
State-led program planning to have first students in 2007, will have both part-time and full-time students

Nebraska
Distance education law passed in 2006

North Dakota
North Dakota Division of Independent Study is state-led program

Ohio
Many cyber charter schools with a combined enrollment of over 20,000 students

South Dakota
State-led program created by law in 2006, not yet in operation, will incorporate existing Rapid City Virtual Campus

Wisconsin
Numerous district programs and cyber charter schools

7.1 Illinois

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	Illinois Virtual High School
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	First cyber charter school in state approved by Chicago Public Schools and state Board of Education in August 2006
State-level online education policy	No	

Almost all online education activity in Illinois is through the Illinois Virtual High School (IVHS), a noncredit-granting program of the Illinois State Board of Education, operated by the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy. 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 2005–2006, 56% of IVHS students were from low-income schools.

As of September 2006, Chicago Public Schools and Illinois State Board of Education have approved a charter for a cyber charter school in Chicago serving grades K-8, which will be operated by K12. The Chicago Virtual School requires students to meet at a physical location once a week in order to address a legal provision that charter schools not be home-based.

Illinois Virtual High School

Operations	
Year started	Spring 2001
Program type	Primarily supplemental; courses have set start and end dates with some flexibility
Grade level	Primarily 9–12; some students in grades 6–8
Number of course registrations/ students	▪ 2,733 course registrations from Summer 2005–Spring 2006 ▪ 1,917 students from Summer 2005–Spring 2006
Funding	
Funding sources	For FY 2006 budget was: ▪ State educational technology funds; $1,450,000 ▪ Federal grants; $100,000 ▪ Enrollment fees; $400,000 ▪ The FY 2007 state funding will remain the same. It is unclear what the federal funding will be, and enrollment fees are expected to increase to $500,000
Course fees	▪ For the 2006-2007 school year registration is $225 with early bird pricing of $195 for registrations prior to June 15. The Summer 2006 fee was $150, scheduled to go to $175 for Summer 2007. IVHS bills the school, but some schools pass some or all of the fee on to the student. ▪ 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 pre-approved site.

Illinois Virtual High School (cont.)

Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	94 courses, 50% licensed and 50% homegrown
Number of teachers	86, all part-time
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	▪ 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.
Formal evaluation process for teachers?	▪ End-of-course student surveys ▪ All teachers are assigned a mentor (experienced IVHS teacher) and mentor/instructor interactions are required throughout the year. ▪ Teachers are formally evaluated through observation of mentor and coordinator of instructors. Instructors also complete a self-evaluation which includes a reflective writing on his/her online teaching practice.
Teacher communication requirements?	▪ Teachers are expected to have a synchronous interaction with each student at least once every two weeks. ▪ Teachers are expected to acknowledge submittal of assignments and questions within 48 hours.
Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	Course completion rates
Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	None
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. There are plans to create an advisory board during the 2006-2007 school year.
Accreditation/Evaluation	External program evaluation annually from FY 2002 through FY 2005

Equity and access	
Types of students	▪ 56% of IVHS students come from low-income schools. ▪ The latest demographics indicate that 57% of IVHS students are from urban areas, 22% rural, and 21% suburban. Students are 62% female, 38% male. ▪ 61% Caucasian, 19% African American, 11% Hispanic, 6% Asian, 3% other.
Any equity initiatives	▪ 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). A part-time teaching position to support students with special needs has been established for the 2006-2007 school year. ▪ All students should have access to the IVHS curriculum, regardless of whether they attend public, private, or home schools. 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. Instructors will use differentiated instruction as appropriate to support these students. The part-time teaching position to support students with special needs will also provide assistance to IVHS instructors as necessary.

7.2 Indiana

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	No	
Other major programs or cyberschools	No	A small number of district programs; law passed in 2005 allows virtual charter schools
State-level online education policy	Yes	Senate Bill 598[f] allows charters to provide online courses as any other public school would while prohibiting "solely home-based instruction"

In Indiana, distance education virtual co-ops associated with regional educational service centers are beginning to work across the state rather than just in their own regions. Indiana Virtual Academy (InVA), expanded and renamed from Ripley County Learning Network, is an example of these. Because InVA is an extension of, and governed by, the Southeastern Career Center, a regional public vocational school that services students and adults from 12 districts, it is not subject to any state polices other than those governing all public schools. The Indiana Department of Education provides funds to allow students to take selected InVA summer school courses at no charge to the student. In Summer 2006, 1,000 students participated in the program.

Legislation from 2005 allows charter schools to provide online courses, but wording in the legislation stating that charters cannot be "solely home-based" has slowed creation of cyberschools. Among the state authorizers of charter schools, Ball State University has shown the most interest in authorizing virtual charters. It has generated guidelines[28] for authorizing virtual charters that were finalized in August 2006. The guidelines address the law's requirement that instruction not be solely home based by requiring that the online charter have a physical location, and that it deliver a portion of instruction via "personal contact" at that or another location approved by the University. The guidelines also require that the school explain how students will be transported to the personal contact location(s).

In February 2006, a survey[29] was conducted by the Indiana Department of Education and the Indiana Distance Learning Association (InDLA) to identify the extent and the nature of K-12 distance learning systems in Indiana. The data from this survey will be used to provide assistance to schools and to formulate policy recommendations for advancing the effective use of distance learning in the state. About half the junior and senior high schools responded, and of these about 25% were offering distance education (DE) courses. DE enrollments in the survey totaled 777, but that this included all types and forms of delivery of DE. About two thirds of all schools using DE reported using Internet-based courses, with the majority using post-secondary institutions as sources for their curriculum.

[28] http://www.bsu.edu/teachers/media/pdf/guidelinespoliciesvirtual.pdf

[29] Survey of Distance Education in Indiana; retrieved August 7, 2006, from http://www.doe.state.in.us/technology/pdf/distance_education_survey_report.pdf

[f] Indiana State Senate Bill 0598; retrieved August 7, 2006, from http://www.in.gov/legislative/bills/2005/PDF/SB/SB0598.1.pdf

7.3 Iowa

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	Iowa Learning Online and the Iowa Online AP Academy
Other major programs or cyberschools	No	
State-level online education policy	No	

Iowa has two programs that fit the *Keeping Pace* definition of state-led programs. Iowa Learning Online, which offers a variety of Internet and video-based courses, is detailed below. ILO is a program of the Iowa Department of Education. The second program, the Iowa Online AP Academy, was created specifically to offer AP courses. The AP Academy offers 11 AP courses through Apex Learning (a vendor), as well as professional development for teachers. Courses, which have set start and end dates, are free to students. The AP Academy was initially funded in 2001 with a $1.6 million technology grant from the IA Department of Education, and an additional $4.9 million has been awarded to the program by the US Department of Education.

Iowa Learning Online

Operations	
Year started	Summer 2004
Program type	Supplemental, most courses have set start and end dates
Grade level	9-12
Number of course registrations/ students	▪ 340 course registrations Summer 2005–Spring 2006, including online and hybrid courses ▪ 260 students Summer 2005–Spring 2006
Funding	
Funding sources	▪ $600,000 from the Iowa Department of Education for 2006 ▪ $600,000 from a U.S. Department of Education Funds for Improvement of Education grant, 2002-2003 ▪ $400,000 from Roy J. Carver Charitable Trust in 2002–2004 for development of three hybrid courses, where the curriculum is online and the teacher provides face-to-face "office hours" over video
Course fees	There are no course fees for ILO developed or purchased courses. Fees for shared courses, created by districts, are set by the districts involved.
Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	▪ 13 ▪ 9 home grown, 4 purchased
Number of teachers	11; 5 full-time and 6 part-time
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All

Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	Yes, instruction in online teaching skills is available through three professional development courses (15 hours each) and on an individual basis. Content is delivered online, through videoconferencing and face-to-face. ILO does not have set policies regarding required hours of professional development.
Formal evaluation process for teachers?	Yes, there is an evaluation process for the full-time teachers offering the ILO-developed science courses. This is in alignment with the Iowa Professional Development Model. These teachers also incorporate end-of-semester student evaluations.
Teacher communication requirements?	ILO teacher expectations do not presently include specific numbers but emphasize that communication be frequent and on-going.
Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	Student outcomes are measured by the individual instructors at appropriate times throughout the course.
Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	None
Governance	ILO is an initiative of the Iowa Department of Education. The state board of education guides policy for high school courses offered through ILO.
Accreditation/Evaluation	None
Equity and access	
Types of students	No particular high school student populations are focused on in practice or policy; student demographic information is not tracked.
Any equity initiatives	ILO instructors accommodate individual student learning needs. ILO partners with local school counselors in assessing student suitability for distance learning before registration in an ILO course.
Support for at-risk students	ILO requires that each student be supported by a local adult advocate, called a student coach. The student coach and the ILO instructor partner to remove all learning barriers for students, especially those at-risk.

7.4 Kansas

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	No	
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) has 20 districts and five service centers registered to provide online courses.
State-level online education policy	Yes	KSDE has a well-developed set of registration and audit requirements for online programs; perhaps the best state-level tracking in the country.

The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) has perhaps the most-developed and well-documented system for tracking online programs of any state in the country. KSDE requires that online programs be registered in order to claim FTE funding. Registration and claiming funding requires a desktop audit and an annual report from each program. In addition, the state has published extensive guidance and rules for online programs. Requirements include site visits, personnel and program requirements. They are very specific, for example stating the type of personnel that must be included on the program staff and requirements for those positions. The state also mandates 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. These requirements do not appear to be stifling the development of online education programs, as the state has 25 registered programs. One online program, Virtual Greenbush, had about 1,200 students in a recent fiscal year, making it as large as some state-led programs in other states.

Information and quotes in this section are based on documents available on the Kansas Department of Education (KSDE) Web site,[30] including an extensive explanation of Virtual Education Requirements.[31] Specific requirements are detailed below.

State policies

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, with some exceptions for out-of-state students.
- 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 detailed by the KSDE.
- Verifying "enrolled and attending" students in a virtual course is done through an Academic Activity Log or Documentation of Virtual/Online Activity.

[30] http://www3.ksde.org/outcomes/chartindex.html

[31] http://www3.ksde.org/outcomes/virtualedreqts.doc

Teaching and curriculum

- Courses must be aligned to state standards.
- Course delivery must be based on 'accepted' good practice for online learning. This may include but is not limited to clearly communicating course expectations, grading policies, required/supplemental materials, etc.; establishing timelines; and regular communications with students and parents."
- Orientation training sessions must be provided for students/parents.
- Access to academic content licensed personnel must be available to provide answers to student/parent questions for every online course.
- "Opportunities for students to participate in group activities must be provided. These may include some face-to-face activities such as (but not limited to): field trips, study sessions, additional orientation/training assistance, open houses, conferences, end-of-year celebrations, use of parent resource center, and teacher face-to-face instructions for labs or virtual teaming opportunities."
- "Online communication opportunities must be provided enabling students to share with others; i.e. discussion boards, chats, virtual classrooms, e-mails, group online projects."
- Ongoing feedback regarding student progress must be provided.
- Students/families must be provided a response within a 24-hour turn-around during school days.
- A backup plan must be established for handling communication if a teacher isn't available.
- "A person or contracted entity must be designated to implement and evaluate training provided to all staff, students and parents in the use of the online program."

Governance and tracking

- Online programs are tracked by the state, as explained above. The required annual reports and desktop audits allow KSDE to have more information regarding online activity across Kansas than any other state education agency across the country.
- The KSDE accredits schools and districts. If an online program is a program within the district it must be integrated into the district Quality Performance Accreditation (QPA)/NCA plan.

Accountability for student achievement

An assessment coordinator must be designated who will, among other tasks, ensure that

- All students 18 and under will take all required state assessments for their grade level.
- All data will be reported as part of the state's QPA requirements, the federal NCLB requirements (e.g. Adequate Yearly Progress), and NCA requirements, if appropriate.
- All state assessments will be proctored by a licensed educator.

Equity and access

- "The district must 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.
- The services of a Kansas licensed counselor must be made available to students in grades 9-12.

7.5 Michigan

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	Michigan Virtual High School
Other major programs or cyberschools	No	
State-level online education policy	Yes	Legislation requiring an "online learning experience" in order to graduate was passed in 2006 and may have wide-reaching ramifications for online and blended learning across the state

Michigan is at the forefront of K-12 online education, led by the Michigan Virtual High School (MVHS). In 2006 the state legislature agreed to require that students have an "online learning experience" as part of their graduation requirements. MVHS has responded by creating an online career development course that will be available to all students across the state (see below). The majority of online education activity in Michigan is through MVHS, and there are no online charter schools. A small number of district-level online programs have been developed.

Michigan Virtual High School is unusual in that it provides a variety of courses, including highly interactive teacher-led semester courses, flexible start date courses in which the instructor acts as a guide, and courses in which the local school provides the teacher. This approach has allowed MVHS to respond effectively to the 2006 law. MVHS has collaborated with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to develop an online course that helps Michigan students understand how the new global economy will impact their career opportunities. The course is funded through a grant from Microsoft's Partners in Learning program and will be available beginning in the 2006-2007 school year in one of three course types: a self-guided course, a course where the local school provides the teacher, and a course where MVHS provides the teacher. The first two of these course options will be offered at no cost to Michigan schools.

The online learning experience requirement has two other potentially significant ramifications. First, all high schools that wish to provide the teacher for the online career development course will be able to receive a course section through the MVHS course management system. This has the potential to encourage greater use of online learning throughout a school's curriculum. Second, the probable demand for a large number of teachers experienced in online instruction affords an opportunity to expand Michigan LearnPort, an existing collaboration between the MDE and Michigan Virtual University (the parent organization of MVHS). LearnPort seeks to redefine how professional development services are delivered in Michigan by making effective use of innovative web-based tools and resources. This program is funded by the legislature and puts Michigan among the leading states enacting legislation to promote online professional development for educators. MVU is required to offer at least 200 hours of online professional development for classroom teachers free of charge. The LearnPort catalog currently contains over 175 online courses or professional development modules, and over 9,300 active users have joined Michigan LearnPort as of July 2006.

Michigan Virtual High School

Operations	
Year started	1999 Spring semester
Program type	Primarily supplemental, both semester-paced and flexible start dates
Grade level	Grades 6-12, with emphasis on grades 9-12 (54 middle school courses were added to the course catalog in Fall 2005)
Number of course registrations/ students	5,625 course registrations Summer 2005–Spring 2006 3,689 students Summer 2005–Spring 2006
Funding	
Funding sources	▪ Seed capital from original $18 million legislative appropriation ▪ $1,750,000 appropriation from the state for 2005–06 ▪ $1,000,000 Title II Education Technology Competitive Grant ▪ Corporate grant support
Course fees	▪ $250-$395 per student, per semester course ▪ Districts pay course fees
Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	Total of 181 semester courses in 2005–2006; this includes all types of courses listed below but not test tools ▪ 83 MVHS-developed ▪ 98 licensed from other developers ▪ Types of courses: ▪ Flex 90: self-paced, flexible start date, instructor guided, designed to meet a variety of student needs ▪ Semester paced: instructor led, highly interactive ▪ 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.
Number of teachers	375, all part-time
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	Effective August 1, 2005, MVHS adopted a rigorous process for ensuring that all MVHS instructors are highly qualified as defined by NCLB.
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	▪ Mandatory online training includes one-day, on-site training and four-six weeks online. ▪ Beginning in Summer 2006, MVHS teachers are eligible to apply for $1,000 scholarships to attend professional development opportunities or training programs that will support their growth.
Formal evaluation process for teachers?	▪ The MVHS has adopted a three-step process. ▪ Each instructor completes a self-assessment and returns it to MVHS. ▪ MVHS personnel complete an assessment of each instructor's performance. ▪ MVHS students complete an end of semester online survey upon completion of each course.
Teacher communication requirements?	Required communication with each student within two business days after course registration. Required response to all student, mentor, parent or staff e-mails within 24 hours. MVHS personnel periodically monitor the status of teacher log-ins and response time to student questions.

Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	▪ MVHS personnel periodically drop into courses to confirm teacher and student activity. ▪ Student completion and pass rates are tracked. ▪ The development of strategies to use real-time data to improve student learning is a priority for MVHS. Prior work (Dickson, 2005[9]) has led MVHS to continue to investigate the use of data dashboards and software tools to support students and teachers. ▪ MVHS has engaged an external consultant to design and develop data displays and feedback reports that will help to ensure student success in online courses.
Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	MVHS has had exploratory discussions with the Michigan Department of Education regarding the creation and use of end-of-course exams for certain core academic courses.
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. ▪ A MVHS advisory council provides guidance and external input.
Accreditation/Evaluation	▪ North Central Association (NCA) and the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Education (CITA). ▪ The Michigan Department of Education has approved MVHS to be an authorized supplemental education service provider under NCLB. ▪ Michigan's state superintendent of public instruction serves as a MVU board member. ▪ In 2006, a state E-learning & Virtual School Initiatives Grant provided external funding to conduct research involving MVHS courses and data, including the use of data to create intervention strategies that help to ensure student success in online courses. ▪ An independent accounting firm conducts an annual financial audit.
Equity and access	
Types of students	▪ A wide range of student needs are served, from credit recovery to advanced placement. ▪ Currently student demographic information is collected on a voluntary basis. As the use of data for decision making at MVHS evolves, the collection of certain demographic information may be required.
Any equity initiatives	▪ MVHS makes every effort to ensure courses comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and works with schools to ensure that access issues are met ▪ 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
Support for at-risk students	▪ Flex 90 and Student Direct courses provide options for at-risk students. ▪ An on-site mentor is assigned to all students, including at-risk students. ▪ Since 2004, MVHS has offered a summer school option for students. ▪ In 2006 MVHS launched a Summer School Scholarship Program for students attending schools not meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP) and students of low-income families.

9 Dickson, W. Patrick, *Toward a Deeper Understanding of Student Performance in Virtual High School Courses: Using Quantitative Analyses and Data Visualization to Inform Decision Making*, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, July 2005; available at http://www.mivu.org/upload_1/NCREL.pdf

7.6 Minnesota

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	No	
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	More than 20 districts and multiple charter schools offer substantial online learning programs
State-level online education policy	Yes	State has extensive policies and tracking of online programs

Minnesota has cyber charter schools, online education programs within districts and intermediate districts, and organizations of two or more districts operating under a joint powers agreement. According to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), more than 20 school districts in Minnesota offer substantial online learning programs, and more than 30% of schools offer at least some courses online. The Omnibus K–12 Education Act of 2003 (amended in 2006)[32] 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. As of May 2006, there were 22 online programs on the "approved" list.[33]

State policies

Funding

- Effective FY 2006, Minnesota provides general education revenue for online students. For students taking online courses from the district in which they are enrolled, funding is the same as if the students were taking all their courses in physical classrooms. For students taking courses from outside their enrolling district, the online learning program receives 88% of one twelfth of an average daily membership (ADM) per completed semester course, weighted based on grade level. The other 12% goes to the student's enrolling district and generates general education revenue. 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 must pay course fees for additional courses. An exception to the ADM cap is when a student qualifies for a Learning Year Program which allows an additional 20% enrollment.
- 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.

[32] Minnesota Statutes 2005 124D.095 Online Learning Option Act; retrieved August 1, 2006, from http://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/stats/124D/095.html

[33] 2005-06 Certified Online Learning Providers, Minnesota Department of Education, April 2006; retrieved August 1, 2006, from http://education.state.mn.us/mde/static/001909.pdf

Teaching and curriculum

- "Courses and programs must be rigorous, aligned with state academic standards, and contribute to grade progressions in a single subject." Online courses must have "equivalent standards or instruction, curriculum, and assessment as other [non-online] courses..."
- The MDE certification process requires that providers list courses and assure the department of their alignment with Minnesota state standards.
- The legislation "requires that a [highly qualified] teacher with a Minnesota license be the person that assembles and delivers instruction to online learning students…The instruction may include curriculum developed by persons other than a teacher with a Minnesota license."
- The legislation states that "unless the commissioner grants a waiver, a teacher providing online learning instruction must not instruct more than 40 students in any one online learning course or program."
- Actual teacher contact time or other similar communication including frequent assessment is an expected online learning component and the online learning provider must "demonstrate expectations for actual teacher contact time or other student-to-teacher communication." The MDE requires that programs describe the methods and frequency of course interactivity, teacher contact, ongoing instructional assistance and assessment of student learning to comply with the law.
- "A student age 17 or younger must have the written consent of a parent or guardian to apply" for online learning.
- An Online Learning Advisory Council was appointed by the Commissioner of Education in 2006 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."

Governance and tracking

- Minnesota annually certifies public school online learning programs. All tracking is based on student reporting to the program finance division of the department of education. Students register either as fully-enrolled online learning students in a comprehensive program or they access online learning as a part time student and are reported by online learning course completion file.
- Programs that offer online learning classes to students enrolled in that district are reported as students enrolled in the district. No distinction is made for online learning in those cases and these programs may not be state-certified.

Accountability for student achievement

- The student's enrolling district is responsible for ensuring students take the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments. If the enrolling district is the online learning provider, the online program administers annual state tests.
- The Online Learning Advisory Council is addressing the issue of quality assurance on the state level along with other key issues related to online learning.

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 based on the certification procedures" set forth in the online learning statute." The department may initiate its own review of the validity of an online learning course offered by an online learning provider." ▪ The legislation allows "an online learning student to have the same access to computer hardware and education software available in a school as all other students enrolled in the district," and "an online learning student may participate in the extracurricular activities of the enrolling district on the same basis as other enrolled students." ▪ The legislation directs the online learning provider to "assist an online learning student whose family qualifies for the education tax credit (under section 290.0674) to acquire computer hardware and educational software for online learning purposes." ▪ "An online learning provider may limit enrollment if the provider's school board or board of directors adopts by resolution specific standards for accepting and rejecting students' applications." An enrollment policy is submitted to the department during the certification process.

7.7 Missouri

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	Created by legislation in 2006, first students by Fall 2007
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	Two university programs
State-level online education policy	Yes	Legislation creating state-led program

Missouri currently has two university-based K-12 online programs and a state-led program in development. Senate Bill 912[34] and House Bill 1275 were passed in June 2006 to create the virtual public school, which is scheduled to begin offering courses by Fall 2007. The law calls for the use of multiple course providers. For year one, 2007-2008, there will be a cap of 500 FTE seats. Officials estimate that in the first year approximately 100 full-time students will enroll in the elementary program and the remainder will enroll as part-time students across grade levels. The virtual public school is under the office of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Students will register directly through the DESE rather than through school districts. The virtual public school is subject to the same laws and regulations as regular school districts including but not limited to assessments and AYP.

The new virtual public school was funded for setup costs of $125,000 for 2006-2007. A fiscal note of $2.6 million is being requested for 2007-08 for first year operations. The virtual school is a separate appropriation and not included in the foundation formula that financially supports Missouri schools. Missouri funds its schools using an FTE model divided into sixths. The 2006 legislation dictates that for every course taken online through the virtual public school, the enrolling district will receive 15% of the funding and the virtual public school 85%.

[34] http://www.senate.mo.gov/06info/pdf-bill/tat/SB912.pdf

The University of Missouri-Columbia High School (MU High School)[35] is a part of the University of Missouri Center for Distance and Independent Study and provides distance learning courses delivered asynchronously to nearly 16,000 students nationwide. Students can receive credit for individual courses or a full diploma. Missouri State University has a program called Missouri Virtual School (MVS)[36] offering supplemental high school and dual credit courses emphasizing teacher interaction.

7.8 Nebraska

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	No	
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	University of Nebraska Independent Study High School and other district programs, no charter school law
State-level online education policy	Yes	Distance education legislation passed in 2006

Nebraska does not currently have a state-led program or any state-level policies specific to online education. Legislation[37] passed in 2006 is intended to lay the groundwork for future efforts by:

- Increasing bandwidth into schools—opening the door for blended learning options in the classroom and high quality online or video courses;
- Creating a state-level Distance Education Council to, among other tasks, broker and facilitate courses, administer learning management systems, and provide assistance in instructional design and best practices;
- Shifting interested districts from a consortium model into an ESU model which facilitates state funding and allows them to enter into contracts with providers.

Current online programs include Westside Virtual High School and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Independent Study High School, which includes some supplemental online courses in its correspondence course program.

[35] http://cdis.missouri.edu/MUHighSchool/HShome.htm

[36] http://mvs.missouristate.edu/index.htm

[37] Nebraska Legislature legislative bill 1208; retrieved August 14, 2006, from: http://www.unicam.state.ne.us/legal/SLIP_LB1208.pdf

7.9 North Dakota

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	North Dakota Division of Independent Study
Other major programs or cyberschools	No	No charter school law
State-level online education policy	No	

The North Dakota Division of Independent Study offers both online and print courses that are self-paced. There are no other significant online programs in North Dakota, and the only legislation related to online education is the Independent Study statute.[38]

North Dakota Division of Independent Study

Operations	
Year started	Spring semester 1996
Program type	Supplemental and full-time, courses are self-paced, with the end date one year from the original enrollment date.
Grade level	4-12
Number of course registrations/ students	2,000 course registrations from Summer 2005 to Spring 2006
Funding	
Funding sources	The program generates 90 percent of its revenue through course fees and site licenses. Additional funding comes from the state general fund.
Course fees	▪ $110 per semester course for state residents, $119 for nonresidents ▪ Site licenses range from $800 for sites with 11–30 users, to $2,850 for sites with 151–300 users; schools provide the teacher for these users.
Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	▪ 91 high school courses and 8 middle school courses are online ▪ All homegrown
Number of teachers	24 teachers; 14 full-time, 8 half-time; this includes both print and online
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	Teachers attend in-services regarding online instruction at least twice per year. Other in-services regarding technology and/or online applications are provided as necessary. Currently, all are provided face-to-face.
Formal teacher evaluation?	All teachers are evaluated by the Principal.
Teacher communication requirements?	Teachers must reply to student work within three days of receipt.
Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	Completion rate
Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	None

[38] http://www.legis.nd.gov/cencode/t15c19.pdf

Governance	▪ The Division of Independent Study is an agency of state government. ▪ Governed by a state board, the K–12 Educational Technology Council.
Accreditation/Evaluation	Accreditation by North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement, and Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA)
Equity and access	
Types of students	No particular student populations are focused on in practice or policy.
Any equity initiatives	No formal initiatives
Support for at-risk students	No formal policies

7.10 Ohio

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	No	
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	41 eCommunity Schools
State-level online education policy	Yes	Legislation in 2005 put a moratorium on new eCommunity schools.

As of August 2006, Ohio has 41 eCommunity (charter) schools that served 20,750 students in FY 2006.[39] These include seven statewide schools. A community school is similar to charter schools in other states. An eCommunity school is an Internet- or computer-based community school in which the enrolled students work primarily from their residences. eCommunity schools first opened for the 2000–2001 school year. Legislation adopted in April 2003 provided additional guidance for their operation. Legislation enacted in 2005 imposed a moratorium on new eCommunity schools until the general assembly adopts standards for the schools, due to a number of concerns including:

- Fast growth of some of the eCommunity schools coupled with a lack of additional standards (beyond those captured in the 2003 legislation and the general charter law)
- Low state assessment participation rates and aggregate test scores by some eCommunity schools (In the year since passage of the 2005 legislation, most of the eCommunity schools moved up one level on Ohio's school report card system.)
- Enrollment of students in eCommunity schools has contributed to decreased enrollment in many public school districts.
- Funding issues; because state funding follows the student, districts lose most of the state foundation funding (but none of the local funding) associated with students who go to the eCommunity schools.

As of August 2006 the eCommunity School standards had not yet been proposed. Other aspects of the legislation are covered in the following table.

[39] Information in this section is based on the 2004-2005 Annual Report on Ohio Community Schools, interviews with staff at the Ohio Department of Education, and legislation passed in 2005, House Bill 66.; retrieved August 8, 2006, from http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/BillText126/126_HB_66_EN1_N.html

Ohio has conducted two of the most comprehensive analyses of the cost of online education, looking specifically at the eCommunity schools. The study, by the former 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."[40]

State policies

Funding

- Community schools, including eCommunity schools, receive state funds directly from the state; these funds have been transferred from school district allocations.[h]
- eCommunity schools no longer are eligible to receive poverty-based funding.
- Beginning in FY 2007, each eCommunity school shall spend a designated amount for pupil instruction or face a possible fine of up to 5% of state payments to the school.

Teaching and curriculum

- 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 for the assessments.
- Whenever an eCommunity school student fails to participate in the spring administration of a grade-level achievement test for two consecutive school years, the school must withdraw that student from enrollment unless the parent pays tuition equal to the state funds the school otherwise would receive for that student. eCommunity schools must report these students to the state, the state must maintain a list of these students, and no eCommunity school will receive funds for students appearing on this list.

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."
- 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

[40] Legislative Committee on Education Oversight, *The Operating Costs of Ohio's eCommunity Schools*; retrieved August 11, 2006, from http://www.loeo.state.oh.us/reports/PreEleSecPDF/eSchools2_Web.pdf

[h] Legislative Committee on Education Oversight (2004), *Funding for Charter Schools*; retrieved August 11, 2006, from http://www.loeo.state.oh.us/reports/PreEleSecPDF/FundingforCharterSchools_web.pdf

7.11 South Dakota

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	A state virtual high school was recently created, but policies are in development.
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	Rapid City School District Virtual Campus will be incorporated into new state-led program.
State-level online education policy	Yes	House Bill 1236[i] signed in March 2006 establishes the state virtual high school and creates systems and requirements for other distance learning providers.

In the summer of 2004, the Department of Education hosted a series of discussions about education in South Dakota. The resulting 2010 Education Plan has as one of its main objectives to "increase 21st century skills using advanced technology to enhance learning" through various initiatives, including:

- Creating a state-led virtual high school program
- Implementing a one-to-one laptop initiative for high school students
- Implementing an e-mentoring program.

House Bill 1236, signed in March 2006, created the South Dakota Virtual High School as a consortium of approved statewide distance education providers under the South Dakota Department of Education. The School will not grant diplomas or credit and represents an expansion of current synchronous and asynchronous virtual class offerings in the state. The Virtual High School will be fee based, with rules being proposed by the advisory council. There will not be any additional government funding.

State policies

The Department of Education will establish criteria for approval of other organizations as Distance Learning Providers (DLP), and review each course offered by a DLP. State policies are primarily related to Department of Education approval of Distance Learning Providers.[41]

Teaching and curriculum

- Distance learning providers are required to ensure that the instruction provided is aligned with South Dakota academic achievement standards and in the case of a student with disabilities, will coordinate with the district to assure that instruction is consistent with the student's individualized education program
- Distance learning instructional staff have the same qualifications as teachers in a traditional physical school
- Distance learning instructional staff must annually demonstrate proficiency in delivering instruction using the distance learning provider's delivery system.
- Current professional development for instructional staff delivering coursework in the distance learning environment must be offered by the distance learning provider. Instructional staff shall demonstrate proficiency in current methods of delivering distance instruction

[41] Information in this section from the South Dakota VS Service Provider application, available at: http://doe.sd.gov/2010education/virtual_schools/docs/ServiceProvider/VS%20Service%20Provider%20application%202006.d.pdf

[i] South Dakota State Legislature House Bill 1236; retrieved August 9, 2006, from http://legis.state.sd.us/sessions/2006/bills/HB1236H.pdf

Governance and tracking

The state DOE is certifying distance learning providers to be listed on the website through an application and review process. The certified distance learning providers are required to report at the end of each year on the type of courses offered, the number and names of districts served, number of course registrations, completion rates, and other information. The certification applies to any company that wants to be included on the list of distance learning providers, including the already existing Digital Interactive Academic Link (DIAL) program. The certification does not apply to school districts with their own programs; these programs are not tracked at the state level.

Equity and access

To be eligible for certification, distance learning providers should explain their "equity and access" plans to address students with disabilities.

Web-enhanced learning

Another part of the 2010 Education Initiative is known as Classroom Connections, a laptop initiative which will proceed as a pilot project in 2006-2007.[j] Twenty school districts, serving 5,046 students, have been selected as pilot sites for the project which provides incentive money to school districts to initiate one-to-one laptop programs for their high school students.[k]

Through South Dakota's Classroom Connections project, the state will provide $1 for every $2 invested by the local school district toward the purchase of the laptops. The state's funding is made possible by a $4 million Citibank donation designated for technology-based initiatives. Districts will purchase their laptops directly from the vendor, and the state will reimburse them for one-third of the cost. Districts will pay $1,207 per laptop, which includes the hardware, warranty and standard software package, as well as training for teachers.

[j] More information on the laptop initiative can be found at http://www.2010education.com/WhatsNew.htm

[k] "Pilot schools selected for South Dakota's Classroom Connections project", press release dated May 16, 2006; retrieved from http://www.state.sd.us/news/showDoc.aspx?i=7371

7.12 Wisconsin

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	Wisconsin Virtual School
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	Several cyber charter schools and district online programs
State-level online education policy	No	No, but the Department of Public Instruction is in the process of creating a set of policy recommendations that have been developed with the Wisconsin Collaborative Online Network.

Wisconsin has a state-led program, 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. 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. In June 2005, State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster 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. As of July 2006, the recommendations have not yet been released and no formal regulations or laws have been created. Many of the advisors are also part of the Wisconsin Collaborative Online Network (WCON), an online education stakeholder group. WCON has developed its own set of recommendations for online education standards and policies.[42]

Wisconsin Virtual School

Operations	
Year started	2000 Fall semester
Program type	Supplemental, most courses are rolling admission and some have set start and end dates
Grade level	6-12
Number of course registrations/ students	▪ 1,500 registrations Summer 2005 to Spring 2006 ▪ 1,100 students Summer 2005 to Spring 2006

[42] Available at http://www.wcon.info/wconpolicies.html

Funding	
Funding sources	State and federal grants: ▪ $70,000 per year from 2000 to 2002 ▪ $42,000 in 2003 ▪ $28,000 in 2004 New state alternative grant: ▪ $52,900 per year from 2005 to 2007
Course fees	$325 per semester. Registration fees are paid by the district; home-school families self-register and pay the registration fees.
Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	▪ 114 courses ▪ 98% licensed, 2% developed
Number of teachers	34, all part-time
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	Yes; initially 12 hours, follow up yearly 16 hours provided face-to-face. Online resources and support provided throughout the year via email and online.
Formal evaluation process for teachers?	▪ Student post-course survey on instructor and course satisfaction. ▪ Teacher performance expectations checklist is used as a guiding document for evaluating performance informally.
Teacher communication requirements?	Required teacher response time within 48 hours of receiving a student or local school district contact.
Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	▪ 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 ▪ Average grade percentage obtained in the courses broken into recovery, AP, high school, and middle school courses
Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	AP scores
Governance	WVS is 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.
Accreditation/Evaluation	None
Equity and access	
Types of students	Student demographics tracked include: age, grade, gender, ethnicity, special education status.
Any equity initiatives	Initiatives are left to local districts. WVS provides support to local districts to implement online opportunities at the local level.
Support for at-risk students	▪ Local district policy ▪ A "local education guide" provided by the district serves as student mentor

State policies

State policies regulating online programs in Wisconsin are primarily charter school law.

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.
- 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 state-led 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 formerly home-schooled students enrolling in any charter school, including cyber charter schools, and receiving public education funding.

Teaching and curriculum

- 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.
- There are no requirements for content, teaching, or professional development that are specific to online programs.

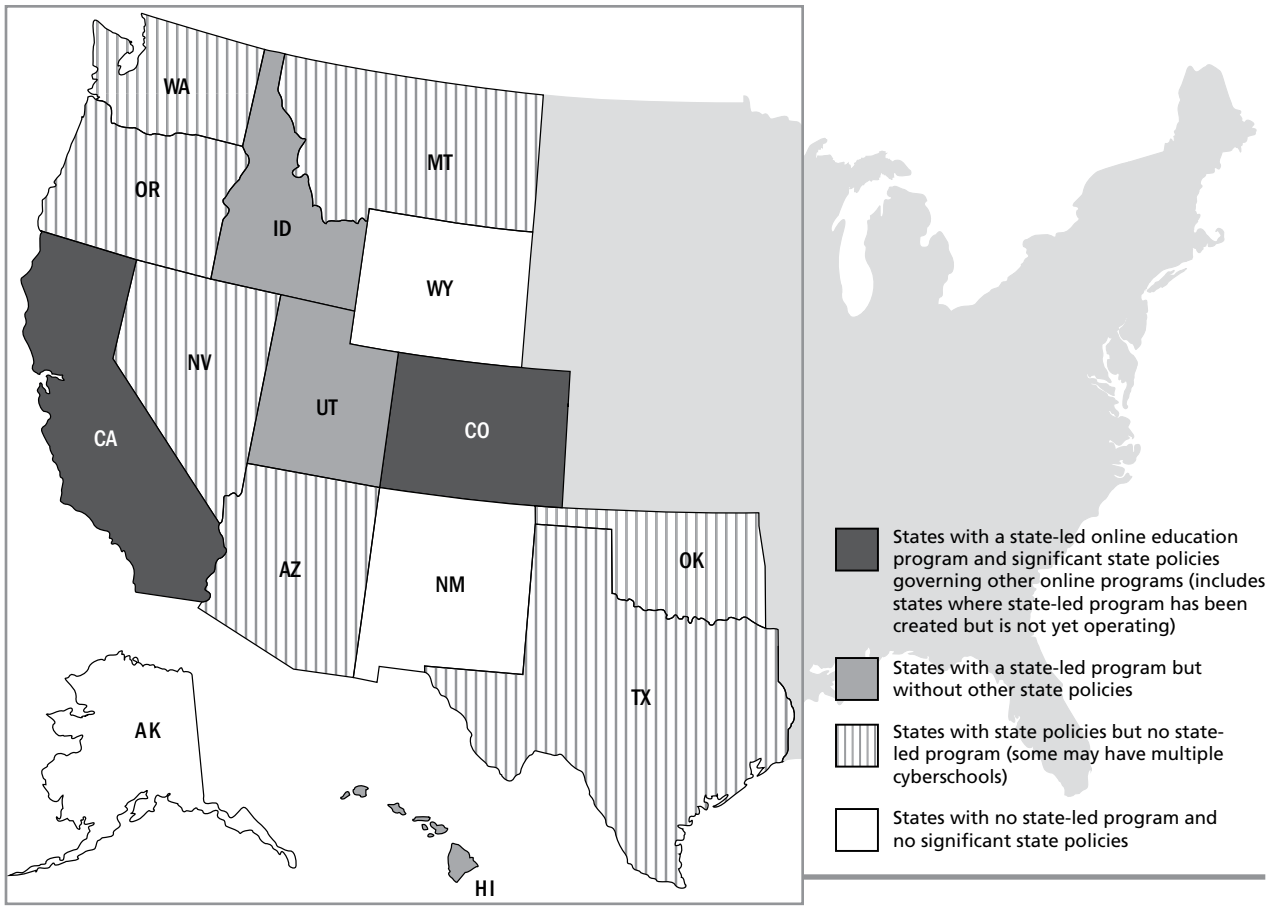
Accountability for student achievement

- Charter school students are required to take Wisconsin state assessments.
- In their petitions, all 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 online programs 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.
- There are no equity and access initiatives that are specific to online programs.

8 Western states



Alaska
Alaska Online is a consortium of about nine districts offering supplemental courses.

Arizona
Technology assisted project-based instruction program has 14 schools offering online courses including seven charter schools

California
University California College Prep Online is state-led program; many district programs and cyber charter schools

Colorado
Innovative program reimburses small districts for purchase of supplemental online courses from state-led program, Colorado Online Learning, and other providers

Hawaii
ESchool is state-led program; additional cyber charter applications anticipated

Idaho
Idaho Digital Learning Academy is state-led program; several other cyber charters and district programs

Montana
Many district programs and an online learning consortium; Department of Education has distance education standards

Nevada
Cyber charter schools and district online programs including the large Clark County Virtual High School; Nevada Revised Statutes set distance education program requirements

New Mexico
State issued an RFP in 2006 for teams to work collaboratively to create a state-led online program

Oklahoma
State code sets distance learning guidelines

Oregon
Law in 2005 created Oregon Virtual School District, several cyber charters and district programs

Texas
Electronic Course Pilot, district programs

Utah
Utah Electronic School is state-led program, Utah Online Academies is a consortium of districts offering online courses

Washington
District programs, no charter school law, extensive state rules governing online learning

Wyoming
A few small district programs

8.1 Alaska

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	No	
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	There are a few districts and cyber charters offering online learning programs.
State-level online education policy	No	

Cyber charters in Alaska are regulated by the same policies which regulate charter schools; there are no state policies pertaining specifically to online learning. Alaska does not have a state-led program, but Alaska Online is a consortium of about nine districts (the number varies by year) offering supplemental online courses, including the former Alyeska Central School. Alaska Online has approximately 250 students annually. Currently, no federal or state funding is provided; tuition rate of $225/semester course is charged.

8.2 Arizona

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	No	
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	14 online programs in the technology assisted project-based instruction program (TAPBI)
State-level online education policy	Yes	Legislation created and updated TAPBI

In 2003, Arizona passed legislation creating the "technology assisted project-based instruction" program,[43] a pilot program that in 2006 consists of seven public schools and seven charter schools[44] offering online courses. The legislation was updated in 2005.[45] 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.

[43] Arizona Revised Statutes § 15-808 describing the program; retrieved July 18, 2006, from http://www.ade.az.gov/technology/StateStatuteonDL.pdf.

[44] Participating school, listed at http://www.ade.state.az.us/stateboard/tapbi.asp

[45] Arizona Senate Bill 1422; retrieved July 31, 2006, from http://www.azleg.gov/legtext/47leg/1r/bills/sb1422h.pdf

State policies

Funding

- Online schools receive standard FTE student funding.
- No student may generate greater than 1.0 FTE funding.
- FTE funding may be split between a pilot program school and another charter school or district based on the time the student spends in each.
- For funding purposes, programs must maintain a daily student log describing the amount of time spent by each pupil on academic tasks.
- 80% of the students accepted into a school must have previously been public school students.

Governance and tracking

- Each school must provide an annual report to the state that describes numerous aspects of the program, including student and parent surveys, and a description of the cost-effectiveness of the program.
- The state auditor will complete a performance audit of the project by November 2007.

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% participation in the assessments, the student may not continue in the online program.
- Each school's annual report must include information on students' academic advancement.

Equity and access

The schools' annual report must provide a "description of the availability and equitable distribution of educational services provided under the program including specific descriptions of the effectiveness of technology tools and modalities used to address the needs of any underserved populations targeted by the school."

8.3 California

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	University of California College Prep Online
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	Cyber charter schools and district programs
State-level online education policy	Yes	Most online programs are governed by independent study regulations that cover all non-classroom based instruction, plus the charter laws.

California has extensive online education activity. It has a state-led program, the University of California College Prep (UCCP), which is funded by the state and run out of the University of California Santa Cruz. It also has numerous cyber charter schools and district online programs. In addition, in 2003 the state legislature passed a law, AB 294, which allowed districts to offer online courses in classrooms at their schools and claim ADA (FTE) funding; this is a program separate from both the state-led program and the state's cyber charter schools. Online programs in California are regulated by either AB 294 or a combination of independent study and, for charter schools, charter school law.

University of California College Prep

UCCP began as a response to the lack of availability of AP courses in many high schools across California, and has since grown to offer a wide variety of high school courses. In fall 2006 it is opening its first charter school as part of its UC Online Academy. The online charter high school, UC Online Academy-Imperial, will be followed next year by a second online high school in Mendocino County. The charter schools will offer a full-time option in addition to the supplemental courses offered by UCCP.

UCCP has two other notable initiatives: a pilot program with the state to offer online adult education courses, and a bi-national online high school to allow students from Mexico to take online courses.

Operations	
Year started	Fall semester 1999
Program type	Supplemental core operations but has opened a full-time charter school
Grade level	9-12
Number of course registrations	3,080 registrations Summer 2005–Spring 2006
Funding	
Funding sources	$3.1 million from the state through UC
Course fees	Per student/per semester course fees vary from $175 to $325 based on type of course, percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, and other factors
Courses and teachers	
Number of courses	46 courses
Number of teachers	46, all part-time

University of California College Prep (cont.)

Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	▪ New teachers work with experienced teachers through two days of face-to-face training that addresses numerous topics in an overview format (e.g., nature of online teaching/learning; structure of learning management systems and related tools; standard practice). Next they enter—as a student—a structured training course delivered through the same learning management system they will teach in. Once they achieve a basic level of competency, they are upgraded to instructor level to practice with the system's features and tools. When the course instructor approves their readiness, they are connected to a section of their content course to begin setting up the environment before students arrive. ▪ In addition to the intensive days of training, teachers attend the annual three-day UCCP Online Teaching & Learning Summer Institute. ▪ Professional development for all teachers is delivered through webinars with voice and video at regular intervals throughout the semester. Teachers are provided a faculty forum where they can exchange ideas, post queries, and discuss topics of concern and interest.
Formal evaluation process for teachers?	UCCP is field testing a formal process starting with a list of competencies. In 2006-2007 teachers will be engaged in discussions about the accuracy, relevance, and fairness of these test items before a formal process is developed based on the continuum from Innovator to High Performer to Master Teacher. Currently, evidence of performance is captured in the communication archive, and strong teacher performance is recognized with certificates identifying them as High Performers and/or Master Teachers.
Teacher communication requirements?	▪ 24-hour response to e-mails and phone calls during the school week; assessment scores posted within three school days ▪ Teachers must reach out to students who have not shown activity in the course, typically within three school days
Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	Drop, completion, and pass rates
Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	AP scores
Governance	UCCP was created by legislation and is housed within UC–Santa Cruz.
Accreditation/Evaluation	External program evaluations have been done, but not in the past year.

Equity and access	
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.
Any equity initiatives	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.
Support for at-risk students	UCCP monitors student course access and begins sending e-mails to at-risk students when a student is not responsive in a course 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.

State policies[46]

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

- AB 294, passed in 2003, which created a three-year classroom 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.
- Independent study regulations for all non-classroom based instruction
- Charter school laws, some of which are specific to online programs and others that are not

The AB294 classroom online pilot program schools offer online programs in the school setting, so are not subject to the non-classroom based instruction regulations. Cyber charter schools are governed by charter school law and the independent study provisions.

Funding
▪ Online curriculum may be presented either in a classroom setting or through independent study; the appropriate method of attendance accounting for such classes is dependent upon the instructional setting utilized. ▪ For online courses in a classroom setting, in which students are under the "immediate supervision and control" of a teacher, regular ADA funding applies through the provisions of AB294. For online courses at a distance, the instruction is considered non-classroom based and independent study provisions apply.

[46] This section based on the report *The State of Online Learning in California: A Look at Current K-12 Policies and Practices*, published by the University of California College Prep Online, 2006. As of September 2006 the report is not yet available online.

Teaching and curriculum

For AB294 school sites:

- "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 be licensed 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% of the total enrollment of that schoolsite."

Non-classroom based online courses are subject to independent study provisions, including that the student-teacher ratio for independent study cannot exceed the ratio of classroom based students to classroom based teachers. "Independent study is an alternative instructional strategy, not an alternative curriculum. Students work independently, according to a written agreement and under the general supervision of a credentialed teacher." [l]

Cyber charter schools are governed in part by provisions of SB 740, passed in 2001, which requires a charter school to:

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

In 2005, however, new regulations were created that allow schools to avoid the pupil-teacher ratio provisions of the law if the school "has and maintains an 8 or above Academic Performance Index (API) rank in either its statewide or similar schools ranking and has no less than a 6 in the other of these two rankings."[m] In this case the school must spend at least 85% of its budget on instruction. Other elements of the law include:

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

[l] Independent study requirements are complex, and explained in documents available at http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/is/

[m] Title 5. EDUCATION Division 1. California Department of Education, Subchapter 13. Independent Study Article 3. Provisions Unique to Charter Schools, § 11963.5, *Determination of Funding Requests For Nonclassroom-Based Virtual or On-Line Charter Schools*; retrieved February 8, 2006, from http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/lr/rr/documents/cleansb740.doc

Governance and tracking
▪ AB294 programs were tracked by the CDE as part of the pilot program ▪ Charter school programs are tracked by the provisions of SB740 ▪ For independent study, compliance with legislative requirements is subject to annual audit
Equity and access
▪ School districts that offer AB294 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." ▪ Charter schools must accept students on a first-come, first-served basis or by lottery

8.4 Colorado

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	Colorado Online Learning
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	Cyber charter schools and district programs
State-level online education policy	Yes	House Bill 06-1008 creates a fund to reimburse small districts which purchase supplemental online courses

Colorado has a state-led program, cyberschools with a collective enrollment of several thousand students, numerous district-level supplemental online programs, and statutes governing online learning. In 2006 Colorado passed a law that creates a unique funding mechanism for supplemental online programs.[47] The legislature appropriated just over half a million dollars to the state Department of Education to be used to reimburse small districts (less than 3,000 students) and charter schools for the cost of purchasing a supplemental online course. Among the limits on the funding are that the course provider must use Colorado-licensed teachers and the district or charter school must not provide its own online courses to students outside its geographic boundaries. The amount that can be reimbursed to each district is capped at ten dollars per district enrollment in grades 6-12. If the district, for example, has 600 students in these grades, it can be reimbursed up to $6,000.

The 2006 law is the latest in a series of state efforts to resolve questions around online learning. Since 2002, Colorado has had three state-level 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. As of September 2006 the Colorado state legislature is preparing a comprehensive fiscal and program audit of online programs; its report is expected in late 2006.

[47] House Bill 06-1008; retrieved July 2, 2006, from http://www.leg.state.co.us/clics2006a/csl.nsf/fsbillcont3/B4270585F78ABF15872570AD0057C329?Open&file=1008_enr.pdf The fiscal note, available at http://www.leg.state.co.us/clics2006a/csl.nsf/fsbillcont3/B4270585F78ABF15872570AD0057C329?Open&file=HB1008_r2.pdf, provides a summary of the bill.

Colorado Online Learning

Operations	
Year started	1999 Fall semester
Program type	Supplemental, both semester-paced and flexible start dates
Grade level	Grades 6-12, with emphasis on grades 9-12
Number of course registrations/ students	▪ 1,350 course registrations Summer 2005–Spring 2006 ▪ 1,100 students Summer 2005–Spring 2006
Funding	
Funding sources	Grant from Colorado Department of Education from federal Enhancing Education Through Technology funds; $700,000 grant each of the past three years, with a $400,000 grant extension in FY 2006
Course fees	$300 per student per course per semester, districts pay course fees.
Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	▪ 58 ▪ 49 developed by program, 9 being taught by teachers who own their own courses
Number of teachers	33, all part-time
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	Individual professional development plans are created for each instructor, based on course reviews and student surveys.
Formal evaluation process for teachers?	Formal quality assurance process incorporates numerous teaching and course-development elements.
Teacher communication requirements?	It is expected that teachers be working in their courses daily and that they respond to student inquiries within 24 hours.
Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	▪ Course completion/passing rates ▪ Daily and weekly monitoring of student progress by COL staff and on-site facilitators
Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	Advanced Placement (AP) exam results
Governance	501(c)(3) non-profit organization with a governing board
Accreditation/Evaluation	▪ North Central Association (NCA) and Commission for International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA) ▪ Annual evaluation by an external evaluator

Equity and access	
Types of students	Student demographic information is not tracked due to federal privacy regulations.
Any equity initiatives	COL led the development of a legislative initiative to create a state fund from which small school districts can request reimbursement for the purchase of supplemental online courses. The measure becomes effective for the 2006-2007 school year.
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.

State policies

Most state policies, other than the new funding mechanism for supplemental programs noted above, are based on Colorado Statute 22-33-104.6, from 2002.[48]

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 for brick-and-mortar districts, but which remains at the state minimum for online students.
- PPR funding is limited to 1.0 FTE per student and may be split in half but not into smaller units. In cases where students are taking more than half of an FTE class load in two schools, the districts involved negotiate the payment split or, in rare cases, the split is determined by the Department of Education.
- Most cyberstudents are funded at the state minimum PPR level—$5,689 in 2005-2006
- Single-district cyberschools get funded at the district's regular PPR unless the student is taking more than 50% 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 in grades two and higher who were not enrolled in a public school in the previous school year, unless the students receive a special-needs exemption.

Teaching and curriculum

- 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. There are no additional requirements for online teachers.

[48] Colorado Statute 22-33-104.6 is available through search on the Colorado State Legislature Web site (198.187.128.12/colorado/lpext.dll?f=templates&fn=fs-main.htm&222-33-104.6); retrieved July 2, 2006

Governance and tracking
▪ Colorado is a local control state, giving school districts substantial responsibility for oversight of cyberschools. ▪ Online programs are not formally tracked by the Colorado Department of Education.
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."

8.5 Hawaii

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	Hawaii E-School
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	One hybrid charter school, additional cyber charter applications anticipated
State-level online education policy	No	

Hawaii has a state-led program, E-School, and one charter school that uses a hybrid online and face-to-face approach. E-School began in 1996 as a US DOE Technology Innovation Challenge Grantee and continued under that funding for five years. The program's size has remained steady for a number of years. There has been interest from legislators in expanding the program, but no bills have yet been introduced to do so.

Hawaii E-School

Operations	
Year started	Fall 1996
Program type	Supplemental, courses have set start and end dates
Grade level	Primarily high school, 9-12; intermediate students invited to sign up but may or may not be granted credit
Number of course registrations/ students	Approximately 1,000 course registrations and between 600-800 students

Funding	
Funding sources	For the first five years, Federal Funds from the USDOE Technology Innovation Challenge Grant
Course fees	Program is free to public high school students during the regular school year, summer school courses cost $80 per half credit.
Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	▪ Approximately 40 courses ▪ 100% homegrown
Number of teachers	Approximately 20 part-time, all are full-time regular teachers who are contracted with E-School to teach online courses above and beyond their full load.
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	▪ Yes. Provided in combination online and face-to-face instruction. Those teaching a course meet six to eight times over two to three months during a semester, and are mentored during course development process. ▪ Teachers are given the opportunity to take online and hybrid (online/ face-to-face combination) professional development courses during the school year.
Formal evaluation process for teachers?	Peer review only
Teacher communication requirements?	There are no mandated requirements, but teachers are encouraged to replicate contact as in a regular classroom—ongoing and almost daily. Student to class ratios are kept at or below 26:1.
Accountability	
Governance	Hawaii Department of Education
Accreditation/Evaluation	▪ None ▪ No external evaluations since federal funding ended in 2001

8.6 Idaho

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA)
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	Three cyberschools in addition to IDLA
State-level online education policy	Yes	Idaho requires that all schools be accredited, and the state Department of Education maintains a list of accredited distance education programs.

Idaho has a state-led program, the Idaho Digital Learning Academy, and three statewide cyberschools that operate under charter school laws as interpreted by the Idaho Department of Education. Idaho requires that all schools be accredited by the Department, and maintains a list of accredited distance education programs. Programs that are part of districts and not separate schools are not tracked by the state.

Idaho Digital Learning Academy

Operations	
Year started	2002 Fall semester
Program type	Primarily supplemental, some full-time students; all courses have set start and end dates
Grade level	7-12
Number of course registrations/ students	▪ 2,500 course registrations ▪ 1,875 students
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 ▪ FY 2005 appropriation was $900,000 ▪ FY 2006 appropriation was $1.1 million (additional $200,000 to reduce or eliminate tuition fees)
Course fees	▪ Fees for 2006-2007 for all courses are reduced to $50 per course per semester for Idaho students, plus a one-time $25 registration fee for those districts who have a trained site coordinator. If the district does not have a trained site coordinator, then fees are $100 per course per semester for Idaho students. ▪ 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.
Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	▪ 85 courses for 2005-2006 ▪ 100% homegrown
Number of teachers	▪ 100 teachers, all part-time ▪ "Courses shall be taught online by Idaho teachers unless special circumstances determined by the director require a waiver of this requirement." ▪ There are three regional coordinators whose primary responsibility is to serve as liaisons between IDLA, school districts, and Idaho higher education institutions, and to enhance program services to participants, specifically in the area of special populations (i.e., at-risk and gifted/talented students).
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	Required annual face-to-face (18 hours) and online training (15 hours)
Formal evaluation process for teachers?	Bonuses for 2006-2007 and continued renewal of contracts are based upon evaluation criteria such as course completion, student evaluations, administrative requirements, and teacher online presence.
Teacher communication requirements?	Teachers are required to respond to students within 24 hours.

Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	▪ Course completion ▪ State end-of-course assessments ▪ Proctored final
Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	State end-of-course assessments
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.
Accreditation/Evaluation	▪ Accredited by Northwest Association of Accredited Schools and the Idaho State Department of Education ▪ External evaluation is a requirement in the legislation, on a three-year cycle.
Equity and access	
Types of students	IDLA was created to address the educational needs of all Idaho students: traditional, home schooled, at-risk, and gifted/AP students.
Any equity initiatives	Legislation says IDLA must be available to all students who want to participate. In practice this means the site coordinator is responsible for notifying the IDLA instructor of appropriate accommodations that the instructor implements. Additional resources of the IEP/504/LEP plan are the responsibility of the home district.
Support for at-risk students	▪ During the summer session, IDLA is approved as an alternative summer school. ▪ IDLA 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% of the faculty have extensive experience working with at-risk students.

State policies

The policies and quotes in this section are based on two laws: charter school law[49] and a statute addressing "technological instruction."[50]

[49] Idaho Statutes Title 33, Chapter 52; retrieved July 7, 2006, from http://www3.state.id.us/idstat/TOC/33052KTOC.html

[50] Idaho Statutes Title 33, Chapter 10, 33-1003C; retrieved July 7, 2006, from http://www3.state.id.us/cgi-bin/newidst?sctid=330100003C.K

Funding

- Charter schools, including cyberschools, are funded based on average daily attendance and a specific formula.
- Legislation passed in 2004 also provided modest "transportation equivalent" funds to cyber charter schools in recognition of costs to bring the school to the student.
- 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 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.
- 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 onto the computer from another location."

Teaching and curriculum

- Cyber charter schools, as with all charter schools in Idaho, 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."
- 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.
- "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."

Governance and tracking

All schools in Idaho must be accredited by the Department of Education, including cyberschools; therefore the Department has a list of online learning programs. The accreditation process, however, does not have standards or processes specific to online programs.[n]

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.

[n] Phone Interview, Shannon Page, State Accreditation Coordinator, July 7, 2006

8.7 Montana

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	No	
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	No charter school law, but several district programs
State-level online education policy	Yes	Senate Bill 359; Montana Distance Learning Standard A.R.M. 10.55.907[o]

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. As of August 2006, Montana is revising the application process for online providers, moving the process online and changing some requirements, including considering a differentiation between online classes taken at a school versus taken at home or elsewhere. The new application should be in place by Fall 2006. Montana also has the Montana Schools E-Learning Consortium, a group of districts working together to provide online learning opportunities.[51]

State policies

Funding

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

Teaching and Curriculum

- "School districts receiving distance, online, and technology delivered learning programs described in this rule shall have a distance learning facilitator as provided in this rule assigned for each course and available to the students.
- When a teacher of distance, online, and technology delivered learning programs and/or courses is not licensed and endorsed as provided in this rule, the facilitator must hold a Montana educator license.
- When a teacher of distance, online, and technology delivered learning programs is licensed and endorsed in the area of instruction… the receiving school district's facilitator shall be a licensed teacher or a para-educator."
- "The school district must see to it that the facilitator receives in-service training on technology delivered instruction…"

[51] www.mselc.org

[o] Summary at http://www.opi.state.mt.us/pdf/AdvPlacement/DistStandard.pdf; full wording at http://161.7.8.61/10/10-795.htm. Unless otherwise noted, quotes in this section are from this document.

[p] Montana Senate Bill 359; retrieved August 1, 2006, from http://data.opi.state.mt.us/bills/2005/billhtml/SB0359.htm

Governance and tracking
Providers (other than Montana school districts) will annually: ▪ Register with the Montana Office of Public Instruction ▪ Identify all Montana school districts to whom they are delivering distance learning ▪ Verify the professional qualifications of course teachers ▪ Provide course descriptions, including content and delivery model, for each program and/or course ▪ Demonstrate that students have ongoing contact with the distance-learning teachers
Accountability for student achievement
School districts handle state assessments.

8.8 Nevada

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	No	Clark County School District Virtual High School is a de facto statewide program.
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	Cyber charter schools and district online programs
State-level online education policy	Yes	Nevada Revised Statutes set distance education program requirements.

Nevada has cyber charter schools and district online programs. The state is unique in that 70% of its students are in one district, the Clark County School District, whose Virtual High School is profiled below. The state also has policies governing distance education, which includes video and online delivery and are discussed in the following section. Policies governing distance education apply to both district programs and charter schools.

Clark County School District Virtual High School

Operations	
Year started	Fall 1998
Program type	Primarily supplemental, but has 180 full-time students. Courses have set start and end dates.
Grade level	9-12
Number of course registrations/ students	▪ 7,116 course registrations Summer 2005–Spring 2006 ▪ 4,825 students Summer 2005–Spring 2006
Funding	
Funding sources	▪ Federal Funds under Title V, approximately $200,000 per year ▪ CCSD per pupil allocation from general funds

Course fees	▪ Concurrent students within CCSD, who are taking courses in addition to their regular school day, are assessed $100 tuition for each semester course they take per semester. ▪ The Driver Education course is $65, 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. Five of the 17 school districts in Nevada have signed agreements. ▪ All students pay the $100 tuition during the summer session.
Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	▪ 121 different semester courses (online, video, and combination formats) ▪ 36 semester courses of solely video format ▪ 13 semester courses dual platform—both video and online ▪ 72 semester courses solely online ▪ 74% homegrown, 26% licensed
Number of teachers	12 full-time, 61 part-time
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	▪ Teachers are 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 and hybrid (online/ face-to-face combination) professional development courses during the school year.
Formal evaluation process for teachers?	Full-time teachers are evaluated based on the Clark County School District's teacher evaluation form. Part-time teachers are not formally evaluated.
Teacher communication requirements?	Teachers are required to make contact with each student each week per Nevada Revised Statutes, and are required to respond to all student communications within 24 hours.
Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	▪ Course passing and completion rates ▪ Advanced Placement (AP) exam results ▪ For full-time students, scores on state and district tests are tracked. This includes the pass rate for the Nevada High School Proficiency Exam. Students must successfully pass this exam to earn a high school diploma.
Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	▪ AP examinations ▪ Nevada High School Proficiency Exam ▪ Iowa Test of Basic Skills and Educational Development
Governance	Board of trustees for Clark County School District (CCSD), Las Vegas
Accreditation/Evaluation	▪ Candidate for accreditation with Northwest Association of Accredited Schools ▪ Yearly audit

Equity and access	
Types of students	▪ No particular student populations are focused on in practice or policy. ▪ Virtual High School tracks student demographics, completion rates, and all of the information required to meet NCLB for the accountability report.
Any equity initiatives	▪ 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.

State policies

Nevada online education 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,[52] with quotes from the Nevada Department of Education web page on distance learning.[53]

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 (except for charter schools that are essentially LEAs and enroll students full-time, not sharing their enrollment with district) and for agreements between districts and charter schools.
Teaching and curriculum
▪ 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."

[52] Retrieved July 31, 2006, from http://www.leg.state.nv.us/nrs/NRS-388.html and http://www.leg.state.nv.us/NAC/NAC-388.html

[53] http://www.doe.nv.gov/techinn/disted.html

Governance and tracking
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"

8.9 New Mexico

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	No	Planning to create and implement a pilot in 2007
Other major programs or cyberschools	No	Rio Rancho Cyber Academy is only program, run by a single district
State-level online education policy	No	

New Mexico is planning to create a state-led program using $1.3 million in Federal Enhancing Education through Technology grant money. The initiative, being coordinated by the New Mexico Department of Education, will award between $300,000 and $350,000 to each of four local education agencies (LEA) that will work together to build and test the pilot program. The four funding areas are curriculum and instruction, professional development, infrastructure, and data-driven decision-making.[54] The grantee LEAs will be required to meet federal qualifications for percentage of free and reduced lunch students, and rural districts will be given priority. LEAs will be encouraged to partner with others across the state to extend the benefits of the program across the state. The state education department is planning to eventually take over and run the online program.

In addition to the online program, New Mexico has had a successful laptop program in place for approximately three years, the New Mexico Laptop Learning Initiative. This year, the state has appropriated $2 million to support the Laptop Learning Initiative. Based upon previous years' experience, it is anticipated that this amount will support approximately 1,500 laptops for seventh graders and their teachers.[55] The initiative is expanding to include an online Professional Development model; the teachers who receive laptops as part of the initiative will be required to complete a number of professional development courses online.

[54] The New Mexico Education Technology Consolidated Application, http://www.nmlites.org/programs/laptop/documents/NMETCA6.16.doc

[55] The New Mexico Education Technology Consolidated Application, http://www.nmlites.org/programs/laptop/documents/NMETCA6.16.doc and http://www.nmlites.org/programs/laptop/index.html

8.10 Oklahoma[56]

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	No	
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	University-sponsored
State-level online education policy	Yes	State code sets distance learning guidelines.

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.

State polices

Funding

Oklahoma funds its schools using Average Daily Membership. Local boards set policy for online learning which typically means districts pay for the online courses.

Teaching and curriculum

- Courses must be aligned with state standards.
- Teachers must be certified in the subject area in Oklahoma or another state.
- Teachers "shall be provided in-service 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.
- 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.

Governance and tracking

The state keeps track of local school board efforts through state accreditation.

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.

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

8.11 Oregon

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	No	The Oregon Virtual School District is state-led but does not have its own students or courses.
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	Numerous district programs and one statewide cyber charter
State-level online education policy	Yes	Senate Bill 1071 created the Oregon Virtual School District.

Oregon has several district online programs, a consortium of districts providing online courses (Oregon Online), one statewide (district-authorized) cyber charter school, and a history of extensive discussions about online learning policy at the state level[57] that have resulted in the Oregon Virtual School District (OVSD). Senate Bill 1071,[58] passed in 2005, provides for the creation of the OVSD within the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). OVSD will not register students, but instead will act as a portal for finding and accessing courses and providers as well as leading in developing future online learning policy in the state. The bill authorizes the State Board of Education to create rules under which the ODE will establish quality criteria and policies for the OVSD, including development and delivery of virtual content and teacher training. As of August 2006, OVSD is in Phase I of development and web-portal rollout, including creating its own LMS, which should be in place by September 2006. The portal will include an aggregated course catalog, links to registered online course providers and a teacher professional development site. The ODE has also issued an RFP for digital content to be used for online courses and as supplemental teaching resources in classrooms.

Even before the creation of OVSD the state has had a 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 made policy recommendations concerning funding, teacher training, and other issues. One significant policy change allows Oregon online programs to utilize out-of-state teachers as long as they hold a teaching certificate. This policy is rare and reinforces one of the big advantages of online learning—freedom from geographic constraints. Another significant policy from the 2005 law requires that a charter school offering online courses must have at least 50% of its students from within the charter school's district. (Because the statewide charter was authorized prior to passage of the 2005 law, it was exempted from this requirement.)

[57] See Distance Education in Oregon Policy Brief, October 2004, for a history of these efforts. http://www.ode.state.or.us/initiatives/elearning/ecs_policybrieffinal.pdf

[58] Retrieved August 3, 2006, from http://www.leg.state.or.us/05reg/measpdf/sb1000.dir/sb1071.en.pdf. Quotes in this section are taken from the law.

State policies

Funding

OVSD received $2 million for two years beginning July 2005 in a fund separate from standard FTE funding. "The Oregon Virtual School District is not considered a school district for purposes of apportionment… of the State School Fund and the department may not receive a direct apportionment from the State School Fund for the Oregon Virtual School District."

Teaching and curriculum

- Teachers must be "properly licensed or registered." Teachers licensing and professional development requirements are done by the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission. As of August 2006, the OVSD Standards Sub-Committee is identifying and drafting related standards (across categories) above and beyond existing ones.
- Courses must meet academic content standards.

Governance and tracking

The ODE lists courses taught by Oregon educators and outside Online course providers on their website[q]. OVSD also lists providers on its portal site.[r] Providers work directly with school districts for reporting annual yearly progress (AYP).

Accountability for student achievement

Accountability is handled between providers and districts.

Equity and access

In order to meet the primary goal of OVSD, to work towards equalization of K-12 education opportunities across the state, significant efforts have been made in addressing last-mile infrastructure and connectivity issues which inhibit or preclude delivery of online courses and digital content from schools most in need.

Web-enhanced learning

One of the purposes of the ODE purchase of flexible digital learning content is to use it as a resource for the OVSD teacher professional development site which will provide tools and resources for the successful establishment of blended-learning classrooms.

[q] http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=334

[r] http://orvsd.org/

8.12 Texas

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	No	State does not have a State Virtual School. However, it is currently implementing a pilot program, the Electronic Course Pilot (eCP).
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	Five districts (four independent school districts and one open-enrollment charter school) are approved to offer virtual programs through the eCP supported by the equivalent of average daily attendance (ADA) state funds; also online programs exist in a number of other districts.
State-level online education policy	Yes	The Electronic Course Pilot (Texas Education Code 29.909)

Texas authorizes all public schools to offer online courses to their students as state-funded supplemental programs. Districts may grant credit for a course if they have determined that the course meets or exceeds the state's curriculum standards for that content area. In order for the district to receive state funding—which is based on average daily attendance (ADA)—students must meet the normal attendance accounting rules of the state. Texas does not have a state-led program or cyber charter schools, but a growing number of districts are offering virtual courses or programs. The University of Texas at Austin and Texas Tech University also offer online high school courses, but these are not funded by state K-12 education funds and the programs charge tuition.

The Texas Education Agency's Educational Technology Advisory Committee (ETAC) developed the Texas STaR Chart, an online resource tool for self-assessment of campus and district efforts to integrate technology across the curriculum. The Texas STaR Chart has recently been revised and will now include campus efforts with regard to online learning.[59]

Additionally, Texas is implementing the Electronic Course Pilot (eCP),[60] a program designed to allow the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to gather data to develop and support recommendations to the legislature regarding online learning in the state. The eCP was created by Senate Bill (SB) 1108, passed in 2003[61] and is now codified in Texas Education Code 29.909. Five independent school districts and one open-enrollment charter school were approved to participate in the eCP. One of the eCP participants began serving students during the 2005-2006 school year and the others plan to begin serving students in the 2006-2007 school year.

TEA will be submitting a report on the eCP to the state legislature in December of 2006. Legislators have expressed interest in introducing new online learning legislation, building upon lessons learned from the eCP, when they convene in January 2007. State policies explained below are based on the eCP and SB 1108.

[59] For more information on the STaR Chart, go to http://starchart.esc12.net/.

[60] Information on the Electronic Course Pilot is available at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/technology/ecp/

[61] Retrieved August 9, 2006, from http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/tlo/78R/billtext/SB01108F.HTM

State policies

Funding

- Public school funding is based on 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. If a student enrolls and takes courses through a district participating in the pilot, the eCP district may then get FSP funding.
- The pilot allows districts participating in the eCP to offer online courses to students residing in other districts, per a written agreement between the districts. The student is then entered into the state's STS transfer system and enrolled in the eCP district.
- The FSP funding model is the only mechanism for districts to collect state funding. Only districts approved to participate in the eCP can collect FSP funding for students taking courses in a virtual setting. In order to be included in the pilot and be eligible to generate state funding, students must be enrolled in a public school district approved to participate in the eCP.

Teaching and curriculum

- 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.
- State Board of Education rules for high school science courses call for 40% hands-on wet lab experiences for students. State curriculum specialists are currently developing specific policies and guidelines for online science courses.
- Teachers in online programs have the same certification requirements as teachers in the traditional classroom.

Governance and tracking

The eCP has extensive reporting requirements for pilot programs.

Accountability for student achievement

- 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 times.
- 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*[s], is available as a guide 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 the course review process.
- The TEA has created an alternative attendance reporting/state funding request instrument for the eCP that will collect student data. This instrument has been developed through the collaboration of multiple agency divisions, including Instructional Materials and Educational Technology, Accountability and Data Quality, State Funding, Financial Audits and Information Technology.

[s] Information about the IQ Pilot and a link to the Texas Education Agency's *Quality of Service Guidelines for Online Courses Evaluation Matrix* is located at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/technology/wbl/wbl_ioc.html.

Equity and access
▪ All students enrolled in the districts approved for participation in the eCP who meet eligibility requirements for the program[t] must be given the opportunity to participate in the eCP project. ▪ Under the eCP project requirements, schools may loan equipment to their students taking eCP courses but cannot transfer ownership of the equipment.

8.13 Utah

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	Yes	Utah Electronic School
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	Utah Online Academies
State-level online education policy	No	No

Utah has the largest K-12 online program in the country, the Utah Electronic School, but no other major online programs or cyber charter schools. Three districts form the Utah Online Academies and use curriculum provided by K12.

Utah Electronic School

Operations	
Year started	September 1994
Program type	Primarily supplemental; all courses are open-entry/open-exit
Grade level	9-12
Number of course registrations/ students	51,482 course registrations from July 2005 to June 2006
Funding	
Funding sources	▪ $1 million appropriation from the Utah state legislature FY 2006 ▪ Previous funding FY 2002 through FY 2005 total of $2.05 million
Course fees	Free to Utah students, out of state students pay $50 per quarter credit
Courses and teachers	
Number of courses, % licensed/ homegrown	▪ 300 ▪ 290 homegrown
Number of teachers	98, all part-time
Are teachers highly qualified under NCLB?	All
Are teaching online skills provided in PD?	EHS provides 12 hours annually of face-to-face instruction in teaching online. The Utah Education Network (UEN) provides multiple distance learning staff development courses.

[t] Terms of Participation for the eCP are available at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/technology/ecp/.

Formal evaluation process for teachers?	Surveys are distributed to students who complete or abandon classes.
Teacher communication requirements?	Teachers must respond to student requests within 72 hours. Since students work at their own pace, there are no specific deadlines to submit materials, other than the end of year requirements (May 1) for seniors who need the credit to graduate from their resident high school.
Accountability	
Measuring student outcomes	All students are required to take state-mandated end-of-level tests.
Measures that are common with face-to-face programs	State-mandated end-of-level tests
Governance	Housed within the Utah state office of education and governed by the state board of education.
Accreditation/Evaluation	Accredited by Northwest Association of Accredited Schools; obtaining accreditation with Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation; also annual external evaluation
Equity and access	
Types of students	50% are credit recovery; 35% are taking courses not offered at their schools; 5% are taking extra courses to accelerate graduation; 7% are home-schooled; and 3% are full time students working to earn a high school diploma from EHS.
Any equity initiatives	Public schools and public libraries provide access for students who do not have computer access at home.
Support for at-risk students	No policies; accommodations made at local school

8.14 Washington

Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	No	The Digital Learning Commons was created by the state to provide online resources to schools
Other major programs or cyberschools	Yes	District programs, including full-time, but no charter school law
State-level online education policy	Yes	Senate Bill 5828[u] and Alternative Learning Experience rules[v]

Washington has several full-time and supplemental district online education programs. The state does not have a charter school law, so all online programs are part of school districts, though they may serve students statewide. The state has also created the Digital Learning Commons, a nonprofit organization formed in 2002 to provide online courses, digital resources, digital tools, and training to students, parents, and teachers. It is not a state-led program that registers students into courses, but instead provides digital resources to schools across the state.

Online programs are governed by the state's "alternative learning experience" (ALE) policies, clarified via program implementation guidelines issued in 2005 by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). These guidelines build in part on Senate Bill 5828, passed in 2005 to specifically address online learning. The ALE rules provide a method for school districts to claim basic education funding for learning experiences that are conducted in large measure away from school, including online courses.

The recent moves to clarify ALE rules are partially based on concerns about academic and fiscal "credibility gaps" in ALE programs,[62] and also based on the recognition that the rules did not appropriately govern online courses. These concerns were identified in two reports issued in 2005 by the Washington Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) on the ALE policies.[63] The passage of SB 5828 was also in response to the concern about online program practice outpacing policy. 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." The recent amendments to the rules are designed to better accommodate online learning programs, and to improve ALE program accountability

[62] http://www.k12.wa.us/AlternativeEd/ProgramImplementationGuidelines/ALETrainingPPTII.ppt

[63] http://www.k12.wa.us/AlternativeEd/pubdocs/JLARCFinalReportALE.pdf

[u] Senate Bill 5828, Digital Learning Programs; retrieved August 10, 2006, from http://www.leg.wa.gov/pub/billinfo/2005-06/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Law%202005/5828-S.SL.pdf

[v] http://www.k12.wa.us/AlternativeEd/ProgramImplementationGuidelines/default.aspx; the code sections are RCW 28A.150.262 and WAC 392-121-182

State policies

Funding

FTE funding is generated by students in ALE programs, based on the student making satisfactory progress towards the goals in the student's learning plan.

Teaching and curriculum

- "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 in an online program may include "telephone, e-mail, instant messaging, interactive video communication, or other means of digital communication," if explicitly authorized by local school district policy.

Governance and tracking

- Programs that are primarily online must be accredited through "the state accreditation program or through the regional accreditation program."
- ALE programs must provide an annual report that gives FTE enrollment, how students are evaluated, and how the program supports state and district learning objectives.

Accountability for student achievement

- Accountability for student achievement in an ALE is based on a student's written alternative learning experience plan.
- Teachers must document student progress monthly.
- Students must take state assessments and any assessments given by the district.

Equity and access

ALE's "shall be accessible to all students, including those with disabilities."

8.15 Wyoming

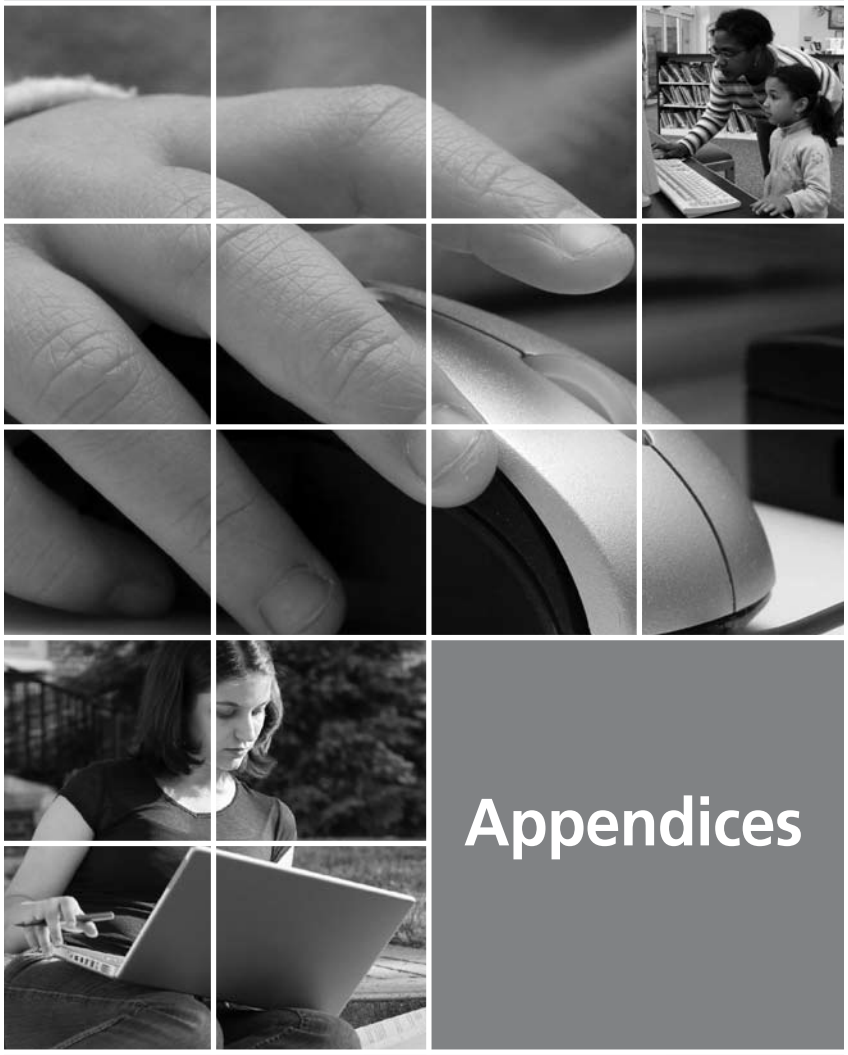
Category	Yes/No	Comments
State-led program	No	
Other major programs or cyberschools	No	A couple of small district programs
State-level online education policy	Yes	Distance learning funding incentive

Wyoming does not have a state-led program and only a few school districts operating online programs. The Fremont County School District #21 has started a cyber charter school that serves a small number of full-time students. It operates under charter school law that is not specific to online learning. As of August 2006 the Wyoming Department of Education is investigating the need to establish rules to govern distance learning, and exploring issues such as funding and accountability, because existing policy is limited.

State policies

Funding
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.[w] There is also a small stipend for teachers of K-12 distance learning courses funded by the state. Most distance learning courses currently are via two-way videoconferencing, but this stipend and the funding incentive applies to online courses as well.
Governance and tracking
Wyoming currently tracks only those students attending distance learning courses provided by a school district or college institution other than the student's school district. The report is collected twice a year; and, the incentives are paid based on the number of students attending distance learning courses.
Equity and access
The Wyoming Equality Network (WEN), an intrastate network connecting schools, administration and higher education facilities, handles data, voice, and two-way videoconferencing needs.

[w] http://legisweb.state.wy.us/statutes/titles/21Title21_2006.htm



Appendices

Appendix A: Glossary Of Online Learning Terms[84]

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

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.

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.

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.

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

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, often used for attendance and funding.

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).

[84] Originally adapted from the Colorado Department of Education glossary of online learning terms, available at http://www.cde.state.co.us/edtech/download/osc-glossary.pdf

Appendix B: Online learning policy resources

There are innumerable sources of information for online learning. With the view that a shorter list of some of the most valuable resources can be more valuable than an exhaustive list, a few key online learning organizations and resources are presented below.

BellSouth Foundation
http://www.bellsouthfoundation.org/

BellSouth Foundation's mission is to improve education in the South and other communities where BellSouth operates by stimulating fundamental change in education institutions and systems. In 2005 the BellSouth Foundation launched a new e-Learning initiative, BellSouth's 20/20 Vision for Education, which has led the Foundation to fund numerous online learning initiatives in the southeast and several valuable research projects. Research reports, including a recently published study on the cost of online education, are available at http://www.bellsouthfoundation.org/publications.aspx.

Learning Point Associates (LPA)
http://www.learningpt.org/

LPA builds on more than 20 years of research and development conducted by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL), part of a federally funded network of ten regional educational laboratories. Each regional education lab has a national focus in one topic area, and for LPA the topic is education technology. LPA has led several research initiatives into the effectiveness of K-12 online education.

Monterey Institute for Technology and Education (MITE)
http:// www.montereyinstitute.org/

The Monterey Institute for Technology and Education is an educational non-profit organization committed to improving access to education. MITE sponsors a range of projects from establishing development standards and specifications for online courses, to educational research and multimodal content development.

North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL)
www.nacol.org

NACOL is a Washington, DC-based non-profit membership organization made up of K-12 online programs. It provides a variety of online learning resources to members and non-members and runs the annual Virtual School Symposium, the main K-12 online learning conference.

Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)
http://www.sreb.org

The Southern Regional Education Board, the nation's first interstate compact for education, was created in 1948 by Southern states. SREB helps government and education leaders work cooperatively to advance education and has had a significant focus on online learning. SREB has several publications available at http://www.sreb.org/programs/EdTech/pubs/pubsindex.asp.