

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

1. *Will the Department set parameters for selecting or developing online courses, or will it be left to the district to decide?*

The legislation requires all curriculum and course content to be aligned with state standards (section 1002.45(3)(c), F. S.). Providers approved by the Department of Education will document that their curriculum has gone through this alignment process. Districts may set parameters beyond what is required in law for their virtual instruction program courses.

2. *Are there guidelines or resources to help districts develop, select, or evaluate quality online courses?*

Yes. The North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL) and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) have published standards and checklists for quality online courses. The following Web site provides an explanation of and a link to NACOL's *National Standards of Quality for Online Courses*: <http://www.nacol.org/nationalstandards/>. The link for SREB's *Checklist for Evaluating Online Courses* is: <http://www.sreb.org/programs/EdTech/pubs/2006Pubs/ChecklistEvaluateOnlineCourses.asp>. Links to NACOL's and SREB's Web sites and other resources can be found on the Department of Education Web site at [http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/Virtual\\_Schools/DistrictVIP.asp](http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/Virtual_Schools/DistrictVIP.asp).

3. *Are there guidelines and resources to help districts select and evaluate online teachers?*

Yes. The law requires teachers to be Florida-certified in the subjects or grade levels they teach and to undergo background screening. In addition, the North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL) and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) have published standards for quality online teaching. The following Web site provides a summary of and link to NACOL's *National Standards of Quality for Online Teaching*: <http://www.nacol.org/nationalstandards/>. The link for SREB's *Standards for Quality Online Teaching* is: <http://www.sreb.org/programs/EdTech/pubs/2006Pubs/ChecklistEvaluateOnlineCourses.asp>.

4. *Can a teacher be a full-time teacher in a district school and a part-time teacher for the district's virtual program?*

Yes. This is determined by the district and collective bargaining agreements. Factors to consider when making this decision include, but are not limited to, teacher schedule, availability and student load (full-time and part-time) and peak times that students will be working on virtual courses.

5. *Must online teachers reside in the school district?*

This is determined by the district. However, there are no residency requirements for teachers in the law. Teachers must be Florida-certified in the subjects or grade levels they teach, but they can live anywhere. However, section 1002.45(2)(c), F.S., requires administrative staff for the program to be Florida residents.

6. *What are the requirements for teacher interaction with students?*

Student-teacher interaction in the K-12 arena is paramount to student success. The law requires providers to use an instructional model that primarily relies on certified teachers rather than parents to provide instruction. NACOL's *National Standards of Quality Online for Teaching* includes standards on establishing and maintaining *ongoing and frequent teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction*

*and teacher-parent interaction and providing timely, constructive feedback to students about assignments and questions.* Districts can look at guidelines used by high-quality existing programs when developing these requirements for their virtual programs.

7. *What is the training plan for teachers in the district's virtual instruction program (how to teach virtually, how to modify virtual information, how to assess virtually, etc.)?*

Districts will determine what training their online teachers will receive. However, there are resources available to help districts determine what types of professional development online teachers need. A good example is *Professional Development for Virtual Schooling and Online Learning* published by the North American Council for Online Learning. This publication provides actions that should be taken to ensure quality professional development for online teachers and other key personnel in virtual instruction programs. In addition, the publication provides resources for quality professional development programs that already exist as well as curriculum resources for use in professional development. The appendix includes a chart depicting preliminary ideas related to virtual instruction professional preparation and development from pre-service to induction and early career development through master teacher development. The Web address is: [www.nacol.org/docs/NACOL\\_PDforVSandOlnLrng.pdf](http://www.nacol.org/docs/NACOL_PDforVSandOlnLrng.pdf).

8. *Will districts be required to submit a plan for their district virtual instruction programs to the Department of Education for approval?*

No. The legislation does not require districts to submit a plan to the Department for approval. However, the Department will continue to be a resource for districts as they develop their virtual instruction programs.

9. *Can districts run a pilot program for 2008-09?*

Yes. The districts are not required to offer a program and serve all eligible students until 2009-10. Therefore, districts can run a pilot program in 2008-09.

#### **FUNDING AND REPORTING**

10. *Will districts need to register their school district virtual instruction programs through the Master School Identification (MSID) process?*

Yes. Districts will need to register their virtual instruction programs using this process. Each school district virtual instruction program will be issued the same school number, 7001. The district number in conjunction with the school number will make the identifier unique.

11. *Can districts comply with this mandate by developing virtual offerings within current schools?*

No. Districts cannot comply with this mandate by developing virtual offerings through existing district schools. Students participating in the school district virtual instructional program will be reported under school number 7001.

12. *Will grade 9-12 part-time students be reported for funding under their school of record or the school district virtual instruction program number?*

Part-time grade 9-12 students will be reported under the school number assigned to their school of record for classes taken there and under the school district virtual instruction program number, 7001, for

successful credit completions of virtual instruction program courses. Districts can only earn 1 FTE per student, per school year.

13. *Will courses developed by districts be eligible for FTE funding?*

Online courses developed by school districts will be eligible for funding if they meet state standards and the requirements of State Board of Education Rule 6A-1.09441, FAC. This rule requires that programs and courses funded through the Florida Education Finance Program, and courses or programs for which students may earn credit toward high school graduation, to be listed in the Course Code Directory. If the course developed by the district is a new course, the district must submit the new course to be reviewed by the Department of Education for inclusion in the Course Code Directory. Instructions are located on the following Web site: <http://www.fldoe.org/bii/curriculum/CCD/>.

14. *Will school districts receive any state funding other than funding through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) to implement their virtual instruction programs?*

No, school districts will receive funding for students who successfully complete district virtual instruction programs through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP).

15. *Will districts use their FEFP funding to provide the required technology, "when appropriate?"*

Yes. District-operated virtual programs may use their FEFP funds for provision of this technology. District policy will determine "when appropriate." If the district contracts with a virtual program provider, the provision of this technology can be negotiated in the contract.

16. *If the district contracts with an approved virtual instruction provider will the school district or the provider receive the FEFP funding for students participating in the virtual instruction program?*

The FEFP funding will flow to the school district. The school district and provider will determine in their contract how much of the funding per student the provider will receive.

17. *If a school district contracts with an approved provider for its virtual instruction program, but provides the teachers, will the district receive the FEFP funding?*

Yes, the district will receive the FEFP funding. The amount paid to the provider for providing the program will be negotiated in the contract between the school district and the provider.

18. *Is there an established percentage of the FEFP funding that a school district is allowed to keep when contracting with a provider?*

No. The amount of funding the school district keeps is negotiated in the contract between the school district and the provider.

19. *Would it be possible to claim transportation if district virtual instruction program students were to use district buses to attend a workshop or guest lecture, use lab facilities, participate in school field trips, etc.?*

Virtual instruction students who are transported to or from events at schools in district school buses may be claimed for student transportation funding under the authority of section 1011.68, F.S., if they would otherwise qualify for transportation due to the distance between the school and their home or under one of the other statutorily specified eligibility criteria. Students may be claimed for state student transportation funding only if the school events are academic in nature and are a necessary part of the student's

educational program. Transportation to and from school for athletic events, recreational events, or other non-academic events is not eligible for state funding. As part of the normal transportation reporting instructions for all categories of students, including virtual instruction students attending events at schools, the district must report the number of days in the school term that eligible transportation is provided, and funding will be prorated accordingly.

*20. Can Hospital / Homebound students participate in the school district's virtual instruction program?*

Yes. However, only Hospital / Homebound students who complete a full school year in the virtual instruction program and are promoted to the next grade or earn course credits would be eligible for funding and they will only be able to earn basic funding. Districts can continue to offer current services including distance education for Hospital / Homebound students not enrolled in the school district's virtual instruction program and report these students as ESE students as they normally do during the FTE Survey periods.

*21. How will students in Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) programs be funded?*

Students in DJJ facilities who enroll in a school district virtual instruction program will be funded for successful credit completions. If they return to a different school district prior to successful credit completion, no funding will be generated.

*22. What are the implications for class size reduction? Will class size reduction limit the number of students a virtual teacher can work with?*

The district's virtual instruction program can be part of the district's toolbox for meeting class size requirements by providing instruction to students outside of the traditional classroom. The district virtual instruction program does not have to meet class size requirements because instruction is primarily delivered individually to students at a location other than a district school building. Although class size requirements do not place limits on teacher loads in the virtual environment, the number of students assigned to an online teacher should allow for ongoing and frequent interaction between the teacher and the student.

#### **PROVIDER APPROVAL AND APPROVAL PROCESS**

*23. When will the Department of Education provide school districts with a list of approved providers for the 2009-10 school year?*

The Department will provide school districts with a list of approved providers by March 1, 2009, as designated in section 1002.45(2), F.S.

*24. What process will the Department of Education follow to approve providers and how long will it take?*

The Department, in conjunction with districts, virtual providers, and other stakeholders, developed a State Board Rule outlining the application and approval process for providers. The final draft version of the rule and application for provider approval are posted online at [www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/Virtual\\_Schools/DistrictVIP.asp](http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/Virtual_Schools/DistrictVIP.asp). The rule and application will be presented to the State Board of Education for approval in October. The general process outlined in the draft rule is as follows: The Department will make an electronic application available to providers seeking approval each year. The Department will form a review team to evaluate the applications. The Department will provide written notice of approval or denial to the applicant. If the application is denied, the applicant will be able to make revisions and resubmit the application one time and within a specified time period. The applicant will receive final written notice of approval or denial no later than February 28 of

each year. If the application is denied again, it will be administratively closed and the applicant may apply during the next application phase. The Department will post a list of approved providers on the above Web site no later than March 1 of each year.

25. *Will the Department of Education seek input from experts in the field such as NACOL and SREB to ensure the process is solid and will be seen as high-quality by others in the industry and by other states?*

Yes. The Department has received input from these experts as well as from other states to ensure a high-quality process.

26. *What will the Department examine when determining whether a provider uses an instructional model that primarily relies upon certified teachers, rather than parents, to provide instruction?*

The Department will ask for documentation to show that the instructional model used will rely primarily on certified teachers to provide instruction. This documentation will include, but is not limited to the proposed teacher loads; the extent to which teachers will be directly involved in instruction; how the teacher will monitor, assess, and report student progress and ensure the authenticity of student work; the required methods and expected frequency of teacher-student interaction; and policies for parental involvement, supervision, and teaching activities.

27. *What will the Department examine when determining if a provider has "prior successful experience" in delivering virtual instruction?*

The Department will ask for documentation for each prior experience to include program description, location and contact information; student performance results; completion rates; program or school performance indicators; terminations; results of stakeholder satisfaction surveys; system performance and reliability; financial solvency; and references and other information selected by the provider such as testimonials, results of external evaluations, awards and recognitions.

28. *What is meant by section 1002.45(9), F.S., "Exceptions relating to digital or online content providers?"*

Providers used by districts for students not enrolled in the school district virtual instruction program do not have to meet the requirements of this law or be approved by the Department of Education. This would include providers that make digital or online content available as a supplement to regular classroom instruction to students enrolled in district classes or schools that are not part of the district virtual instruction program.

### **STUDENT ELIGIBILITY AND PARTICIPATION**

29. *How will equity in district virtual instructional programs be addressed?*

Section 1002.45(2)(b), F.S., requires providers to document that they meet the provisions of section 1000.05, F.S. This law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status against a student or an employee in the state system of public K-20 education. It further states that the criteria for admission to a program or course shall not have the effect of restricting access based on these factors. School districts are required to comply with these provisions for all of their schools, including their district virtual instruction programs.

30. *Are there any academic criteria that a student must meet to enroll in the school district virtual instruction program?*

No. Section 1002.45(5), F.S., regarding student eligibility states that this program is open to any student residing in the district who meets the prior year public or virtual school enrollment criteria or who is a military dependent whose family moved to Florida within the last twelve months.

31. *Are there any provisions for a student who transfers in from a virtual school in another state?*

No. Only military dependents who attended a virtual school out-of-state can meet the eligibility criteria in the law.

32. *Students enrolled in the district virtual instruction program must take state assessment tests. Will they take all the same tests and how will this be accomplished if they take their virtual classes from home?*

Yes. District virtual instruction students will take the same assessment tests as their counterparts in other district schools. The district must provide testing facilities for these students. However, the district can designate the testing sites within the school district. Examples include, but are not limited to, assigning each student to the district school he or she would have attended, designating a central testing site, or providing regional sites.

33. *This year (2008-09) several of our home education students will begin taking online courses through our FLVS franchise. Hundreds are taking courses through FLVS right now. If they're on record in our system during the October and February FTE periods, could they become students of the full-time K-8 or part-time or full-time 9-12 program?*

District public school students enrolled in FLVS courses or in the district franchises of FLVS who are reported for FEFP funding by the district during the October and February survey periods would be eligible to participate in the district's virtual instruction program the following year. However, section 1002.45(5), F.S., does not include home education students as eligible to participate in the school district virtual instruction program. Therefore, FLVS and district franchise students registered as home education students in their school districts would not be eligible to participate in the school district's virtual instruction program the following year.

34. *Will students enrolled in Florida Virtual School or district franchises of Florida Virtual School have to meet the student eligibility and other requirements delineated in section 1002.45, F.S.?*

No. Florida Virtual School and the district franchises of Florida Virtual School operate under section 1002.37, F.S. Thus, home education and private school students, as well as public school students, can still participate in these virtual school programs. District students participating in district franchises of Florida Virtual School will continue to be reported under school number 7004.

#### **PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM**

35. *How many core and elective classes must a K-8 student pass to be promoted to a higher grade level, i.e., to be a "successful completer?"*

The school district's virtual instruction program is a district public school and students participating in the program are district public school students. Each district's Student Progression Plan includes district policies regarding student progression and promotion for its students.

36. *Will full-time elementary students in virtual K-8 programs be exempt from the required 150 minutes/week of physical education?*

No. Elementary students must meet this requirement.

*37. Does the virtual instruction program take place at school sites or at home?*

Section 1002.45(1)(a), F.S., specifies "that the purpose of the program is to make instruction available to students using online and distance learning technology in the non-traditional classroom." This implies primarily using a site other than a district school building which may include a student's home.

*38. Will a young child participating in this program sit in front of a computer 4-5 hours per day?*

Students participating in this program will engage in both online and offline learning activities. The amount of online vs. offline time will depend on a number of factors including the grade level of the student and the program the district develops or selects.

### **SCHOOL CHOICE**

*39. Must a school district virtual instruction program be offered to parents as a school choice option?*

Yes. Section 1002.20(6), F.S., designates the school district virtual instruction program as a public school choice option for parents.

*40. Must the district contract with multiple providers to allow parents to choose?*

No. Districts may operate their own virtual instruction program or contract with one or more providers to operate the program. This is a district decision.

*41. Can parents choose the district's virtual instruction program as a school choice option under the NCLB option?*

Yes. If Title One funds are not used to support the virtual school, then it would be available as a choice option for parents.

*42. Is Florida Virtual School still a school choice option for parents?*

Yes. Florida Virtual School remains a school choice option for parents and an option for districts to provide additional opportunities for their students. Section 1002.45(10), F.S., stipulates that any information school districts provide to parents and students regarding the district's virtual instruction program should also include information about the opportunities offered by Florida Virtual School (FLVS) and the parent's and student's right to access FLVS courses.

### **SCHOOL GRADES AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

*43. Will the School District Virtual Instruction Program receive a school grade?*

Yes. Section 1002.45(8)(2), F.S., requires each school district virtual instruction program to receive a school grade as provided in section 1008.34, F.S.

*44. How will school grades be calculated if the district uses more than one vendor to provide virtual instruction to students in this program?*

Section 1002.45(8)(2), F.S., related to school grading also designates that the school district's virtual instruction program shall be considered one school regardless of the number of providers participating in the district's program. This program will be assigned one school number and all eligible students assigned to this number as their school of record will be included in the school grade calculations. These calculations will be made in the same manner as for other public schools in the district.

45. *If a school district virtual instruction program has fewer than 30 students that can be included in its school grade calculation, would it be able to meet the requirement in law to receive a school grade?*

No. The school district's virtual instruction program must have at least this number of students to receive a school grade.

46. *This law states that the school district's grade 9-12 virtual instruction program may be full-time or part-time. Will part-time students in the district's virtual instruction program be included in its school grade calculations?*

No. Section 1002.45(8)(b), F.S., specifically states that the performance of part-time students will not be included in the school grade calculations for the district's virtual instruction program. The performance of eligible part-time students will be included in school grade calculations for their non-virtual school of record.

47. *This law states that the school district's grade 9-12 virtual instruction program may only serve students in Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), dropout prevention, career and vocational programs. Yet many of these students are not normally included in school grade calculations. Will these students be included in the school grade calculations for the district's virtual instruction program?*

DJJ students will not be included in school grade calculations. The performance of students in dropout prevention programs and career or vocational programs could be included if they have valid FCAT scores in the appropriate grades and if they are full-time students in the district's virtual instruction program. However, career and vocational education programs cannot be funded under the current statutory language.

48. *If a school district virtual instruction program does not receive a school grade because of an insufficient number of students, will its enrollment be limited the following year as specified in s.1002.45(4), Florida Statutes?*

This section of the law is intended to apply to schools that receive an unsatisfactory grade (D or F, possibly I). If a school does not have enough students to be graded, the only way that it can become a graded school is to increase its enrollment.

49. *If the school district virtual instruction program begins operation in 2009-10, will it receive a school grade for that year?*

Yes. School district virtual instruction programs will receive a school grade in their first year of operation. Schools with the required number of tested students are in fact graded during the first year of operation. The learning gains calculation relies on two years of tested data, but the students' scores from FCAT exams administered in the prior year (even if from a different school) are used along with current-year test scores in the calculation.

## MISCELLANEOUS

50. *How does this impact the quality assurance reviews conducted at DJJ sites with regard to certification requirements within these programs and will the Quality Assurance manuals be changed to reflect the impact of this bill?*

Districts must offer full-time or part-time virtual instruction programs for students in grades 9-12 in DJJ, dropout prevention or career or vocational programs beginning in 2009-10. This program is designated as a public school choice option in Section 1002.20(6)(a), F.S. Therefore, this program will be a school choice option for DJJ students and the Quality Assurance manuals will be revised to reflect this.

51. *If the district provides internet access for students at their home, how will districts insure that the access is filtered and compliant with the federal Child Internet Protection Act (CIPA)? Districts must be CIPA compliant to qualify for E-Rate funding.*

Each school district should determine if additional language should be added to their existing policies addressing the use of the Internet and district or school equipment (acceptable use policy). In addition, the district can set up a technical procedure for accessing the virtual instruction program so that the only way to enter is through the school's network.

52. *Are there documented successes for the different district franchises of FLVS?*

Yes. The FLVS Board of Trustees is required to report the performance of each school district franchise annually. This report includes progress toward meeting franchise goals; results from parent and student satisfaction surveys; enrollment and successful completion data; and courses offered. A copy of this report can be found at the FLVS Web site: [www.flvs.net](http://www.flvs.net).