



Policy Brief

Distance Education in Oregon

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PK-20 Virtual e-Learning/Distance Education

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Introduction

Ever evolving virtual e-Learning and other distance education technologies can offer support for the most promising strategies for active learning. A statewide distance education system can enhance teaching and learning opportunities for all learners; with effective implementation, distance education can offer widespread access, academic excellence, equity and new educational opportunities. The terms “virtual e-Learning” and “distance education” encompass a wide variety of learning modes, including: online tutorials; provision of an online or televised course (interactive or not) within an otherwise traditional, classroom-based course of study; provision of online courses; provision of teacher professional development through online courses or resources; provision of all of an institution’s courses via the Internet or other technology; student interaction with a computer within a classroom setting (i.e., accessing a teacher’s web page for research tips, homework assignments, etc.); the use of electronic textbooks; and the use of electronic assessments.

With the rapid worldwide growth of teaching and learning through the Internet and other communications technologies, almost every state in the nation is engaged in some kind of virtual e-Learning and distance education effort. In less than two years, Oregon has accomplished a great deal towards transforming student learning and bringing resources to all Oregon learners through technology. Clearly, the state is on the leading edge of distance education for all learners; however, work remains to be done.

The following topical policy brief presents a compilation of Oregon education policies and statewide programs related to virtual e-Learning and distance education. In addition, the brief includes relevant performance data for Oregon related to virtual e-Learning and distance education, examples from other states, policy questions, and considerations for discussion as Oregon determines the next steps for their distance education system. The policy questions and options are intended as a starting point for discussion and deliberation among Oregon education policymakers and other stakeholders.

Data Sources and Methodology

ECS used a variety of sources to obtain the data and information reported in this document, including staff in several departments and agencies within the state of Oregon as well as a number of national education policy organizations and research reports. This document presents a sample of the available data on Oregon performance related to virtual e-Learning and distance education; it is not an exhaustive representation of Oregon’s efforts. Additional data sources exist and are worth examining.

Oregon Policies and Programs Related to Virtual e-Learning/Distance Education

- In 1995 the Oregon Public Education Network (OPEN) was founded as a grassroots effort and formalized as an Oregon Associated Education Service District-sponsored (OAESD) project. The network’s mission is to enable all of Oregon’s K-12 schools to participate in a coordinated information network that allows students and educators access to technology-based classes and resources. OPEN helps bring the Internet to Oregon’s classrooms by facilitating network connections and servicing those connections through technical and user support services. Established by a consortium to provide high speed Internet to schools, OPEN builds on

successful regional networks to offer a wide range of educational services targeted at Oregon students and educators. OPEN is “a robust and reliable connectivity system for data for districts and Education Service Districts (ESDs).”

- In 1999 the State Superintendent of Public Instruction appointed a Distance Education Council that met from 1999-2003 to formulate strategies to bring to fruition a statewide distance education program.
- In 1999 the Oregon Legislature enacted Senate Bill 622, a telecommunications act that allocated \$50 million to be administered by the Oregon Department of Education for the purpose of building connectivity infrastructure and providing videoconferencing hardware to all of Oregon’s high schools and ESDs. Supported in kind by the Oregon Association of Education Services Districts and the Oregon Public Education Network (OPEN), sponsorship of this legislation was based on a recognized need to bring critical learning and teaching resources to all Oregon learners and to link the statewide education community through technology. The legislation has led to the following:
 - The establishment of a dedicated frame relay video network. Videoconferencing equipment and systems were provided to all 287 Oregon high schools and 21 ESDs on an as-ready basis (VTEL brand PC-based videoconferencing systems). The installation was completed December 31, 2001, resulting in the Oregon Access Network, one of the first statewide IP (Internet Protocol) video networks in the nation and one of the largest of its kind.
 - The completion of a statewide data network for all Oregon schools, bringing high-speed Internet access to every school building in the state. (This completed the OPEN development of high-speed connectivity for K-12 schools, bringing a direct connection to the data network for every remote or underserved area in the state.)
 - The bolstering of a high-speed, broadband network that supports data and video infrastructure, installation of videoconference equipment, and development of telecommunications programs in every K-12 school district in the state.
 - The development of local area networks (LANs) in every school building in which they did not already exist.
- In 2000, the Oregon Access Network, Oregon’s Internet protocol-based, two-way interactive videoconference network, was established statewide as a result of Senate Bill 622. Coordinated primarily by the Oregon Department of Education, the Oregon Access Network allows for interaction and delivery of classroom and professional development content in over 150 high schools and 20 ESDs. The network also supports community college and higher education connections. The network is used to connect educators and classrooms throughout Oregon, thereby creating a statewide virtual education community. Administrators and school leaders use the network to attend meetings remotely, teachers use it to access workshops and other professional development opportunities, including certification and licensure programs, and students use it to access critical content, like foreign language and advanced placement science courses, and other learning opportunities, such as virtual field trips and lectures, that they would otherwise not have within their reach.
 - A [VTEL videoconferencing unit](#) has been installed in high schools and ESD's throughout Oregon. Videoconferencers are able to see themselves on one monitor while viewing remote participants on a second monitor. Table microphones allow videoconferencers to push a button to point the local camera in their direction. Each unit is computer-based and offers multi-media functions like the use of videotapes, websites, and PowerPoint presentations.
 - Regional hubs provide bridging services for multi-point conferences and scheduling software to manage the system. There are eight regional ESD hubs located throughout the state.
 - Some of Oregon's ESDs have opted to aggregate video connections using a regional network approach. This allows for the use of existing infrastructure, with both data and video running over the same circuit, and provides a cost savings to all participating sites. Regional connections have the same capacity as sites connected to the state centralized hub.

- Centralized network hubbing and scheduling services are provided through the State of Oregon's video hub, [Enterprise Network Services \(ENS\)](#).
 - Partnerships are being formed with content providers like the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI), Oregon Public Broadcasting (OPB) and the Oregon Symphony to bring learning opportunities to all Oregon high school students and teachers.
 - Many resources and training opportunities exist on the Network's website, hosted by the Oregon Department of Education: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=140>.
- In 2003, a petition to amend Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 584-036-0017 arose from the need to offer schools effective distance learning from a qualified, licensed teacher at a remote site without the burden of duplicating licensed staff at the receiving site. Given that distance learning course content, student instruction, and assessments are designed, delivered and assessed by a remotely located licensed teacher, the petition was approved and the rule was amended by deleting the section requiring a licensed teacher to be present in a classroom during a distance learning presentation.
 - OAR 584-036-0012 states, "(1) Except as provided by section (4)...any teacher employed by a distance learning program in Oregon shall hold a valid Oregon teaching license appropriate for the grade level and subject matter being taught. (2) Except as provided by section (4)...a distance learning teacher employed by a distance learning program outside the State of Oregon shall provide verification satisfactory to the Commission that he or she: (a) holds a current teaching license issued by Oregon or any other state appropriate for the grade level and subject matter, and (b) has passed the California Basic Education Skills Test, the NTE Core Battery Tests of Communication Skills and General Knowledge, or the Praxis I Pre-Professional Skills Tests...(4) A school district may contract with a post-secondary institution accredited by the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges for distance instruction at the high school level provided restrictions and approvals required by ORS 342.173 have been met.

In January 2004 over 200 P-16 educators and community partners assembled at the e-Learning Distance Education 2004 Summit to determine ways to generate a cohesive P-16 education system and virtual learning programs and supporting infrastructure. At the Summit, workgroups were established to research and discuss issues related to the implementation of virtual learning programs for all Oregon students. More information about the Summit is available online at <http://www.ode.state.or.us/initiatives/elearning/2004summit.aspx>.

- In March 2004 Summit participants came together again to finalize recommendations for overcoming roadblocks related to the successful implementation of virtual learning programs for all Oregon students. The Summit workgroups reported their recommendations, which are available in Appendix A. The Oregon Online Leaders presented a vision statement for online learning in Oregon. The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) also recapped its intentions regarding distance education as follows:
 - ODE will work closely with the Oregon University System (OUS), OPEN, community colleges, and the ESDs to establish and maintain a quality system.
 - ODE will take recommendations to the Superintendent, who will take them to the Chancellor, the Commissioner, and the governor's office to ask for formal commitments.
 - ODE will work on policy and funding issues, including a standardization of quality.
 - ODE will work to connect the distance education strategy conversations with Oregon's economic development initiatives.
 - ODE suggests that plans to change the OPEN infrastructure include community colleges.

- In 2004 the Oregon Department of Education created a policy option to develop the Oregon PreK-16 Integrated Data System (KIDS). The Department has received approval from the Superintendent and the Governor to appoint an advisory team in order to pursue the plan. The data system will coordinate with the OUS Student Data System to move student information electronically from PK-12 entities to community colleges and universities. The project will leverage best practices and lessons learned from the Computing and Networking Infrastructure Consolidation (CNIC) project, which is a current project of the Oregon Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to consolidate state agency data centers. The Oregon Department of Education has developed a draft budget narrative to be integrated into a legislative package for 2007-2009.

Oregon P-16 Policies That May Have Implications for e-Learning/Distance Education

- Oregon Senate Bill 919 established the Proficiency-Based Admission Standards System (PASS), the OUS means of admitting students based on demonstrated proficiencies. When the State Board of Higher Education directed the development of PASS in July 1993, it was expected to become the primary admission policy when K-12 reform and OUS alignment made that feasible. The purpose of PASS is to clarify and define the relationship between the standards-based reform agenda for K-12, including CIM and CAM, and college admission. PASS defines the knowledge and skills necessary for success in higher education and includes academic standards and criteria for six content areas defined at the K-12 level: English, math, science, social science, second language, and visual and performing arts. Full implementation of PASS is expected by 2005. Although PASS is strongly recommended, it is not a requirement for OUS admission.
- In 2002, the Joint Boards of Education mandated the integration of assessment expectations across CIM/CAM/PASS. This integration is intended to create concrete definitions for schools regarding four factors: requirements for student achievement; connections between state assessments and college admissions; use of PASS data for state requirements; and the use of PASS collections for juried CIM assessments. The mandate may also permit the use of PASS collections for CAM assessment. The Oregon Department of Education, in collaboration with PASS, offers reciprocal agreements for assessments of CIM, CAM and PASS requirements.
- 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 (<http://www.ous.edu/aca/earlyoptions.htm>, retrieved 2004).
- The Oregon University System/Oregon Community College Dual-Enrollment and Co-Admission Programs maintain formal bilateral agreements among the state's community colleges created to ease the transition for students transferring to an Oregon University System (OUS) campus from an Oregon community college. Dual enrollment and co-admission programs aid student mobility and enhance baccalaureate completion. They vary from agreement to agreement, but typically include: (1) a single application process for admission to both institutions, (2) availability of student advising on both campuses, (3) increased scheduling flexibility with access to classes on both campuses, (4) opportunity to access services and participate in college life on both campuses, (5) an integrated system of financial aid administration, and (6) access to library and computer resources on both campuses (Oregon University System, *Key Academic Partnerships*, 2003).

Oregon Data and Performance Related to Virtual e-Learning/Distance Education

Oregon's performance on Virtual e-Learning/Distance Education is highlighted below using multiple data indicators. The following data points are a sample of potential indicators and are not meant to be an exhaustive listing.

- According to the Oregon Department of Education, in 2002-03:
 - 3,000 K-12 students took online courses from nine K-12 online learning providers.
 - Over 30,000 community college students were served via an online environment.
 - 15,545 higher education students utilized a virtual learning option through videoconferencing or online learning.
 - Nine regional hubs serve over 150 interactive videoconference end-points throughout the state.
 - Rural utilization of interactive videoconferencing (IVC) was almost double urban usage.
 - Over 50 daily IVC classes served high school students throughout the state
 - 120 online K-12 courses were offered, including comprehensive curriculum leading to diploma and college credit.
 - Oregon University System offered 817 web-based courses.

- The Oregon Access Network [website](#) currently provides a portal to Oregon [sites](#) that are connected to the network, videoconferencing [opportunities](#) and [networks in other states](#), and other websites, documents, and professionals that support videoconferencing and similar distance learning efforts in Oregon's classrooms.
 - Eight regional hubs and several regional aggregation programs support the network. Scheduling statewide videoconferences requires confirmation of participation at each participating site and each participating hub. The Oregon Access Network website provides a color-coded list to indicate each site's network status and which hub to which each site is directly connected. Users can find out more details about each site and about the scheduling process by clicking on the site name.
 - Interactive videoconferencing opportunities include videoconference classes for K-12 students, virtual field trips, professional development videoconferences (the e-Learning Professional Development series), live and archived videoconference streams, special opportunities, and other e-Learning resources.
 - Over 5,000 videoconference sessions have been held since the Oregon Access Network was launched in 2000. Several higher education and community college programs also are delivered over the Oregon Access Network.

- OPEN currently partners with the Oregon higher education system and the state in the Oregon Wide Area Network (OWEN) and has contracts with two tier one providers, UUNet and Cable and Wireless. OPEN's network design has migrated from a single hub to two regional hubs, one located at Clackamas Education Service District and one at the University of Oregon. The network is designed to allow Technical Centers (TC) to branch out from each hub. Each hub brings together, or aggregates, traffic from the TCs and makes the connection to OWEN and then to the Internet provider. The OPEN TC is responsible for the OPEN network server(s), which is the data circuit connecting to the Internet provider and the State of Oregon backbone, and the data circuit and router connecting each TC.
 - OPEN has established common network standards to ensure reliability and cost effectiveness. Three types of Technical Centers are currently possible: a district TC that serves one district only; an ESD TC (or a district under contract with the ESD) that serves districts within the one ESD region; and ESD TCs serving districts within that geographic region, as well as other ESDs and their districts. The OPEN network support system is based on a graduated hierarchy of network support personnel. Technology coordinators currently provide the following services:
 - School level, which includes support to school local area networks (LANs) and professional development

- District level, which includes assistance to school coordinators, support to district wide area networks (WANs) and school LANs, and professional development
 - Technical Center level, which includes support to regional WAN and OPEN backbone connection, assistance to SC / district coordinators, and the coordination of regional professional development
 - OPEN Regional Hub level, which provides support to the TCs, state network, and Internet, and coordinates OPEN activities.
- Many schools, districts, and ESDs are at least two years into the development of major instructional projects and have considerable information to share about best practices, lessons learned and available resources for K-12 students in Oregon. According to the OAESD, Oregon maintains at least 11 distance learning providers and class opportunities. The Oregon Department of Education e-Learning provides a portal to at least six providers of videoconferencing classes, a number of special videoconference opportunities and virtual field trips and at least nine online schools (<http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=136>).
 - Oregon currently offers the following professional development programs:
 - [ODE E-Learning Professional Development Series](#)
 - [Southern Oregon ESD Curriculum Improvement and Staff Development](#)
 - <http://www.cosa.k12.or.us/>
 - <http://www.nwrel.org/>
 - <http://www.ncce.org/>
 - <http://www.opb.org>
 - <http://www.oms.edu/teachers/>
 - Oregon educators are working together to identify ways of bringing the full range of instructional technology opportunities to all K-20 students, teachers, administrators and school staff. Over the past several years, a variety of regional and state committees and councils have convened and worked to identify issues and to establish guidelines for distance delivery of instruction, health care, community services and other materials and opportunities. All areas of education – K-12, community college, and higher education – along with citizens representing a broad base of both rural and urban initiatives involving telecommunications, continue to develop programs for Oregon learners. The following partners are in place to assist with the development of K-20 distance education programs:
 - Oregon Access Network (OAN)
 - Oregon Association of Education Services Districts (OAESD)
 - Oregon Community Colleges
 - Oregon Department of Education (ODE)
 - Oregon Educational Technology Consortium (OETC)
 - Oregon On-line Leaders (OOL)
 - Oregon Public Education Network (OPEN)
 - Oregon Rural Telecommunications Council (ORTCC)
 - Oregon University System
 - Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL)
 - Northwest Educational Technology Consortium (NETC)
 - International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)
 - Between 2000 and 2004, the following e-Learning issues, recommendations, guiding principles and policy goals were identified by various PreK-16 workgroups, boards and advisory groups in an attempt to pinpoint the issues and solutions related to institutionalizing a PreK-16 e-Learning system for Oregon:
 - Issues: funding; need for cross-sector instructional initiatives; need for teacher training; lack of information-sharing systems; and technology needs (including infrastructure, equipment, and leadership)

- Recommendations: empower families; generate shared vision across sectors; generate clear e-Learning curriculum/instructional standards that align with Guiding Principles; evolve knowledge management/enterprise system; and make the system student driven
 - Guiding Principles: create a clear and coherent vision focused on student learning, quality of faculty work life,; and reduced costs; learner-driven; adaptable to change; establish shared, collaborative, systemic solutions; and all students should have access to core curriculum.
 - Policy Goals: expand access/equity; support reliable quality criteria; secure adequate funding; professionalize teachers; and support articulation.
- As a result of the P-16 e-Learning Framework development meeting on June 30, 2004, Oregon stakeholders established priority activities and guiding principles for a P-16 E-Learning Framework. The Framework was established to guide the development of aligned standards, policies and programs. It implies a direct correlation between a P-16 system and e-Learning strategies, including infrastructure, guiding principles, quality standards and technology standards. The priorities for action, guiding principles and P-16 e-Learning Framework are available in Appendix A.
 - As a result of input from Oregon stakeholders and extensive multi-state research, a second draft of Oregon's K-12 Virtual Education Policy/Guidelines/Rating Criteria was created in 2004. The document highlights issues around quality assurance standards, enrollment/credit, teaching/classroom management, student access, and course development; and quality ratings for online and interactive videoconference courses. The draft is available in Appendix B.
 - As a result of input from Oregon stakeholders, a draft of Average Daily Membership (ADM) Reporting Requirements for Cyber Schools was established in 2004. The document raises the issue of how Oregon will fund its e-Learning and distance education initiatives and how credits will transfer to other institutions.

Oregon P-16 Data and Performance With Implications For Virtual e-Learning/Distance Education

- Oregon's proficiency-based standards system does not appear to include a link between early learning and K-12. Oregon's e-Learning/Distance Education programs do not appear to include such a link either.
- The 1995 amendment to the original 1991 Education Act modified the CIM and CAM's implementation schedule and reduced the number of work samples. Schools have struggled to adopt and implement the new standards and assessments, especially given the many changes and modifications to the system. Nevertheless, the reforms have persisted and to some degree have become institutionalized. The original legislation that mandated CIM, CAM, and PASS is now over 10 years old. Will e-Learning/distance education be allowed to count towards CIM and/or CAM? How will they be integrated?
- While Oregon high schools have a number of acceleration mechanisms in place to assist motivated high school students move into college-level programs, school participation is voluntary; high schools are not required to provide such programs (comment from Oregon stakeholder). Is this a consideration for Virtual e-Learning/Distance education?
- In 2002-2003, 13,641 high school students, from 260 participating high schools, were enrolled in college credit courses. Collectively they earned over 98,000 college credits. f. In 1998-1999, 16,863 high school students were enrolled in college credit programs. While each program differs slightly, most of Oregon's dual enrollment programs occur during regular school hours, offer low course fees (these programs either do not charge tuition or it is paid by the high school district), provide guidance counselors, equip students with essential skills in math, science, technology, and written and oral communication, and give students the ability to solve problems, think critically and work well with others. Upon completion, participants receive both high school and college credit that can transfer toward other two-year or four-year public colleges and universities

(www.ode.state.or.us/opte/community_colleges/OCCS_Directory.htm,
www.ode.state.or.us/links/orclinks.htm, retrieved 2004).

- In order to ensure the rigor of the high school coursework that Oregon students complete in the process of preparing for college, the OUS Course Approval Process was redesigned to require high schools to map course content to college entry standards. High school staff can map high school course content to PASS standards and indicate students' opportunity to meet varying levels of proficiency. OUS requires every Oregon high school to list the courses in all six content areas in which students have full or partial opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in each standard. High school administrators are encouraged (but not required) to use this process as an opportunity to align curriculum within departments and across content areas (www.ous.edu/enroll/CAPforms.doc, retrieved 2004).

Virtual e-Learning/Distance Education ~ Examples from Other States

These state examples can be used in a variety of ways, including: comparison, interesting or relevant examples, new ideas, and the creation of networks.

All states have some level of videoconferencing capacity in the K-12 classroom (<http://www.gsn.org/gsh/cu/cfm/statelist.cfm>).

- California. [The California Virtual School Report: A National Survey of Virtual Education Practice and Policy with Recommendations for the State of California](#)
Commissioned by the University of California College Preparatory Initiative, this report disseminates information learned during a Request for Proposal process to create a state virtual school. The study examined virtual high schools across the nation, current technologies available to California and issues in creating a state virtual school. [2002].
<http://www.edpath.com/images/VHSReport.pdf>
- Florida. The Florida Virtual School (FLVS), initially funded by the Florida Legislature as a pilot project in 1997, is now a nationally recognized e-Learning model. In 2000, the Florida Legislature established FLVS in state law through House Bill 1533 as an independent education entity with a gubernatorial-appointed governing board. FLVS offers virtual education options for grades 7 through 12 as well as for adults seeking GED alternatives. Today, the school is supported by private business partners and by tuition from out-of-state students. The program is affiliated with 67 Florida school districts and currently offers about 75 courses and employs about 100 teachers.
<http://www.flvs.net>
- Georgia. Georgia e-Learning is a state-funded program in which Georgia public high schools can register students to take tuition-free core and Advanced Placement courses. [The Development Of The Virtual High School In The State Of Georgia](#) is a document that reports data gathered and recommendations made for creating a state virtual high school in Georgia.
- Illinois. The Illinois State Board of Education adopted [take out 'these'] [these policies as the framework](#) for actions to establish the Illinois Virtual High School in 2000.
- Kentucky. In 1999, by [executive order](#), Kentucky established the first statewide virtual high school. In January 2000, the Kentucky Virtual High School began operation with a blend of licensed and self-developed online courses taught by Kentucky teachers. The Kentucky Board of Education also created new [administrative regulations](#) relating to advanced placement courses.
- Louisiana. In 2000, the Louisiana Department of Education created [State Standards for Distance Education](#), a framework for developing and implementing quality distance education programs based upon learning, research, dialogue and practice.
- Maryland. In 2002, the Maryland House of Representatives passed the [Maryland Legislation on Technology for Education House Bill 1197](#) to establish the Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities (MVLO) Web-based Learning Program, an educational service managed by the Office of Instructional Technology and School Library media. The program provides a coordinated, statewide approach to providing Web-based courses and staff development for K-12 students and educators in Maryland. In November 2002, the Maryland Department of Education issued "[Maryland Department of Education RFP, Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities, Online](#)

[Student Courses](#),” an RFP to expand the access of Maryland public school students to challenging curricula through online courses aligned to the Maryland Content Standards and Core Learning Goals. [“Expanding the High School Classroom Through Web-Delivered Courses”](#), by the Internet-based Learning Study Group of the Maryland State Department of Education, looks at considerations for implementing Web-delivered courses. Needs and issues include the current state-projected need, benefits and challenges, recommendations from the committee and a comparison of state initiatives on Internet-based courses.

- Missouri. The Missouri Research and Education Network (MOREnet) is run by the University of Missouri System and provides Internet connectivity, technical support, videoconferencing services and training to Missouri’s K-12 schools, colleges, universities and other public affiliated organizations. The University of Missouri System manages a conglomerate of pre-existing statewide networks and is guided by the principal that a single reliable, carrier-class, high-quality network offers economies of scale as well as more options than several smaller networks. The University of Missouri System regularly holds conferences to bring together the education and technology communities and provides training programs for teachers (which are sponsored by the Department of Education). The System supports the Department of Education in integrating multimedia technology “into inquiry-based, student-centered, interdisciplinary, collaborative teaching.” Sixty percent of the program’s funding comes from direct appropriation to the University of Missouri while 40% comes from e-rate and customer fees, which are based on the number of certified FTE and range from \$250 to \$10,000/year. www.more.net
- Michigan. The Michigan Virtual High School (MVHS) is an online resource that enables Michigan high schools to provide courses taught by certified teachers and other learning tools to which students would not otherwise have access. MVHS does not grant diplomas but works in cooperation with individual school districts. [The Revised School Code, Act 451 of 1976, Section 380.1481](#) states that not later than the beginning of the 2000-2001 school year, the Michigan Virtual University shall develop, implement and operate the Michigan Virtual High School. It further describes the Michigan Virtual High School and the powers and duties of Michigan Virtual University in this section. [The State School Aid Act of 1979](#), Section 388.1698.
- Texas. The Texas [Virtual School Pilot Project](#) was established through the implementation of [SB 975, 2001](#). The main purpose of the VSP has been to gather data with which to formulate recommendations regarding potential state funding of courses and policies that enable high-quality online learning.
- Utah. The Utah Electronic High School (EHS) was initiated by a challenge from the governor in 1994. Accredited through Northwest Association of Schools, it is accepted as an alternative method of instruction by the Utah State Board of Education. In 2004, EHS served over 25,000 students over the Internet in asynchronous classes and roughly 3,500 students through synchronous EDNET service, which has 460 sites across the state.
- Washington. In 1996, the Washington Legislature authorized \$50 million to build the “K-20 Educational Telecommunications Network,” a high-speed telecommunications network that supports Internet and videoconferencing, including 2,000 buildings in which a combined one million students are schooled. The network is a partnership that includes all education sectors. The state funds the technology as part of basic education. Washington also has a statewide academy, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, that teaches school administrators to take advantage of the technologies. www.wa.gov/k20
- West Virginia. The West Virginia Virtual School was created within the Department of Education to offer courses through the Internet. Through the WV Learns gateway, many learning options are available to students, parents, teachers, school personnel and WVDE staff. [Distance Learning and the West Virginia Virtual School - West Virginia Board of Education: Title 126 Legislative Rule](#) establishes the requirements in West Virginia for distance, online and technology-delivered learning programs, including student needs, course content, teacher/facilitator guidelines, virtual classes, funding, and management at the state, county and school levels.

Virtual e-Learning/Distance Education Policy Questions

- Who has the approval, authority, and accountability over e-Learning/distance education?

- How many of the Summit recommendations have been implemented?
- How does Oregon plan to address the different cultures of its education system (preK, K12, community colleges, universities, etc.)?
- How will Oregon support policy work around e-Learning and distance education?
- Who will host, manage, maintain, advocate and sustain Oregon's e-Learning and distance education system? Could it be collaborative?
- What are Oregon's e-Learning and distance education funding paths? How will Oregon manage them?
- How will Oregon make sure that data encompasses needs across the system(s)?
- How can Oregon reduce technological redundancy?
- How does the ecology of learning, economy, technology and community connect? How do the entities enhance each other? What is the role of technology?
- How does e-Learning in Oregon translate across district boundaries?
- What needs to happen to prepare Oregon teacher to teach online? Training? Standards? Certification?
- How will Oregon revise content for e-Learning and set standards? Can Oregon have one set of learning standards? How will Oregon measure proficiency (and what is it)?
- How will Oregon develop the multiple kinds of communication needed between elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, community colleges, and the OUS system?
- Have the K-12, community college, and OUS web sources been evaluated in any way?
- How will Oregon address inconsistent course classifications?

E-Learning/Distance Education Considerations for Discussion

- Generate a clear set of e-Learning curriculum/instructional standards that align with established guiding principles (see Appendix B).
- Consider establishing state-level leadership for Oregon's e-Learning/Distance Education initiatives.
- Consider developing a virtual education strategy based on results of a statewide needs assessment that focuses on partnerships and available resources.
- Consider conducting a statewide infrastructure inventory to be utilized and coordinated by a state-level technical coordinating committee.
- Consider creating a virtual learning portal that provides centralized information about courses and the technology resources needed to access those courses.
- Consider generating outreach materials and activities that demonstrate the range and benefits of distance education in Oregon and disseminate the materials to all potential stakeholders and supporters.
- Consider creating policies and guidelines that support and identify high quality and innovative virtual learning courses and programs and that help all students utilize and benefit from these programs.
- Does Oregon need unique student IDs in order to implement a statewide e-learning system?
- Will open courseware available to everyone?
- Is Oregon thinking in terms of Carnegie unit of courses? Should the state consider proficiencies, modules, and/or units (of teaching and learning)?
- Rural Oregon may have fewer resources – does Oregon need special considerations for these communities?
- How will Oregon ensure that e-Learning systems are meeting student needs?
- How can Oregon create and leverage cross-sector initiatives?
- How will Oregon specifically use e-Learning/Distance Education to expand access/equity?
- Given P-16 priority, how does e-Learning fit? Could it be used as a tool in high school redesign?

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Appendix A: Oregon P-16 E-Learning Framework

Virtual Learning in Oregon 2004 e-Learning Summit Follow-up

In January of 2004 over 200 P-16 educators and community partners came together to find ways to generate a cohesive P-16 education system and to bolster the much-needed virtual learning programs and supporting infrastructure. In a series of meetings, including the Summit, the following recommendations have been put forth to state leaders by Oregon's education and community stakeholders:

Recommendations to Oregon Educational Policy Makers

Recommendation #1:

Develop virtual education strategy based on results of statewide needs assessment that focuses on partnerships and available resources.

Recommendation #2:

Conduct statewide infrastructure inventory to be utilized and coordinated by state-level technical coordinating committee.

Recommendation #3:

Create virtual learning portal that provides centralized information about courses and technology resources needed to access those courses.

Recommendation #4:

Generate outreach materials and activities that demonstrate the range and benefits of distance education in Oregon and disseminate to all potential stakeholders and supporters.

Recommendation #5:

Create policies and guidelines that support and identify high quality and innovative virtual learning courses and programs, and help all students utilize and benefit from these programs.

Recommendation #6:

Generate all policies with provisions that support the learning and access needs of all students.

Recommendation #7:

All Oregon public school students should have access to a full-range of high-quality, tuition-free online courses

Priorities for Action

- ✓ Set procedures for support and administration of virtual learning programs and systems
- ✓ Enhance and leverage existing resources, such as online “portals”
- ✓ Institutionalize P-16 partnerships
- ✓ Develop an information outreach program and set in motion by a cross sector workgroup
- ✓ Appoint a cross-sector and agency network management team and charge with a set of necessary outcomes
- ✓ Identify and pursue funding and resource opportunities through a statewide virtual learning partnership
- ✓ Complete a strategic partnership and resource leveraging plan by June 1, 2004
- ✓ Education and government policy makers review course development, administration, enrollment, support, and quality assurance issues for all virtual learning programs
- ✓ Education and government leaders assign specific work to a representative group of policy-makers and set clear timelines

Priorities for Policy Development

- ✓ Set quality assurance standards and policies to insure that instruction is aligned with Oregon's vision for student learning and achievement.
- ✓ Establish process for course development and acquisition
- ✓ Ensure that all students have convenient, reliable access
- ✓ Develop teaching/classroom management standards for virtual programs
 - How are instructors prepared?
 - Who monitors and evaluates teachers?
 - Who evaluates and rates programs?
 - Who provides incentives?
 - Contractual rights for teachers

- ✓ Set policies for quality control of programs and systems
 - Technical support
 - Assessment and rating virtual courses
 - Accountability measures

- ✓ Enrollment and Credit issues
 - Credit issuance
 - Grading process
 - Registration process
 - Credit value
 - Parent/District permission
 - Set ratio/limit to numbers of virtual classes that can be taken and still earn a home-school diploma
 - Guidelines for election to take online courses

Long-Term Vision

Oregon education decision-makers will take advantage of the opportunity to ensure that emerging virtual learning programs are of the highest quality and available to all Oregon learners and educators so that they strengthen our state's education system.

What are the guiding principles for a P-16 Framework?

(Groups work on sets of 2 principles)

Guiding Principles:

- Learner Driven*
 - Focus on learner/learner outcomes
 - Need good teaching outcome and learning environment

- Learning Process ready for Change*

- Engage in Possibility Thinking*
 - Challenge our notions about teaching and learning and keep an open mind

- All P-16 Students have Access to Core-curriculum via e-Learning Framework*
 - How do we define "core courses"?
 - How do we define "all"?

- Work Smarter*
 - Work simpler
 - Refine productivity tools/communication
 - Interoperability: common platforms
 - Conform to a standard
 - Communicate your success stories

- Measurable Learning Outcomes*
 - Transferability, portability
 - Common definitions
 - "E" should be different

- Solutions based on strategic education*
 - Needs for state and people

- Solutions are Assured (?**) of Political Success and are tied to Standards/Collaborative*
 - Address political support

- Evolutionary process; adaptable to change*
 - Today/future

- Teacher use of aggregated, manipulable data*
 - o More analysis
 - o Systems should make data more usable at all levels
- Sharing, communicating, marketing the vision/strategy*
 - o Compiling outcomes

**What are the standards (commonality) needed to represent our principles?
(Agreed-upon set of measures against which you measure performance/outcomes)**

Guiding e-Learning in Oregon

- Quality
- Delivery
- Content
- Technology
- Performance (system/teacher/student)
- System (s)
- Tech/organization/content designs
- Curriculum/content alignment
- Teaching
- Learning
- Sustainability
- ROI
- Needs driven
- Interoperability
- Practicality

Consolidation of Quality Standards (to reach Principles):

- Curriculum**
 - Design
 - Delivery
 - Content alignment
 - Learning proficiency
 - Teaching/Instructional methodology
 - Responsiveness to labor markets
 - Fits audience needs
 - Performance
 - Benchmarks
- Technology**
 - Interoperability
 - Delivery
 - Reliability
- Articulation**
 - Transferability
 - Portability
 - Transparency
- Support Services**
 - Teacher development; mentoring
 - Advising/counseling
 - Online registration
 - Record management
- Accessibility**

- Access for special needs students and geographical areas
 - Economic and infrastructure considerations
- **Sustainability**
 - ROI
 - Cost/Benefit
 - Replicability
 - Common understanding

Guiding e-Learning in Oregon

- ⇒ Shared, collaborative systemic solution(s) with common vision and strategic plan
- ⇒ Should be learner driven in a high quality learning environment
- ⇒ Is an evolutionary process/system, adaptable to change
- ⇒ All students P-14 have access to core curriculum
- ⇒ Engage in possibility thinking, challenging notions of teaching and learning
- ⇒ Work smarter to increase productivity, interoperability, and interface
- ⇒ Should accommodate strategic solutions based on broad support from citizens, communities and policy makers. (Address ROI/Standards)
- ⇒ Should make data/information available at all levels to improve teaching and learning
- ⇒ Should reflect measurable students progress transferable across systems
- ⇒ Definitions
 - Virtual = anywhere
 - Digital = online
 - Mobile = anytime

Appendix B: Oregon K-12 Virtual Education Policy/Guidelines/Rating Criteria June, 2004—DRAFT 2

POLICY—Quality Assurance Standards

- ✓ To receive credit for a virtual course, the student must be enrolled in an Oregon public school.
- ✓ Courses listed on the ODE roster of approved virtual programs must be approved by the state Virtual Assurance Board and will be limited to Oregon providers. (*This Board is appointed by the State Board of Education, who will determine how the approval process will work*).
- ✓ State may revoke approval for a virtual learning class if determining Board deems that the provider has failed to comply with the virtual learning provisions under which that course was initially approved. (*The state will notify provider via certified mail*).
- ✓ All virtual learning supplemental instruction shall be considered an enhancement to regular instruction and may not be subject to the restrictive provisions of these regulations.
- ✓ Online courses must be reviewed and re-approved annually.
- ✓ Virtual courses meet same curriculum content standards as face-to-face classroom-based courses, and clearly denote which standards will be learned.
- ✓ Performance objectives are matched to the developmental/grade level of intended student population.
- ✓ Virtual teachers are highly qualified in subject matter.
- ✓ Students/parents have access to procedures for resolving complaints related to virtual learning programs purchased outside of their home district.
- ✓ No more than 5 interactive video sites will be linked together to receive one class. No more than 15 students should participate from one site.
- ✓ Procedures for evaluation, recording student progress, and administering final grades will be the decision of local districts, based upon provider indicators and local grading policies.
- ✓ Student/Teacher contact expectations:

POLICY—Enrollment/Credit

- ✓ Students engaged in virtual courses for credit must have prior approval from home district.
- ✓ Districts establish local policies/guidelines for student eligibility for enrollment and credit award for virtual courses.
- ✓ Recipient districts shall provide full credit for all state-approved virtual learning courses.
- ✓ No credits will be issued for courses completed through home instruction (students not currently enrolled in an Oregon public school).
- ✓ Virtual providers adhere to state and federal privacy regulations regarding students.
- ✓ Districts or parents are responsible for virtual learning costs. Financial responsibility is determined at the district level.
- ✓ Funding for virtual learning courses and associated materials may be provided through instructional budgets or grant awards.
- ✓ Districts must pay fees for *required classes* not available in-district.
- ✓ Class fees are determined at the district or provider level.
- ✓ Student records must be maintained by Virtual Education provider for a minimum of 5 years.
- ✓ Student achievement assessment documentation will be available for review by local districts and state review board.

- ✓ Districts will establish the ratio of the number of virtual learning classes with which a student may take and still earn a district diploma.
- ✓ Dual Credit options:

POLICY—Teaching/classroom Management

- ✓ Virtual Learning teachers are licensed in the state of Oregon and are highly qualified in content area.
- ✓ Course facilitators are required at all recipient classrooms
- ✓ Virtual Learning Facilitators must receive a minimum of 8 hours of in-service training or technology-delivered instruction pertaining to course organization, classroom management, technical aspects, monitoring of students, special pedagogy pertaining to learning from a distance with adolescents, and securing student services as needed.
- ✓ Teacher delivering course and the on-site facilitator are responsible for verifying student participation and performance.
- ✓ Virtual teaching contracts are negotiated locally.
- ✓ Providers will ensure that virtual teachers provide timely and informative feedback for student support and remediation.
- ✓ Testing in all virtual learning classes will be proctored by an on-site facilitator.
- ✓ Student interaction with virtual learning instructors shall be available at a ratio of no more than 30 students per course and 150 students each day, including other students taught during the day outside of the virtual learning program.
- ✓ Provider organizations monitor and evaluate virtual learning teachers on the basis of TSPC standards. Course evaluation is provided by students and parents.
- ✓ Student cheating will be handled by districts and providers and dealt with on a par with district guidelines.

POLICY—Student Access

- ✓ All 9-12 grade students will have access to required courses via virtual learning options if classes are not available through their home school/district.
- ✓ Homebound students shall have unlimited access to state-approved virtual learning programs/courses needed to fulfill core subject requirements.
- ✓ Districts will establish approval criteria for students wanting to enroll in online or IVC courses.
- ✓ Districts will establish minimum age/readiness for student enrollment in virtual learning classes.
- ✓ District personnel may authorize student access at off-campus locations such as libraries, ESDs, and homes when school access is not feasible due to a scheduling conflict.
- ✓ Scheduling conflicts (in the case of IVC classes) will be solved by the district and course provider.
- ✓ Participating districts shall provide e-mail accounts (to be utilized for class purposes) for each student while engaged in virtual learning class.

POLICY—Course Development

- ✓ Virtual course content is owned by providers. Providers are responsible for faculty compensation, copyright compliance, cost of course development, and course production.

Quality Ratings for Online and Interactive Videoconference Courses

(These criteria are in addition to virtual education policy requirements that will also be used to rate virtual courses)

- Course objectives are clear and provided in course description/syllabus
- Desired learning outcomes are clear
- Course is based on learning science and evidence of effectiveness
- Students proficiency requirements are delineated
- Prerequisites identified
- Required textbooks and other materials clearly stated
- Technology requirements identified
- Grading criteria outlined
- Add/drop policies are clearly stated in course description.
- Options for tracking learner progress stated
- States clearly how students performance will be assessed
- Student expectations are clear
- Includes a student rights and responsibilities statement

- All required course elements are consistent throughout course materials
- Assignments and due dates are reasonable
- Course content is accurate and consistent with copyright laws.
- Available technical support
- Course developers, their credentials and brief bio listed
- Options for special needs students
- Accessible and user-friendly for all students including those with special needs
- Course includes glossary that defines unusual or technical terms used in the course and/or the delivery of the course
- Level of language is appropriate for intended students
- Course material has been edited for grammar, language and content verification
- For online courses, the layout facilitates learning
- Content is directly related to learning objectives
- For online courses, are all quoted materials cited correctly?
- Instructions and directions are clear
- A variety of instructional and learning objectives are used to promote interactivity, practice, and knowledge transfer
- Built-in schedule of teacher feedback and parent interaction opportunities
- Course has gone through rigorous evaluation by content provider/issuing district. Evaluation criteria and outcomes are provided to state evaluators
- Course has been reviewed by peers and/or content experts
- Course contains clear and practical evaluation components
- Course has been piloted
- Course schedule includes a variety of activities (both online and offline)
- Course fosters development of communication skills and the ability to collaborate from a distance
- Frequent opportunities for student-teacher and student-student interaction is built into the course
- Teacher has received virtual teacher training
- Engaged learning, self-direction, and development of critical thinking skills are emphasized
- Student learning is assessed on an ongoing basis and through a variety of methods
- Online course provides necessary registration, grading, and other administrative systems to facilitate student participation in the course
- Students should be recruited and enrolled in Virtual Learning courses on the basis of their capability to succeed, i.e. reading levels, pre-requisite courses completed, success in basic-level e-learning courses, etc.