
# Equity Matters

## Digital & Online Learning for Students with Disabilities

James D. Basham, William (Skip) Stahl, Kelsey R. Ortiz, Mary Frances Rice, Sean J. Smith

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# Acknowledgments

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***James Basham and Skip Stahl***

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## Design

Ian Shea-Cahir

# The Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities

The Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities conducts research on how K-12 online learning impacts the access, participation, and progress of students with disabilities. Research outcomes are expected to inform the design, selection, and implementation of online digital curriculum materials, the systems that deliver and support them, and the instructional practices associated with their use, in order to increase their efficacy for students with disabilities and other elementary and secondary learners. The research agenda is aimed at 1) identifying the trends and issues in online education, 2) developing and testing designs and practices that promise to make online education more effective and accessible, and 3) conducting research that impacts the future of online education. The Center is a partnership involving the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning (KUCRL), the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE). The Center is funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in the U.S. Department of Education.

## Center for Research on Learning (CRL)

The Center for Research on Learning, at the University of Kansas Lawrence campus, is an internationally recognized research and development organization noted for creating solutions that dramatically improve quality of life, learning, and performance — especially for those who experience barriers to success.

In the mid-1970s, passage of a federal education law required that special education services be delivered to all students who needed them from kindergarten through high school. That law changed the education landscape and planted the seed for what is now the Center for Research on Learning.

CRL's work centers on solving the problems that limit individuals' quality of life and their ability to learn and perform in school, work, home, or the community. CRL specifically studies problems in education and works to place solutions that make a difference into the hands of educators, learners, employers, and policy makers. Long-term goals of the Center include research, development, professional development, organizational change, and dissemination that reach the largest possible audiences.

## Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST)

CAST is a nonprofit research and development organization that works to expand learning opportunities for all individuals, especially those with disabilities, through Universal Design for Learning. In 1984, a small band of education researchers founded CAST, the Center for Applied Special Technology, to explore ways of using new technologies to provide better educational experiences to students with disabilities. As CAST researchers tested and refined their principles, priorities, and vision over that first decade, they came to a new understanding of how to improve education using flexible methods and materials. They called this approach Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

CAST's work is inspired and informed by the learners who often get pushed aside in traditional education settings. In other words, "the future is in the margins," as Founding Directors David Rose and Anne Meyer write. By pioneering inclusive educational solutions based on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), CAST is researching and developing ways to meet the needs of all learners. CAST's efforts provide pre-K through college educators with knowledge, skills, strategies, and tools that maximize learning opportunities for all students.

## National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)

Since the time of its formation in 1938, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education has been providing leadership focused on the improvement of educational services and positive outcomes for children and youth with disabilities throughout the United States, its federal territories, and the Freely Associated States of Palau, Micronesia and the Marshall Islands. NASDSE works tirelessly with these education agencies to align policies and proven practices in order to ensure students with disabilities are afforded full participation in their education and successful transition to post-school education, employment, and independent living.

NASDSE serves state directors of special education through service and collaboration, providing effective leadership in the development of national policy related to services that produce those successful outcomes.

NASDSE offers strategies and tools to move to implementation of best practices through communities of practice, training on current issues, technical assistance, policy analysis, research, national initiatives and partnerships to enhance problem solving at the local, state, and national level. NASDSE works to engage students, families, communities, professionals and policymakers as full partners.

Chapter One

# Understanding Transformative Change

**In 2011, the Center on Online Learning for Students with Disabilities (COLSD, or the Center) was funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to research the transformative changes taking place in K-12 online education for students with disabilities.**

The Center was specifically tasked with a) identifying and verifying trends, issues, and outcomes for students with disabilities in online settings, b) identifying and developing promising approaches for increasing the accessibility and effectiveness of online learning, and c) testing the feasibility, usability, and potential effectiveness of promising practices.

The Center interpreted this charge through a research framework that focused on investigating these priorities through three aspects of the interwoven and contextualized nature of the emerging online environment. Specific focuses included: 1) students with disabilities and their families, 2) the personnel and institutions through which these students are being served, and 3) the digital materials and delivery systems that support learner interactions within the full-time virtual, blended, and supplemental instances of online learning.

This inaugural publication will present some of the preliminary understandings from a number of Center research projects and experiences and inform the various stakeholder groups of the emerging trends, outcomes, challenges, and promising practices in this developing field of practice. Special education was founded on—and continues to operate as—a collaboration among students with disabilities, families, professionals, and policymakers. Now with the digital education industry's growing and major influence in this new area of education, it is important they join this collaborative effort. The overall goal for this publication is to spark discussion, reflection, and debate, with a focus on enhancing understanding within all participant groups, leading to the design of more responsive systems, practices, and policy to support enhanced outcomes for all learners—especially students with disabilities.

## Defining the Field of Practice

Other reports (e.g., Keeping Pace 2014) have reflected that the field of K-12 online education has rapidly evolved from a primary focus on full-time virtual settings to the growing preeminence of blended (and personalized) environments. These options in online learning vary greatly in how they are implemented and interpreted across states, school districts, buildings, individual teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Beyond this variability, the field's emergent nature (in

conjunction with the fast-paced and disruptive nature of the digital education industry itself), our work has continued to highlight the importance of context. A nuanced understanding of the variables and interactions within these environments—how, when, where, and with whom online learning occurs—is critical to understanding the trends, issues, and outcomes associated with policies and practice. As such, the terminology used in this publication is clearly defined. For example, online learning refers to the larger field encompassing full-time virtual, blended, and supplemental offerings. A reference to full-time virtual learning or blended learning specifically focuses on only the contextual setting being referenced. Personalized or competency-based learning references a practice that may occur within each of these contexts. The Center also employs the terminology of digital learning to characterize the interplay among digital technologies, digital delivery systems, and student learning. Thus, digital learning takes place across all online learning spaces, is a key contributor to outcomes, and represents, optimally, the integration of various technologies and systems that support learning. Digital learning, digital materials, and delivery systems are a primary determinant within online learning environments, however, the impact—positive or negative—can only be assessed in context.

## Reference Terms
**(as defined for this publication)**

**Online Learning:** Education in which instruction, content, and learning are mediated primarily by network technologies such as the Internet.

**Full-time Online Learning:** When students are primarily taking all academic classes in online environments. This type of learning generally takes place in virtual schools or what is referred to as fully online schools.

**Blended Learning:** "A formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online learning, with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace; at least in part in a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home; and the modalities along each student's learning path within a course or subject are connected to provide an integrated learning experience" (Christensen Institute, 2013).

**Supplemental Online Learning:** When students are enrolled in an online environment to supplement another primary learning environment. An example would be someone taking a course in Mandarin Chinese or object-oriented programming online rather than in a face-to-face classroom environment because the local school does not offer the course.

**Digital Learning:** Use of digital technology to support learning. The use of this term is context free including the type of technology, environment, pedagogy, instructional design, and learner-interaction with the material, technology, or environment. Digital learning includes, but is not limited to, online learning, blended, or personalized learning. Digital learning would also encompass non-online environments that are simply focused on integrating digital technologies to support learning.

**Digital Materials:** Electronic textbooks, workbooks, activities, simulations, assessments, and other components of the elementary and secondary school curriculum made available to students via computer, tablet, or mobile devices.

**Digital Delivery Systems:** Content management or learning management utilities that display, provide access to, or otherwise render digital materials for students' use. Most of these systems require an individual student logon via username/password or unique student identification number, and record and display student usage and achievement data.

**Personalized Learning:** An approach in which the instructional approach, outcomes, content, activities, pace, tools, and supports are customized for each learner's needs. Personalized learning takes advantage of the real-time progress monitoring capacity of many digital delivery systems to provide timely (e.g., daily, weekly), actionable updates on student learning and/or achievement through a course of study. Many personalized learning settings also follow a competency or proficiency-based instructional design.

**Competency/Proficiency-Based Learning:** In this curricular structure, students progress based on mastery of successive goals. Students are often grouped by age and/or proficiency levels—not by grades—and movement through a course of study is based on evidence-based skills or knowledge learning, not seat time.

**Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** A scientifically-based framework that is focused on supporting the variability of every learner through proactive and iterative design that integrates multiple means of engagement, representation of information, and action and expression of understanding. (Learn more at UDLcenter.org.)

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## Conducting Research in the Field of Online Learning

The field of K-12 online learning is still new, and, as with any emerging cultural shift, its practice has wide variance with each instance having limited empirical evidence to support its efficacy.

At present, sparse independent research is available to help distinguish educationally effective digital materials, activities, delivery systems, and progress monitoring procedures from those materials and practices that yield little gain—or even lead to negative outcomes. While a number of groups across education and industry actively welcome the involvement of researchers, others vigorously avoid any association with independent inquiries as those research activities may identify negative (as well as positive) outcomes. The digital education industry is highly competitive and materials, delivery systems, and emergent learning designs that become associated with less than optimal effects can (and do) disappear overnight. This intensely competitive climate precipitates avoidance of transparent, objective, and rigorous inquiry as much as it encourages it. Until some stabilization occurs, research in this ecosystem will face ongoing challenges.[1]

While immense amounts of data are generated across these environments, establishing research agreements to acquire these data and working across siloed digital systems is challenging. The complexities of understanding how special education mandates, policies, and procedures are to be addressed in online settings may be further complicated by the existence of contracts or regulations that prohibit student data tracking or sharing. In some circumstances, the uncertainties of interpreting student data privacy statutes prompts some entities (both in education and industry) to act conservatively and prohibit the involvement of outside researchers.

These challenges (and others) are key contributors to the complex nature of research in online learning. The research represented in this publication is an initial understanding of what has been learned from preliminary explorations, interactions, and experiences that have taken place with the Center and its research partnerships, as well as from the limited published research base. The findings and associated discussion represent the Center's preliminary understanding of practice and policies, and are likely to change with additional research and more nuanced understanding of the interplay among the systemic elements.

## Some Key Findings

From a variety of research inquiries including national scans, forums, surveys, interviews, observations, and data analysis involving various stakeholders in online learning (administrators, teachers, parents, students, and developers and vendors of digital curriculum materials and delivery systems), the following items represent a sample of important issues for all or some of these constituents:

- Few states offer or require certification or endorsements in online teaching, despite the fact that all stakeholders generally agree that the knowledge and skills, both technological and pedagogical, necessary for success differ dramatically from those skills and knowledge required in brick-and-mortar settings.
- A shared belief is that the flexibility of digital learning materials, when combined with appropriately designed online delivery systems and instruction, can address the variable learning needs of elementary and secondary students with disabilities in ways difficult or impossible to otherwise achieve.
- The capacity of online learning systems to track, record, and present information about student progress—at the point of instruction—offers enormous potential for supporting more personalized learning for all students, including those students with disabilities. Unfortunately, the current data gathered within many of these systems are often siloed and do not always support instructional decision making.
- State Directors of Special Education agree that great potential exists for online systems to collect a variety of data, but, currently, these data do not support the reporting requirements they are charged with addressing.
- Leaders of full-time virtual and blended online schools, and digital materials and systems vendors uniformly agree that Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) developed for brick-and-mortar settings need to be re-visited (and likely revised) once a student enrolls in online learning.
- Parents of students with disabilities who are being educated in full-time virtual settings spend more time supporting their students in day-to-day online learning than do parents of these students in blended or supplemental settings, despite the fact that few parents report having expertise in providing special education services.

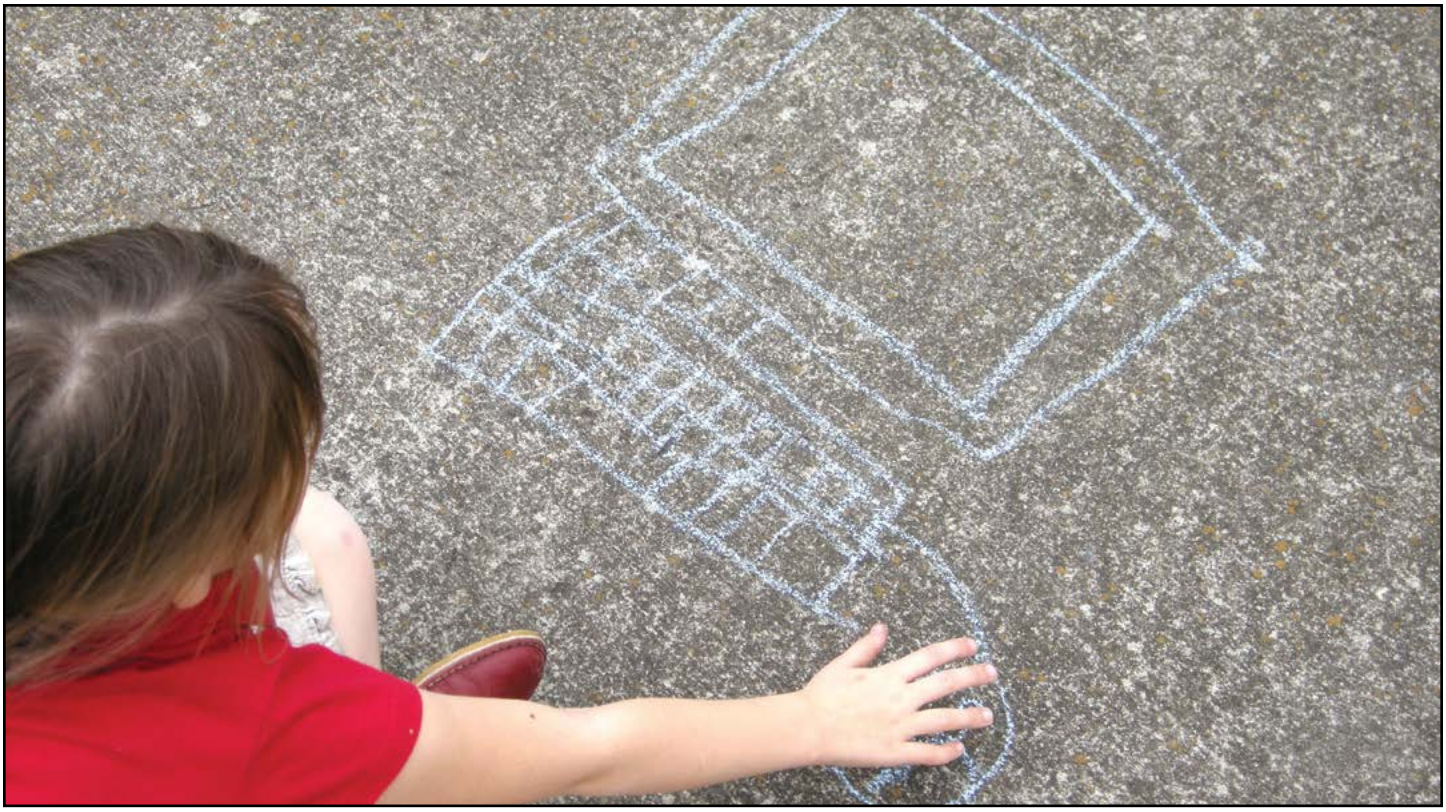
## Overview of This Publication

**Chapter One:** This chapter provides an overview of the Center, Center work, and this publication.

**Chapter Two:** The second chapter provides an overview of a state and territorial policy scan of all 50 states and five U.S. territories with a focus on online learning for students with disabilities.

**Chapter Three:** This chapter presents an understanding of major topics impacting the field and is based on the Center's (and others') research. In looking across the field of practice and Center holdings, the focus of Chapters 3 and 4 is on four topical areas, each within a targeted stakeholder emphasis. This chapter addresses issues that have emerged at the local school district with respect to Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and the placement of students with disabilities in online settings, and challenges and opportunities related to teachers' roles in supporting students with disabilities in virtual environments.

**Chapter Four:** This chapter continues the exploration of major topics within the context of two additional stakeholder groups: 1) state education agencies and their need to acquire progress and activity information related to students with disabilities in online settings for reporting and program planning, development, and evaluation purposes, and 2) the changing role of parents when these students are enrolled in online learning in full-time virtual, blended, or supplemental settings.



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**Chapter Five:** Provides a quick summary of the topics discussed and outlines some primary topics for the field to consider as it continues to grow and expand. In addition, three topics were chosen for specific reference based on the importance of the topic relative to student learning, its prominence in industry, society, news media, ans well as the comments or questions received from SEAs. Topics include: 1) Access to Online Education, 2) Data and Privacy, and 3) Graduation.

## Conclusion

Online education is an evolutionary transformation in K-12 education that is now rapidly influencing many stakeholders, policies, procedures, and practices for students with disabilities. Overall, the system is responding quickly with individuals sometimes making necessary decisions with very little evidence at their disposal. In some circumstances the impact of these decisions on the system at-large, the learners, their families, or the professionals that serve them has been positive; in some circumstances the decisions have not. This publication highlights the great importance of developing, conducting, and sharing research findings that are directly focused on supporting the needs of all learners, especially learners with disabilities and other diverse learning needs. This publication encourages greater active and open collaboration among all stakeholders to support the needed research, findings, and needs of all learners.

Learn more at http://centerononlinelearning.org/
If you have questions or comments about this publication, you are encouraged to reach out to the Center by emailing: info@centerononlinelearning.org
James D. Basham, Ph.D., jbasham@ku.edu
Skip Stahl, sstahl@cast.org

**Disclaimer**: *The Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities works with teachers, parents, and industry leaders to research and disseminate high-quality reports about engagement, effectiveness, and accessibility of online education for students with disabilities. The contents of this publication were developed under a grant from the US Department of Education #H327U110011. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officer, Celia Rosenquist.*

## Endnotes

1. Pinker, S. (2003). *The blank slate: The modern denial of human nature*. New York: Penguin.

## References

Pinker, S. (2003). *The blank slate: The modern denial of human nature.* New York: Penguin.

Chapter Two

# State and Territory Policy Scan for Online Learning and Students with Disabilities

**Federal and state education policies have the potential to influence students' educational experiences. In fact, policies embrace this potential by addressing many crucial aspects of the educational process, including desired achievement outcomes, curricular materials,**

instructional practices, assessments, funding, instructor qualifications, students' attendance, and related services for students with disabilities. Any time that policies are created, they have the potential to impact students who have difficulties learning and achieving in educational settings—as well as general education students. Therefore, policies for *any* elementary and secondary educational setting should attend to important elements of the IDEA such as identifying students with disabilities, providing due process protections, ensuring parent participation, and ensuring that students with disabilities have access to a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Such education policies continue to evolve in traditional school settings and are also evolving in digital settings.

Researchers at the Center for Online Learning and Students with Disabilities (the Center) continue to investigate and track policy issues that affect students with disabilities in the digital learning environment. In September of 2012, Center staff conducted a search of all 50 U.S. State Departments of Education websites for publicly discoverable policy and guidance documents specifically addressing online learning for students with disabilities. Since this initial scan in 2012, both the field of online education and the Center have acquired additional information and undergone a number of changes. Given the evolutionary nature of online education, continued policy scans are important for identifying states' policy changes.

Different from the original scan, the 2015 state and territorial policy scan provides the field with more specific information on online learning for students with disabilities, their families, and associated service providers. Through this updated scan, Center research attempts to provide a deeper understanding of how states and territories are progressing in online education policy and in their guidance efforts to ensure equity, quality, equality, efficiency, inclusion, and opportunity for students with disabilities in the online learning environment. The intent of this scan is to provide stakeholders (including State Departments of Education staff, school district administrators, teachers, parents, and students) with answers to policy questions more directly linked to IDEA legislation, and highlight steps the states and territories are taking to

## Reference Terms

Various terms in the field of special education require clarity and transparency for understanding. Throughout this publication, the following terms are used as defined below.

**Accommodations**
Accommodations, modifications, and other services for students with disabilities are legally protected when included in a highly structured Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a more flexible plan created under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. An IEP is developed and implemented as a requirement of special education, and a 504 plan is developed and implemented by the educational institution to address civil rights mandates. [1]

**Accessibility**
In the context of technology, accessibility refers to providing access for all students to digital environments and tools, including students with disabilities. Designing digital materials and delivery systems to support the use of audio-only screen readers, text browsers, and other adaptive technologies; offering contrasting colors for readability; and providing alternative text tags for graphics are examples of accessibility. The Office of Civil Rights, United States Department of Education has issued a "significant guidance document" detailing the responsibility of elementary and secondary schools to meet accessibility requirements under both civil rights and special education law. [2]

**Child Find**
Child Find is the IDEA legal requirement that schools identify children with disabilities who may be entitled to special education services. This requirement covers children from birth through age 21. This screening and identification process mandate schools' staff to identify, locate, and evaluate students with disabilities. [3]

**Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)**
"COPPA imposes certain requirements on operators of websites or online services directed to children under 13 years of age, and on operators of other websites or online services that have actual knowledge that they are collecting personal information online from a child under 13 years of age." [4]

**Due Process/Procedural Safeguards**
Compliance with the procedural requirements of the IDEA to ensure processes for parents regarding timelines for actions, receiving notice of changes, expressing disagreements with program recommendations, and resolving disputes through mediation or a fair hearing.

**Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**
"The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records." [5]

**Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**
A term used to describe the educational rights of students with disabilities. It refers to an educational program designed to provide individualized supports and services needed for students with disabilities to access the general education curriculum that align with state education standards in the public school system. This educational program is provided at no cost to the parents of the student with a disability. [6]

**Individual Education Program (IEP)**
According to the federal Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (1997), an IEP is a statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals designed to meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; and meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disabilities. [7]

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**
"The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997 (P.L. 105-17) established parameters for services provided in an educational setting. Part B of the document indicated that eligibility for services required that the impairment "adversely impacts educational performance." [8]

**Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**
Education of students with disabilities with their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. [9]

**Parent Participation**
Collaboration with parents in children's individualized educational program development and implementation. [10]

**Protection in Evaluation for Services**
Installment of assessment processes to determine if a student has a disability protected under IDEA and if he/she needs special education services. [11]

**Section 504**
"Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects the rights of persons with handicaps in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance. Section 504 protects the rights not only of individuals with visible disabilities but also those with disabilities that may not be apparent." [12]

**Zero Reject**
Responsibility of school officials to locate, identify, and provide special education services to all eligible students with disabilities. [13]

ensure that the rights of students with disabilities are protected through policy and procedural safeguards.

Center staff completed a scan of the 50 states and five territories in order to identify the most pressing needs in the area of policy development for students with disabilities and digital learning. The scan's results will have potential uses for multiple stakeholders and applications. Results will provide a platform for framing further discussions about policy, inform state and territory education agencies of available policies in other jurisdictions, identify potential areas of technical assistance, and identify topics for further research.

## Organization of Chapter

Chapter organization features four sections: Literature Review, Methodology, Findings (summary of findings for nine scan items), and Summary and Recommendations.

I. The Literature Review provides an overview of relevant existing research on online learning and K-12 students with disabilities. Researchers determined that there is little existing literature directly related to policies on online learning for students with disabilities. The literature that was included in this review focused on state directors of special education and their perspectives on online education for students with disabilities, specific challenges in serving students with disabilities in online environments, and instances of under- and over-representations of students with disabilities in online learning enrollments.

II. The Methodology component explains how the scan questions were generated, reviewed, and, finally, selected for inclusion. Three methods were used to retrieve existing state and territory policy and guidance information from online sources. Findings were compiled and sent to state and territory special education directors for their review and comments. The findings were used to create an overview of current U.S. policies on online education for students with disabilities.

III. The Findings from the policy and guidance scan are presented in three approaches throughout this publication.
   A. Presented in this chapter is a global summary of five critical domains associated with online learning for students with disabilities. These domains account for nine constructs on the scan associated with special education as defined by IDEA.
   B. Three topics were singled out for specific reference. Each of these topics were identified based on the importance of the topic relative to student learning, its prominence in industry, society, news media, as well as the comments or questions received from SEAs during the review process. Topics included: 1) Access to Online Education, 2) Data and Privacy, and 3) Graduation. Discussion of these three topics is presented in Chapter 5.
   C. Abbreviated Individual State and Territorial Scans (presented in Appendix B) that provide a quick glance of the findings from each state and territory. Individual and full state and territory scans are available. http://centerononlinelearning.org/publications/annual-publication-2015/

IV. A summary is provided at the end of this chapter that includes four key recommendations for stakeholders' consideration.

## Literature Review

When Greer, Rice, & Dykman (2014) reviewed the published literature on online learning and students with disabilities in K-12 settings, they found very little work directly related to policy. Further, policy implications of available studies were either missing or superficial. For example, many studies included ambiguous statements such as, "policy makers should take into account students with disabilities in their program regulations." A survey conducted by Burdette, Greer, & Woods (2013), with more than 60 respondents from 46 states (and other entities), asked state-level directors of special education for their perspectives on online education for students with disabilities. The survey results indicated two findings. Most states were not directly addressing disability issues in their planning for online learning. Additionally, states had a wide range of strategies for addressing this gap, based on such contextual factors as

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state educational funding priorities, geographical configurations, and the number of students with identified disabilities.

In their literature review, Greer, Rice, & Dykman (2014) did not include books, conference papers, doctoral dissertations, or industry reports. However, several sources of this type are referenced in other research about states' policy for online learning and students with disabilities. Müller's (2009) report attempted to map the participation of students with disabilities in online learning in various states. Most states provided information that was then represented in the findings. At that time, 11 states provided direct information about their online school programs with reference to students with disabilities (Alabama, Hawaii, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Nevada, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia). These states articulated the following challenges in serving students with disabilities in online education:

- Virtual schools were opening before they had adequately prepared to serve students with disabilities;
- Established standards were lacking for implementing special education services;
- A need was recognized to revise curriculum for student accessibility;
- Issues of the suitability for enrolling students with disabilities were identified;
- Online education was serving an increasing number of students with more severe needs;
- Miscommunication existed about persons' roles and responsibilities of IEP development and implementation;
- Online programs were facing a challenge of accessing sufficient numbers of related service personnel; and
- Both general and specialized technology to meet students' needs was lacking.

In addition, several reports have emerged based on data from single states. Wang and Decker (2014) looked at data on the participation in online learning for students with disabilities and found that while nationally this population tended to be underrepresented, in Ohio, a significant overrepresentation was noted. When the authors examined enrollment trends, they were able to

demonstrate that an Ohio law promising a computer to families who enrolled in online schools coincided with the increase in enrollment of students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged children. Wang and Decker's findings underscore the ways in which policy can function as a fairly fast-acting facilitator for online learning enrollment.

This quick review continues to highlight the limited published information on online learning and students with disabilities. The field is encouraged to expand the types of research being conducted and published in online learning for students with disabilities. To develop a better understanding across stakeholders, published research in various formats is necessary. To reach the varied stakeholders, those formats should include open publications (such as this one), academic-refereed journals, and both practice as well as trade publications.

In an effort to further the knowledge base of online learning and students with disabilities, Center researchers identified nine critical content domains that will provide a more complete picture of how the online learning environment is supporting students with disabilities in the area of policy and guidance documentation. These nine critical content domains provided the foundation for the 2015 Center on Online Learning for Students with Disabilities State and Territory Scan.

### Content Domains

- Access to Online Education
- Teacher Preparedness
- Appropriateness of Learning Environment
- Identification of Learners with Disabilities
- Provision of Disability Support Services
- Accessibility Issues
- Data and Data Privacy
- Parental Involvement
- Graduation

## Scan Methodology

Information from the 50 State Departments of Education and their counterparts in five U.S. territories (American Samoa, District of Columbia, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands) were reviewed for this policy study. The purpose of this scan was to review and summarize publicly available state and territorial level policy and guidance documents for topics regarding online education for students with disabilities.

After reviewing the Center's 2012 scan, the Center stakeholder forums, relevant academic and industry-based literature, and information from other Center research projects, a panel of Center staff developed a pool of state and territory policy domains and questions pertaining to students with disabilities in the online learning environment. Over the course of several meetings, Center staff reviewed these policy domains and developed specific questions until a consensus was met regarding the items to include in this state and territory scan. The items were organized into the nine domains listed in the previous table. A blank copy of the scan used in data collection is located in Appendix C.

### Scan Process

Between April and August 2015, Center staff focused on answering each of these state and territorial scan items from the perspective of a parent, student, educator, or service provider residing in each of the respective geographic regions. Thus, Center researchers were trained to locate and categorize only information from publicly available websites and documents. The research protocol was designed to be representative of what a person searching for answers to questions might do in a "real life" situation.

Center researchers followed a three-step process to conduct the document scan, summarization, and categorization. First, researchers would familiarize themselves with the location (i.e., state or territory) as it appeared in two widely known reports. Specifically, researchers reviewed information for each location from the Keeping Pace (http://www.kpk12.com/) and the Digital Learning Now (http://digitallearningnow.com/report-card/) websites for each state and territory. Second, researchers located each state and territory's Department of Education related websites and then keywords were used to search each of the scan items. Third, if incon-

sistencies were noted in the known information or information presented within the Department's website, researchers used the same keyword—in combination with the state's and territory's name—and used Google to locate answers. Only documentation from official state and territorial domains and/or known online service providers were used to document answers. All answers were recorded in Qualtrics.

## Rating for Each Item

For each policy question, findings were entered into the notes section of the Qualtrics data gathering tool. These findings were categorized into four possible responses: 1) **Yes with Evidence** indicated that policy or guidance information was located that directly addressed the scan item, 2) **No with Evidence** indicated that the appropriate sources were located but the policy or guidance that directly addressed the scan item was not located. This code was interpreted as indicating that the state or territory guidance and policy documents did not address the particular question, 3) **Unclear** indicated the found guidance or policy was generally associated with an item (by keyword or included terminology), however, the existing information was not clear if—or how—the scan item was addressed. This option provided an opportunity to indicate that the state or territory policy did broach the topic but the Center staff could not clearly determine how that information addressed the scan item, 4) **Nothing Found** indicated that Center staff could not locate the necessary guidance or policy documents pertaining to the scan item.

## Reliability Checks

During August and September 2015, scan findings for each state and territory were compiled into a document and sent to the special education director (or territory head) for each state and territory, along with an external Qualtrics data gathering tool for their use in verifying Center findings. If the state's or territory's staff discovered omissions or misinterpretations, they were asked to provide corrected information. Agency representatives were provided a deadline and informed that findings would be published in this report. At least two email reminders were sent to each representative and representatives were prompted to review the results and submit any revisions before the deadline. Responses were obtained from 36 (65%) of the 55 state and territorial agency representatives.

As reviews from states and territories were received, Center researchers reviewed each suggested change and the supporting evidence. If changes were supported by evidence and met the criteria of being publicly available, Center researchers evaluated (in a consensus meeting) whether a change in the categorization was warranted. During a consensus meeting, Center researchers had two choices: 1) change the rating or 2) do not change the rating and identify the item as providing dissent with the state or territory. Consensus was reached on each respondent's suggested change.

# Findings

This section contains a summary of the findings across the five critical domains. These domains account for five of the nine constructs that most closely align with the practice of special education as defined by IDEA. The five domains that are highlighted in this section include: Appropriateness of Learning Environment, Identification of Learners with Disabilities, Provision of Disability Support Services, Accessibility Issues, and Parental Involvement. As previously discussed, three other special topics (Access to Online Education, Data and Privacy, and Graduation) are located in Chapter 5. Finally, all state and territory scans are located in Appendix B.

## Appropriateness of Learning Environment

The policy and guidance scan included three items addressing this domain. The items address several important elements of ensuring that students with disabilities are receiving a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in online environments as prescribed in IDEA. In practice, FAPE is operationalized with each student's individualized education program (IEP). Thus, the scan items reviewed policy and guidance for whether IEPs are considered prior to enrollment in a program, whether a state or territory provides guidance for IEP teams, or if they provide examples for ensuring that the students receive appropriate accommodations. These items are particularly important in that students can experience online instruction in such varied contexts (e.g., as a supplement to their general education or special education classroom instruction, or as a fully online program). Each of these items provides understanding for how states and territories ensure that students are

placed in online learning environments with appropriate instruction and supports.

**Policy Question 1:** Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in a fully online, blended, or digital learning experience?

To provide some context, IEP team members make placement decisions for students with disabilities during IEP meetings. Placement decisions are made in alignment with IDEA's free appropriate public education (FAPE) requirements including least restrictive environment.[14] Part of these requirements mandate that students with disabilities are educated with other students that do not have disabilities.[15] IEP team members must take into account what learning environment is most appropriate for the student.[16] Center reviewers searched state and territory policy or guidance documents to determine states or territory requirements for IEP meetings prior to a student with a disability being placed in a fully online, blended, or digital learning environment.

Table 2.1: IEP Review Prior to Online Environment

| Response | Total | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes with Evidence | 7 | 13% |
| Unclear | 16 | 29% |
| No with Evidence | 31 | 56% |
| Nothing Found | 1 | 2% |

**States or Territories with "Yes" Rating**

Alabama
Florida
Missouri
North Carolina
South Carolina
South Dakota
Vermont

Seven states have publicly available documentation that requires a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experiences.

The North Carolina Virtual Public School enrollment policy requires that a student's IEP team consider how the change in instructional delivery and learning environment will align with that student's special needs. The policy also discusses the need for the IEP team members to determine what accommodations and modifications are necessary for the student to be successful in the online learning environment. See the associated text for example language.

> ***"NCVPS course enrollment for students who have an IEP or 504 should be reviewed by the IEP or 504 face-to-face school team prior to the student's being placed in the NCVPS course. The IEP or 504 team should discuss if placement in an online course is appropriate for the student and then determine appropriate modifications and accommodations necessary for the student to be successful in the online course. These accommodations and modifications should be documented on the IEP or 504 beside the appropriate NCVPS course the student will be enrolled."*** [17]
>
> **— North Carolina Virtual Public School**

South Carolina's state-sponsored school, Virtual South Carolina, has documentation requiring that a student's IEP team review the potential virtual school placement through the parameters of FAPE. The documentation notes that considerations for how the accommodations will be met in the digital learning environment must be determined before placement. See the associated text for example language.

> ***"Prior to enrollment of a student with a disability into one or more VirtualSC course, the student's IEP team must consider whether or not an online instructional delivery method is appropriate for the student to receive a FAPE. The student's IEP team should also determine whether or not the student's accommodations can be provided through virtual learning. For example: preferential seating close to the instructor is not applicable to online learning."*** [18]

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States or territories that emerged with an Unclear rating revealed three previously unconsidered issues. State online provider approval/enrollment guidelines leave considerable discretion to vendors. This process often requires providers to have enrollment procedures that include consideration of students with disabilities. However, Center reviewers were unable to determine if these states or territories included a requirement to review the IEP during the pre-enrollment and/or enrollment process. This lack of clarity stems from broad guidelines on applications regarding enrollment processes. Secondly, some virtual schools require outreach to students during pre-enrollment including welcome calls, counselor meetings, or discussions with academic advisors to assess placement options in online classes, but the focus and content of these outreach meetings is unclear. The Center reviewer could not determine what type of intake assessment occurred during these points of contact. Finally, in some cases parents and students were asked to disclose on an enrollment form if the student had a disability, but the documentation did not clearly articulate what would be done with the information from the disclosure.

States and territories that received a No with Evidence response from reviewers often included a statement regarding how the virtual school or program will meet the needs of students with IEPs but nothing or little was said with regards to IEP prior to placement. The member check with state agency repesentatives elicited disagreement with Center findings on whether online schools are schools of choice and that parents have the responsibility to decide whether or not to enroll in an online school. Some state and territory department representatives indicated that online schools are merely one point on the continuum of special education placements but they are unable to offer a full continuum of services, and that IDEA does not require them to do so. The Center considers this interpretation of policy as a concern.

**Policy Question 2:** Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities?

The IEP document must contain written statements that include descriptions including the student's present level of performance, annual educational goals, needed related services and supplementary aides, accommodations, and short term objectives for students who take alternate assessments.[19] When a student with a disability is placed in an online learning environment, the IEP team faces additional considerations that pertain to the student receiving services in a digital learning environment. These considerations may include: ensuring access to appropriate technologies, needed accommodations and supportive services, how communication will occur between all parties responsible for implementation of the IEP, and any other special issues that arise from changes in the student's learning environment. While these considerations are made in every IEP meeting, research in online learning (see other chapters in this publication) indicate that in online environments the available supports are distinctly different than traditional brick-and-mortar environments. Center reviewers scanned IEP guidance or related documentation for evidence of discussion of online learning for students with disabilities.

Table 2.2: Special Education Guidance

| Response | Total | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes with Evidence | 9 | 16% |
| Unclear | 3 | 5% |
| No with Evidence | 42 | 76% |
| Nothing Found | 1 | 2% |

**States or Territories with "Yes" Rating**

Alabama
Florida
Georgia
Missouri
North Carolina
South Carolina
South Dakota
Vermont
Washington

Center reviewers found that some states and territories addressed online learning for students with disabilities through a Frequently Asked Questions webpage, or the state's virtual school developed its own IEP and related services policies. For example, Washington Superintendent of Public Instruction Digital Learning Department provides discussion regarding special education issues. See the associated text for example language.

*"The following guidelines are intended to provide an overview of school district responsibilities related to ensuring that students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate in ALE programs and that those students enrolled in ALE programs continue to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE), as required under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (Title II), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and chapters 28A.642 RCW and 392-190 WAC."* [20]

**— Washington Superintendent of Public Instruction Digital Learning Department**

In addition to the preceding statement, the following topics are addressed: recruitment, admission, communication with parents, eligibility criteria, nonresident choice transfer procedures, appeals, inter-district agreements, FAPE, IEP, related services, staff training qualifications, and procedural safeguards. [21]

However, in the majority of states and territories, no discussion was included in the IEP guidance or related documentation regarding online learning for students with disabilities. In some states that have an approval process for vendors, requirements mandate that vendors provide students and parents with information about the nature of online learning, but the vendor application was unclear how that mandate would be carried out from district to district and how it applied to students with disabilities.

One state disagreed with Center findings based on the premise that the legal expectations for the IEP are constant across all settings and the law does not require a separate discussion for digital learning settings.

**Policy Question 3:** Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for students with disabilities?

Part of the IDEA requirement regarding FAPE is ensuring that students have appropriate accommodations embedded into their educational experiences. The student's IEP team drafts a plan with educational goals that are appropriate for that particular learner. In order to meet IEP goals, accommodations may be needed to ensure that the students are afforded the same opportunities as students without disabilities to complete assessments and coursework.[22] Typical accommodations have included additional time to complete tests or assignments, adjustments in seating (including working in a small group), and text read aloud to the learner. Center reviewers searched state and territory guidance and policy documents for examples of appropriate accommodations in the online learning environment for students with disabilities.

Table 2.3: Accommodations

| Response | Total | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes with Evidence | 5 | 9% |
| Unclear | 5 | 9% |
| No with Evidence | 42 | 76% |
| Nothing Found | 3 | 5% |

**States or Territories with "Yes" Rating**

Colorado
South Carolina
South Dakota
Vermont
West Virginia

Five states gave specific examples of accommodations that might be appropriate to the online learning environment. Virtual South Carolina offers a list of accommodations that can be provided and notes that extended time must be indicated in the IEP in order to be provided. The document also includes a notation that not all accommodations may be available in all courses. See the associated text for example language.

*"Identifying and providing those accommodations that are possible in virtual learning as specified on the student's IEP. Examples of accommodations that may be provided by VSC include clarifying/*

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*repeating directions; allowing the use of a dictionary/glossary; extended time (which must be outlined on the IEP relative to online learning and pacing guides); use of graphic organizers; masking/templates; notes, outlines, and instructions; and visual organizers. [2] VSC instructors will maintain documentation (through logs, e-mails, or other media as selected by the VSC staff and faculty) relative to the provision of the accommodations the instructors are able to provide in the virtual learning setting. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list of potential accommodations that a student may need for access to an online course. Also, please note that these examples may not be possible in every VSC course."* [23]

**— Virtual South Carolina**

The Center's state and territory scan findings show that the majority of the states and territories do not provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for students with disabilities. However, five states did have a disclaimer that accommodations will be provided by the virtual school or online, but the information was unclear about what types of accommodations the state would support or approve.

One state disagreed with Center findings by stating that interagency agreements are in place to ensure accommodations are in compliance with IDEA Part B, but no additional supporting evidence was provided.

## Identification of Learners with Disabilities

As families increasingly choose to enroll their children in fully online schools, students may not experience the screening or progress monitoring assessments that are required for addressing academic or behavioral difficulties or disabilities related to sensory, motor, or intellectual challenges. While some online educators may argue that the online program, because of the multiple data points collected, might more easily identify learners who are not making satisfactory progress,

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those data may not always be examined or interpreted as an indicator of a disability. The state or territory must have policies and procedures in place that ensure that all children with disabilities are located, identified, and evaluated. The intent of this scan question was to determine how IDEA's Child Find provisions (Section 300.111)[24] for determining possible disabilities were represented in state and territory policies and guidance in the context of online instruction.

**Policy Question 4:** Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)?

The Child Find federal mandate requires that all schools "locate, identify and evaluate" all children who may need special education services.[25] Center reviewers scanned State Child Find policy to determine if the states and territories had a suggested procedure for identifying the online learners who may qualify for disability services.

Table 2.4: Child Find

| Response | Total | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes with Evidence | 3 | 5% |
| Unclear | 6 | 11% |
| No with Evidence | 45 | 82% |
| Nothing Found | 1 | 2% |

**States or Territories with "Yes" Rating**

Colorado
Florida
South Carolina

Center reviewers found three states that have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services. The Florida Virtual School Full Time (FLVS FT) discusses in their FAQ what processes are in place in order to meet the Child Find mandate. FLVS FT aligns policy to be consistent with other schools in the state by reviewing data such as response to instruction (RtI), interventions, and assessments. See the associated text for example language.

***"107. Who has the responsibility to evaluate FLVS FT students if it is suspected that a student may be a student with a disability?***

***"The FLVS FT school has the responsibility to implement procedures and processes to identify and evaluate students if the FLVS FT school has reason to suspect that an enrolled student may be a student with a disability in need of special education and related services. Consistent with the evaluation process for any student suspected of having a disability, FLVS must review all existing data for the student which would include data regarding the student's response to instruction and interventions provided by FLVS and information from any assessments administered by FLVS. If it is determined that additional formal assessment data are needed to determine the student's eligibility as a student with a disability, obtaining such an assessment(s) is the responsibility of the FLVS FT program."***

**— Florida Virtual School Full Time**

While Center reviewers uncovered some general statements about Child Find in online learning policies, Unclear findings were reported for two main reasons. The first reason applies to states and territories that primarily authorize charter schools to deliver online programs. In some such cases, the policy did require Child Find to be implemented, but either online programs were not specifically mentioned in the policy or procedures or guidance were not included. In the second instance, online schools had an intervention checklist to identify students that are at risk of low achievement or behavioral problems in an online learning environment, but Center reviewers could not find evidence if a referral process was in place to further evaluate learners suspected of having a disability. States and territories that received a No with Evidence response did have Child Find policies but no guidance or mention of online learning environments within that policy.

One state responded through the state agency representative check process that their virtual charter schools do comply with Child Find requirements, but no supporting documentation was provided. In addition, the state also mentioned that the virtual school was drafting exceptional children procedures manuals but that the manuals were not yet published. Another state disagreed with Center findings by saying that Child Find is a universal requirement and no reason existed to single out online schools in policy documents.

## Provision of Disability Support Services

Online educational opportunities are expanding both in individual states and territories and in the school districts within states and territories. With this trend toward expanded online offerings, some stakeholders are concerned that students with disabilities are not accessing these opportunities or receiving appropriate services, and that significant variation exists among the states and territories. The three questions in this domain addressed specific aspects of these concerns. The questions were focused on the policy or guidance regarding the regulations on serving students with disabilities, the shared responsibilities of providing disability support services, and the monitoring of online schools to ensure alignment with IDEA and state regulations. Stakeholders might use this information to better understand how the various partners of education (e.g., school district staffs, state department of education staffs, vendors, and parents) can develop a shared understanding that will support integrated, effective efforts for learners with disabilities.

**Policy Question 5:** Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of services reference regulations for serving students with disabilities?

This scan question specifically addressed the role of online providers. The concern was whether or not states or territories request (or require) an online provider to adhere to specific regulations and/or statutes regarding students with disabilities in order to offer a fully online

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school or program or to offer courses. One might expect that the application and approval process, where applicable, would require that the provider documents that its products and services adhere to specific federal and state regulations addressing students with disabilities. The documentation, for example, could indicate how providers address the special considerations and accommodations for students with disabilities. Such information could be important as a condition for the state or territory department of education's accreditation or recognition. Importantly, every state and territory scanned by the Center had some form of online learning activity within their geographic boundary. Some states were found not to acknowledge that this activity is taking place.

Table 2.5: Application for Providers

| Response | Tally | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes with Evidence | 18 | 33% |
| Unclear | 0 | 0% |
| No with Evidence | 12 | 22% |
| Nothing Found | 25 | 45% |

**States or Territories with "Yes" Rating**

Arizona
Colorado
Florida
Idaho
Iowa
Louisiana
Maine
Maryland
Massachusetts
Minnesota
Pennsylvania
South Dakota
Utah
Vermont
Virginia
Washington
Wisconsin
Wyoming

Eighteen states did reference the need for provisions for students with disabilities in their online provider application process. States and territories that reviewers rated a Yes with Evidence required potential online providers to articulate—in a narrative—how the requirements

of IDEA are met. The application for Arizona Online Instruction Schools and Programs (AOI) requires that applicants describe how the requirements of IDEA will be addressed. In addition, a description is required as to what extent electronic content can be modified as well as how students will receive support in the digital learning environment. See the associated text for example language.

> ***"Describe the services offered to developmentally disabled populations. Evaluation Criteria: The extent to which:***
> ***· The AOI School/Program will identify special education students and meet the requirements of IDEA.***
> ***· The content and the content delivery system can be modified to meet the accommodation and modification requirements for Special Needs Students.***
> ***· Special Needs Students will receive onsite support when the need is identified."*** [26]
>
> **— Arizona Online Instruction Schools and Programs**

States and territories that received a No with Evidence rating did have applications for online providers publicly available, but Center reviewers did not identify provisions for students with disabilities embedded in the application. States and territories that received a Nothing Found rating either did not have state online provider applications publicly available, or none exists.

**Policy Question 6:** Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disability services (e.g., IDEA, 504) for students with disabilities enrolled in online courses?

Section 300.34 of IDEA identifies disability services that may need to be provided to students with disabilities in order for the student to benefit from special education.[27]

**Disability services:** "*includes speech-language pathology and audiology services, interpreting services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, including therapeutic recreation, early identification and assessment of disabilities in children, counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling, orientation and mobility services, and medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes. Related services also include school health services and school nurse services, social work services in schools, and parent counseling and training.*"[28]

The question of interest was who was responsible for determining and providing students with the appropriate disability services. Center reviewers scanned state and territory education policy or guidance documents in order to determine whether a responsible party is identified for providing disability services for students with disabilities enrolled in online courses. The responsibility of providing FAPE for students with disabilities in fully online settings is a noted issue because a student can live in one location and receive online services in another location (Umpstead, Andersen, & Umpstead, 2015).

Table 2.6: Disability Services

| Response | Total | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes with Evidence | 14 | 25% |
| Unclear | 10 | 18% |
| No with Evidence | 30 | 55% |
| Nothing Found | 1 | 2% |

**States or Territories with "Yes" Rating**

Alabama
Florida
Georgia
Idaho
Kansas
Massachusetts
Minnesota
Missouri
North Carolina
Oklahoma
Pennsylvania
South Carolina
South Dakota
Washington

Fourteen states included statements in policy or guidance documents that identified what entity is ultimately responsible for the provision of disability services in online learning. States that received a Yes with Evidence response clearly identified which entity was responsible for the provision of related services, but statements varied in how related services would be handled. For example, Alabama's ACCESS Distance Learning program includes a statement that indicates that the local school is responsible for providing any supplementary aides and services required by the student's IEP that are not supported by the web-based environment. See the associated text for example language.

> *"If a distance learning course is determined to be appropriate for the student based on the IEP or 504 Plan, and the student takes such a course through ACCESS during the implementation period of the IEP or 504 Plan, the local school will be responsible for providing any supplementary aids and services as required in the IEP or 504 Plan that are not supported within the Web-based environment and for maintaining communication with the ACCESS teacher."* [29]
>
> **— ACCESS Distance Learning program**

Four scenarios emerged in the Yes with Evidence category. One type of scenario notes that the local school district will be responsible for any supplementary aide or related service that is not conducive to the web based environment as referenced in the ACCESS policy above. Another type of statement indicates that the school district is responsible for the implementation of the IEP, but the district and virtual provider may establish specific roles and responsibilities for the virtual provider while the student with the IEP is enrolled. A third type of scenario points to the virtual school for compliance with the IEP, but the home district must provide needed resources, but these resources are not defined. Finally, one policy stated that any related service requiring in-person contact will not be provided by the virtual school.

States and territories that received an Unclear response did have policy or guidance that addressed the responsibility of meeting the needs of a student with a disability while in the online learning environment, but the information was unclear about which entity is ultimately responsible for providing these services. In other states and territories, collaborative efforts are mentioned between the local school district and virtual school, but the specific nature of collaborative efforts on the behalf of the student with a disability was unclear. Center reviewers gave states and territories a No with Evidence response when guidance and policy documents did not include statements about who bears the responsibility for the provision of disability services in the online learning environment.

**Question 7:** Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA?

One of the ways in which the IDEA legislation is designed to improve the educational experience for students with disabilities is by monitoring the state and territory special education activities through the use of performance indicators.[30] The online learning environment affords new challenges to the monitoring process. Center reviewers scanned state and territory monitoring documentation to identify if the information referenced online schools in special education monitoring tools or other guidance.

Table 2.7: Monitoring Schools/Programs

| Response | Total | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes with Evidence | 1 | 2% |
| Unclear | 6 | 11% |
| No with Evidence | 33 | 60% |
| Nothing Found | 15 | 27% |

**States or Territories with "Yes" Rating**

Florida

A scan of state and territory special education monitoring tools and other documentation showed that Florida was the only virtual program that was included in special education monitoring documentation. The Florida Department of Education Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services includes Florida Virtual

School in the monitoring cycle.

States and territories received an Unclear response because Center reviewers were able to find either self study or legislative checklists for virtual schools, but the information was unclear how these tools were linked to IDEA. States and territories that received a No with Evidence response did have special education monitoring tools publicly available, but online schools and programs were not included in the documentation. Center reviewers gave states and territories a Nothing Found response if the special education monitoring materials were unable to be located.

The state agency representative check revealed that some states and territories disagreed with Center findings because broad terms such as "local school district" were believed to cover all schools and programs. States and territories commented that online programs should not have to be addressed separately in the monitoring materials. In one case, the state noted that a general supervision document was being drafted that would include students with disabilities and online schools and programs, but that document was not yet available.

## Accessibility Issues

For many students with disabilities, learning and achievement is enhanced by the advantages afforded through online education. On the other hand, some practices are not advantageous to students with disabilities—just as they may be disadvantaged through traditional classroom curricular approaches and instructional activities. This domain focused on both the accessibility of the online offerings and the opportunities to participate in those offerings. That is, do the states or territories provide guidance or regulatory language that emphasizes the importance of ensuring access and enrollment for students with disabilities?

**Question 8:** Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensure online courses are accessible and open to enrollment by students with disabilities?

As more students use technology as a primary tool for learning, educators will need to ensure that provisions are made for students who may not be able to access technological applications because of their disability. Both IDEA and civil rights laws require the availability of methods and materials appropriate for use by students with disabilities in all learning environments. Digital learning environments should provide flexible options for colors and contrast, keyboard access, semantics and page structure, video captioning, and other supports, and these should be addressed when acquiring and implementing electronic curriculum materials.[31] Center reviewers scanned state and territory guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensure online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities.

Table 2.8: Accessibility

| Response | Total | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes with Evidence | 20 | 36% |
| Unclear | 20 | 36% |
| No with Evidence | 5 | 9% |
| Nothing Found | 10 | 18% |

**States or Territories with "Yes" Rating**

Alabama
Arizona
Arkansas
Colorado
District of Columbia
Georgia
Kansas
Kentucky
Maine
Maryland
Massachusetts
Michigan
Missouri
North Carolina
Oklahoma
Pennsylvania
South Dakota
Texas
Washington
West Virginia

Center reviewers found 20 states with guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensure that online course are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities. For example, the Colorado Department of Education Office of Blended and Online Learning describes technology tools with support structures that reduce barriers to learning for all students. See the associated text for example language.

*"3.02.3 The Online School has, or has a plan and timeline in place to accomplish, the technological infrastructure capable of meeting the needs of students and staff, and of supporting teaching and learning. The Online School uses a variety of technology tools and has a user-friendly interface. The Online School meets industry accepted accessibility standards for interoperability and appropriate access for learners with special needs. Technological support structures and programs are in place to reduce barriers to learning for all students.*

*The Authorizer has reviewed the Online School for compliance with the policies of the Authorizer, including compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines for web-site accessibility and policies relating to internet safety and acceptable use."* [32]

**— Colorado Department of Education: Office of Blended and Online Learning**

Center reviewers gave an Unclear response to this item for three reasons. First, the state or territory may have a policy that included technology accessibility guidelines, but the information was unclear whether the policy pertained to education for students with disabilities. For example, a state may require that state agencies only adopt and use technologies that conform to accessibility standards, but do not offer clear guidance that this applies to elementary and secondary schools. Second, an accessibility policy was located, but the information was unclear whether the policy applied to online schools and programs beyond technology offerings that might be provided in a "traditional" school setting. Finally, a policy statement was found regarding Section 508 compliance by the virtual school, but specific provisions—extent of conformance to 508 standards; exceptions, etc.—could not be located.

States or territories that received a No with Evidence response had documentation available in the area of enrollment and accessibility, but did not ensure online courses are accessible and open to enrollment by students with disabilities. Center reviewers gave states or territories a Nothing Found response when no guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes could be located that ensured online course were accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities.

## Parental Involvement

Parents' involvement in the education of students with disabilities was significantly altered with the passage of IDEA. Parents have increasing roles in the assessment, identification, placement, and goals for their children with disabilities. They also have specific avenues for challenging—through due process and hearings—decisions or dissent with service options. This scan item focused on the extent of guidance or other provisions regarding parents' involvement in their child's education and related services, and how they might have a collaborative role in the decisions. For example, parents might feel that online education is a potentially viable alternative to traditional educational experiences. However, parents might not understand that adopting or participating in online learning options changes the interactions, roles, and responsibilities of the partners in a child's educational experience (see Chapter 4 of this publication). Thus, to be an effective collaborator, parents may require clearer guidance and thoughtful reflection on the various implications of online learning for their child with a disability.

**Question 9:** Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of students with disabilities in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings?

When students take online courses at home or in a non-traditional setting, often the students' parents become the primary adult that provides instructional support and monitors academic progress.[33] Parents of a student with a disability may need additional support for the duration of their child's online course or program. This item looked for evidence that states and territories support informing, training, and engaging par-

ents during the duration of their child's online course. Examples may include access to a parent-teacher coach, a chat box that connects to a learning specialist, a handbook or guide for parents that includes troubleshooting, training in instructional strategies specific to the online learning environment, or structures that include regular correspondence with local school district staff and virtual provider among other supports.

Table 2.9: Parent Support

| Response | Total | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes with Evidence | 0 | 0% |
| Unclear | 6 | 11% |
| No with Evidence | 47 | 85% |
| Nothing Found | 2 | 4% |

No state or territory received a Yes with Evidence for this item. However, six states were given an Unclear response from Center reviewers. Unclear responses were assigned when states offered general (nonspecific) statements about parent communication with the online school on behalf of the student. Since none of the statements included specific supports for parents of students with disabilities, the information was considered to be indicating that additional supports for communication and collaboration could exist, but the clarity was lacking based on the available policy or guidance document. COLSD reviewers gave states and territories a No with Evidence response when communication and ongoing collaboration statements were not present in policy or guidance documentation. States and territories that received a Nothing Found response did not have IEP documentation available.

# Summary and Recommendations

The online environment is rapidly expanding and becoming a larger component of learners' educational experiences. In the process, this digital learning environment is affording many students new opportunities for completing their formal educational experiences and altering many instructional and contextual features in comparison to the traditional school setting. An important consideration is whether students with disabilities are also benefiting from these opportunities. Are they provided with equitable, quality, and efficient experiences, especially as compared to their peers without disabilities? One approach to answering this question is to review states' and territories' existing policies and guidance. The Center staff reviewed the existing regulations and guidance documents for the 50 states and five territories regarding specific features of IDEA policy and regulations as they are implemented for digital learning environments.

The policy review examined nine IDEA domains. Across these nine domains the results were quite variable. In general, Center reviewers had minimal difficulty locating those policies. However, only a few states or territories addressed online, blended, or digital learning in those special education policy or guidance documents. In other domains, the policies were nascent and loosely described as in the procedural applications for online providers, for example. Finally, some states and territories only provided statutes with no additional guidance for the stakeholder.

In three specific topical areas, the responses were quite varied and not so easily categorized. These three topics a) states and territories provision of fully online schools, b) data use and privacy, and c) graduation requirements are treated as special topics, warranting further elaboration and discussion of the existing policies. The special topics will be addressed in Chapter 5 of this publication. The findings suggest that State and Territory Departments of Education, vendors, online providers, and other stakeholders should prioritize the following areas for further development and clarification.

**State and Territory department policy coherence**. The findings suggest that the policies are not integrated or consistent. For example, 41 (73%) of the 55 states and territories scanned do not have clearly articulated guidance for what entity bears responsibility for ensuring special education services (or FAPE) are provided in online settings. Further examples involve conflicting policies found within a state's or territory's documentation because different agencies or departments within the state department had shared responsibilities for a procedure or documentation. Thus, stakeholders could be perplexed as to which agencies or procedures take priority.

**IDEA legislation covers all learning environments.** Each of the nine domains in this study touch on a crit-

ical element of IDEA. The online, blended, and digital learning environments require stakeholders to view FAPE through a lens that has a very limited research base. The Center's state and territory scan found that great variation existed on how states and territories are working to ensure how those critical pieces are being addressed in online learning policy. The scan also shows that limited policy across the country deals specifically with these critical issues.

**A noteworthy finding is that at least 75% of all states and territories scanned were found to have Unclear, No with Evidence, or Nothing Found in six of the nine items most closely aligned with IDEA:**

- **Reviewing IEP prior to online enrollment (48 states/territories Unclear, No With Evidence, or Nothing Found),**
- **Guidance to consider online learning variable when developing an IEP for online settings (46 states/territories Unclear, No with Evidence, or Nothing Found),**
- **Examples of appropriate accommodations in online settings (50 states/territories Unclear, No with Evidence, or Nothing Found),**
- **Clear statement of child find and identification considerations (52 states/territories Unclear, No with Evidence, or Nothing Found),**
- **Monitoring procedures for ensuring online schools are in compliance with IDEA (54 states/territories Unclear, No with Evidence, or Nothing Found),**
- **Guidance for considering parent involvement (55 states/territories Unclear, No with Evidence, or Nothing Found).**

One disconcerting finding is that at least 50% of all states and territories scanned were found to have Unclear, No with Evidence, or Nothing Found on the remaining three items:

- Required regulations for supporting students with disabilities in online settings (37 states/territories Unclear, No with Evidence, or Nothing Found )
- Clear understanding for entity bearing responsibility for FAPE/services in online settings (41 states/territories Unclear, No with Evidence, or Nothing Found).
- Ensuring accessibility for students with disabilities in online settings (35 states/territories Unclear, No with Evidence, or Nothing Found).

These findings can assist state agencies and other entities (e.g., local school districts) as they reevaluate their current education policies and determine how to ensure that the rights of students with disabilities are supported and protected in all learning environments.

**Parents need guidance/support.** Parental involvement has always been an important element of the IDEA legislation. IDEA mandates that parental involvement is a major piece of the student's rights and protections.[34] As the online environment continues to expand, clear and specific guidance and policy is critical to helping parents advocate for their child. The Center's state and territory scan was limited to publicly available documents that could, theoretically, be available to parents seeking guidance or policy information. Overall, Center reviewers found barriers such as broken web links, outdated documents, conflicting information, and lack of resources to be a potentially tremendous setback for parents and students.

**Limited research base.** The online, blended, and digital learning environments require stakeholders to view provisions for a free appropriate public education through a lens that has a very limited research base. As indicated in much of this publication, the available research provides limited evidence of effective procedures, practices, and policies. This limited research base makes developing effective, equitable, and efficient procedures, practices, policies, and support systems difficult. States and territories that have developed guidance have done so based on early lessons learned in online settings or have simply modified guidance from traditional brick-and-mortar settings.

An important consideration is that the scan reviewed existing policy and guidance documents: states and territories are continuing to update these documents. Overall, the scan was not designed to evaluate at what stage or level of implementation the policy was, to examine unintended consequences, or to determine whether policies were working as intended. Whether the outcomes of students with disabilities are improving remains a separate research and evaluation question.

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Chapter Three

# Special Education in Online Learning Environments

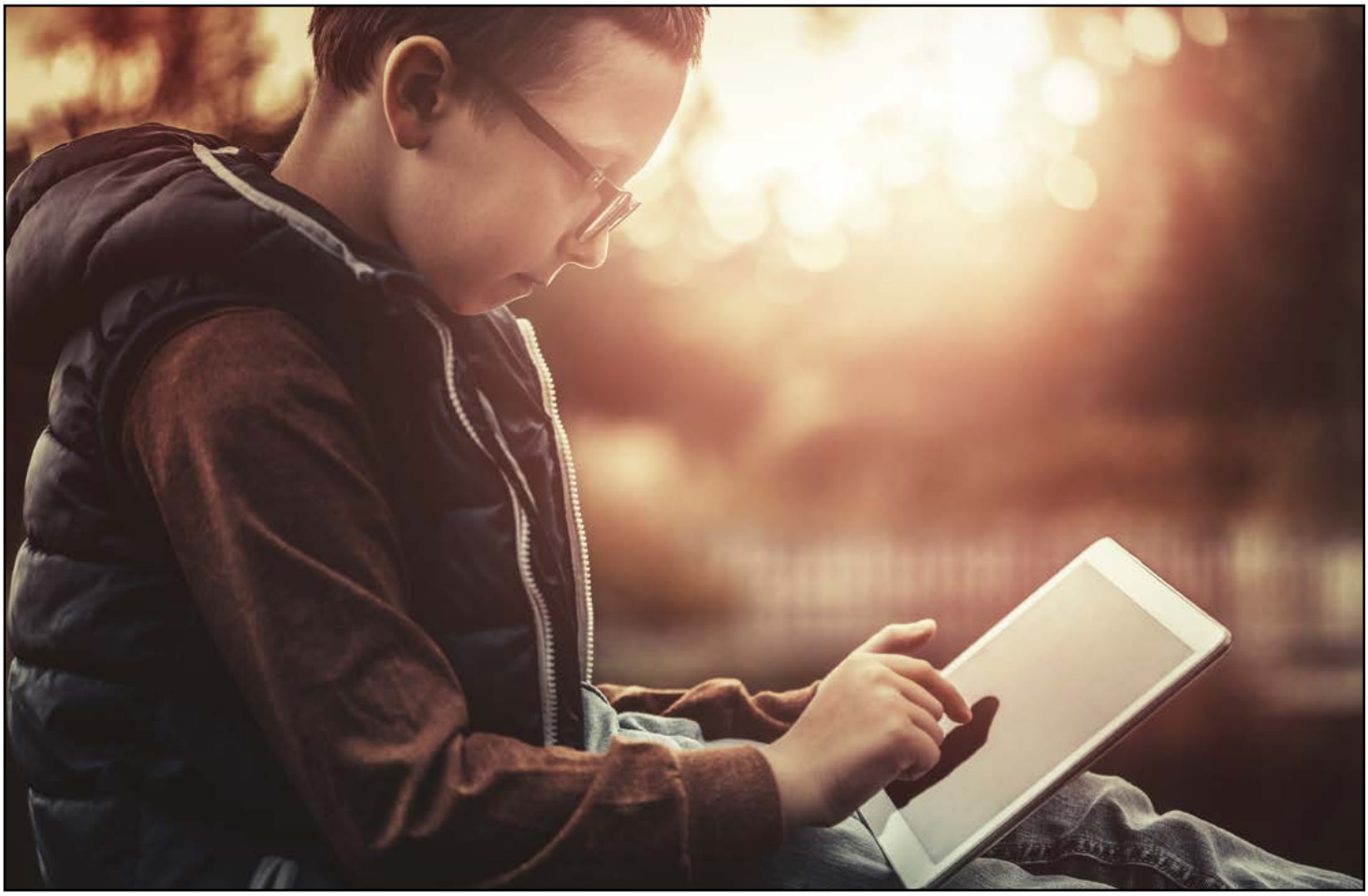
**In the United States, students with disabilities are served and protected under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Within IDEA, six core principles serve as the backdrop for the framework that governs policies, procedures, and practice.**

These principles are:

**1. Free and Appropriate Education**
**2. Least Restrictive Environment**
**3. Zero Reject**
**4. Protection in Evaluation**
**5. Due Process**
**6. Parent Participation**

Since the passage of Public Law 94-142 in 1975, districts across the country have been focused on adhering to the six principles. The recent emergence of digital technologies and online learning environments have forged a landscape unimagined when the principles were developed. In these new learning environments, the challenge for educators is to address the principles in ways that support and protect students in a manner that is, at a minimum, equivalent to what students receive in brick and mortar settings. For example, when a student is identified as having a disability, educators, parents, and other relevant stakeholders have traditionally drafted an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that defines present levels of achievement and establishes goals for academic and social growth. A student's IEP would follow the student if the student changed schools or even moved to another state. When students come into digital educational environments, however, questions arise regarding who is responsible for implementing this plan, or even if a plan developed in a "traditional" setting is appropriate in a digital one. Historically, responsibility for addressing these details lay with the traditional school that the student attended. But now, digital learning options may be delivered locally by national vendors or online schools developed in other states, raising significant questions about who is responsible for designing, delivering, and documenting special education services. Entities that engage students in online learning are presumed to share the responsibility for IEP oversight or manage it entirely, and even parents (who may serve as "learning coaches") now have more responsibility for IEP implementation. Addressing IEP mandates is one of many questions that arise as students with disabilities participate in online learning.

This chapter presents findings from research projects from the Center and its various partners. The first part of this chapter will present findings from a number on studies associated with the IEP and placement of students with disabilities in online settings. The second part



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of this chapter will present studies that were associated with supporting students in online environments. Understanding the intersection of educating students with disabilities and online learning is an ongoing process for the field and the Center. The research summaries in this chapter are not presented as a comprehensive view of practice, but rather as a preliminary examination and consideration from the Center's work to date. This chapter will support collaboration among educational leaders, practitioners, policy makers, researchers, and other stakeholders as they support students with disabilities in online learning.

## The IEP and Placement of Students with Disabilities in Online Learning Environments

Since the passage of PL 94-142 in 1975, special education practice in the United States has been guided by the principles of Zero Reject, Protection in Evaluation, Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Procedural Due Process, and Parent Participation—six legally guaranteed "pillars of practice" in special education. These pillars have guided practice and transformed the lives of millions of students with disabilities and their families. The adoption of online learning in the K-12 education system has redefined the boundaries of practice and the Center's research has sought to examine these principles in this newly emergent environment.

The provisions of FAPE, LRE (and the continuum of placement) as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and implemented via a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) have guided educational practice for millions of students with disabilities for 40 years. However, the Center's work and experiences have indicated that each of these safeguards has been impacted by the integration of full-time virtual, blended, and supplemental online learning into the nation's elementary and secondary education practices. That is, if an online school is recognized by the state, the school is required to comply with all federal and state

laws, rules, and regulations, including IDEA. In the best of circumstances, the digital learning environment provides an equitable environment for meeting the needs of all learners. Alternatively, the digital learning environment can add an additional layer of complexity to an already complicated system.

With the integration of online learning into the education environment, questions emerge, such as whether a fully online placement is considered a separate placement option within the LRE continuum services, or whether an IEP written for a traditional brick-and-mortar setting is suitable for a fully online setting. Several scholars have questioned whether accommodations and other services developed for brick-and-mortar placements are appropriate as a student migrates to online learning, particularly when that migration is to a fully online school where face-to-face instruction is limited or non-existent.[1]

The Center has conducted a series of inquiries and research reviews to investigate the development, implementation, and monitoring of IEPs in online learning environments. Online learning in K-12 settings generally falls into three categories: full-time virtual schooling, blended environments (where students receive some considerable percentage of their instruction online), and supplemental online courses that offer credit recovery or a content area focus not locally available. As previously defined in this publication, full-time online or virtual schooling is when a student attends school through a virtual interface and does not attend classes at a brick-and-mortar building. The Center's work (see research summaries below) has found that IEPs for these virtual settings commonly follow the same established considerations and procedures for IEPs in traditional brick-and-mortar settings. However, IEP services in online settings often require a clearer delineation of the roles and responsibilities of special and general educators, and IEP development and implementation often requires the creation of an IEP specific to that context.[2]

To identify the variables associated with IDEA, the IEP, and the placement of students with disabilities in online settings in particular, the Center has drawn inferences from a number of sources and presents brief summaries of findings.

- As highlighted in the Center's state policy scan (see Chapter 2), very few states or territories have regulations or guidance for supporting students with disabilities in fully online or blended digital settings. Specifically, of the 55 states and territories surveyed, fewer than 25% have any guidance for supporting IEP development and student placement options in online or blended environments.

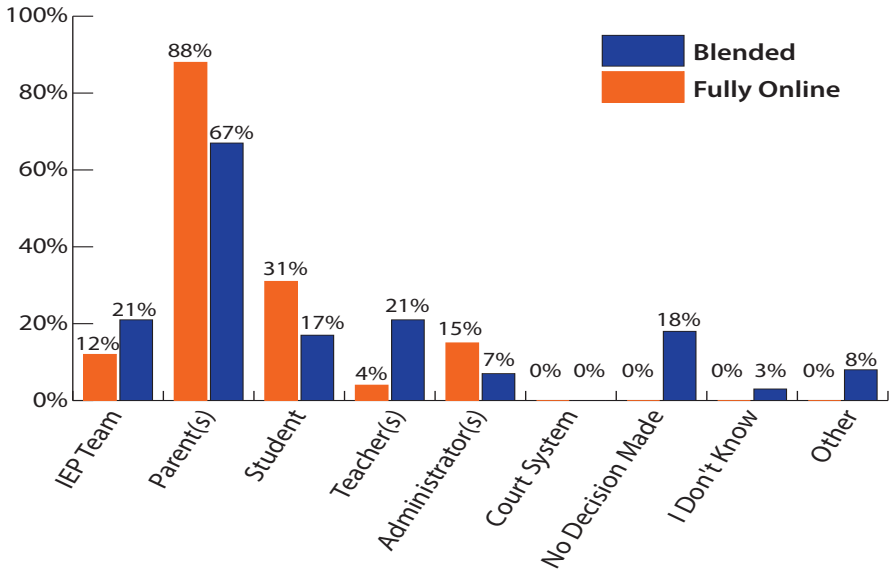
- In a recent study of IEP accommodations, Center researchers obtained a dataset that contained IEP information (including accommodations) on 225 students with disabilities in a supplemental program at a fully online state virtual school. The dataset included primary and secondary disabilities (if applicable), accommodations and other services, enrollment data, and demographic data about the students' brick-and-mortar assigned school and district, racial/ethnic background, and age/grade. A total of 152 unique accommodations and services were being provided to students who represented every major type of disability. Researchers then performed a content analysis of accommodations and services provided to students and grouped them according to district, race/ethnicity, and age/grade, in order to see potential patterns that might require statistical analysis to verify correlation. No discernable patterns were found.

  Next, a team of researchers evaluated the accommodations and services to determine whether they were applicable to the online environment and to classify them into major categories. Researchers found most accommodations and services provided implementation challenges. For example, the accommodation of preferential seating has no bearing in fully online learning because students are not sitting in a classroom. The largest category of accommodations (n=40) dealt with specialized instruction with a trained teacher. Even though face-to-face instruction was possible, no structure existed for providing it within this online course structure. Alternatively, students were able to select when they attended a small group session or make an appointment with the teacher to make sure that the promise made to families of "anytime, anyplace" learning was kept. Accommodations and services that were most applicable to online

learning centered on technology use, (e.g. use of a computer to compose instead of a pencil,) and audio-supported reading. However, these accommodations were not uniquely offered to students with disabilities, as all students enrolled online had access to them. This finding indicated that parents and students may struggle to discern ways in which specialized instruction, as mandated by an IEP, is truly taking place.[3]

- A Center-led survey conducted in a Southeastern state in the U.S. yielded information from 66 respondents: LEA representatives, general and special education teachers, psychologists, and other service providers. Responses indicated that the most prevalent disability categories of students with disabilities engaged in online learning were: specific learning disability (62.1%), emotional/behavioral disability (57.6%), autism spectrum disorder (56.1%), and speech and language impairment (53%). When asked to identify the top three student characteristics most relevant to placement decisions for students with disabilities in online settings, the most frequently-selected option was "learning needs that require support in reading" (42.40%). Following in frequency were "learning needs that require supports in information processing and conceptual skills" (40.90%) and "lack of engagement in traditional brick-and-mortar settings" (30.30%). [4]

Figure 3.1 Who Makes Placement Decisions in Online Learning




- Two separate nationwide surveys of parents of students with disabilities enrolled in online settings were administered in 2012 and 2013. In the 2013 survey, responses from 119 parents of students with disabilities enrolled in online learning (46 students in K-8 grades and 73 students in 9-12th grades) were recorded. Half of the respondents reported having students in full-time virtual schools and half in blended settings. Parents reported the most prevalent disability categories as: specific learning disabilities (29%), autism (13%), other health impaired (13%), speech and language (9%), intellectual and multiple disabilities (8%), and emotional disabilities (7%). In the 2012 survey, most parents had students enrolled in secondary, blended learning environments. These parents identified themselves as the most influential decision makers regarding placement of their students into online environments: In 2012, 88% of parents with students in full-time virtual schools reported making that placement decision, while 74% of parents reported this in 2013. Although parents of students in blended settings reported themselves as slightly lower placement decision-makers at 67% in 2012, these surveys consistently reflect the predominant role parents play in deciding to place their students in online learning settings. Figure 3.1 depicts parent responses to the question, "Who makes the decision to place students in online learning?" [5]

- An initial 2012 survey of state directors of special education indicated that they did not have the data to determine which students with disabilities received instruction through online environments in their states, with nearly half of the respondents being unaware of which categories of disabilities were being served. Those state directors who were aware named emotional disturbance, specific learning disabilities, and autism as the most prevalent disabilities participating in online environments.

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- In a 2012 survey of district-level special education administrators with 94 respondents representing all 50 states, 71% indicated that their understanding was that IEP teams made placement decisions, with 8.2% indicating that parents made those decisions. In a 2013 re-deployment of the same survey, administrators (N=37) indicated that IEP teams made placement decisions had dropped to 49% and 22% reported parents as decision makers. In a 2014 Center-hosted forum, six state special education directors (AZ, FL, GA, MA, OH, VA) reported that no uniform method existed for monitoring placement, persistence, progress, and achievement in online learning settings. State directors indicated that very few, if any, local education agencies (LEAs) had developed ways to collect and assess these types of data. Additionally, they did not have the capacity to evaluate the information based on student disability categories. All administrators agreed that parents, special education staff, and education staff responsible for the enrollment processes for online school environments play a role in deciding what environment is appropriate for students with disabilities, yet no effective plan for monitoring or assessing the appropriateness of these placements exists. [6]

## General Impressions

Online education is emerging across the K-12 system and parents of students with disabilities have a large influence on selecting full-time virtual placement as well as other digital learning placement options. Not surprisingly, a student's lack of engagement and progress in a traditional school setting is often identified as a variable in considering online placement potentials. Unfortunately, initial research indicates that what should be a primary driver of services—the IEP—often does not reflect the expanded context within which learning may occur: the affordances and concerns of placing the student in a fully online or blended digital environment. Moreover, while education personnel at the local district level have some understanding of the reasons that parents may choose to place students in online learning settings, the oversight, monitoring,

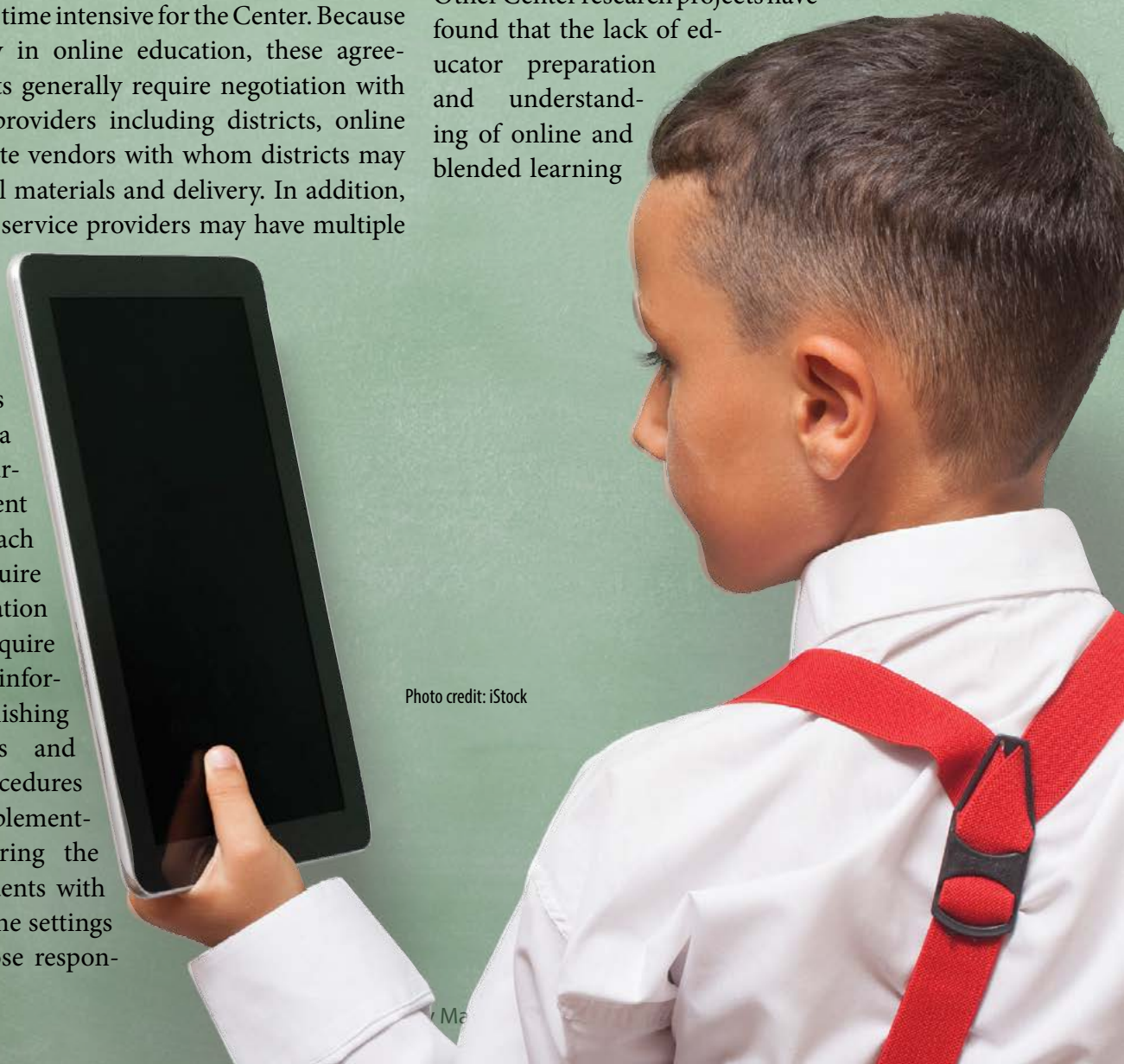
and reporting of these placement decisions are nearly non-existent, resulting in a lack of information available to the field. Overall, further research is needed to understand the complexities associated with placing students with disabilities in online, blended, or even supplemental online services.

## Initial Considerations for Policy, Practice, and Research

**Policy:** Initial research on policy related to IEP development and placement of students with disabilities indicates that more transparency is needed in how these services are impacted by online, blended, and supplemental placements. Specifically, the Center's experiences and work in the field indicate that very little data from IEPs and online placement decisions are being shared between local education agencies (districts) and states. Beyond basic surveys and leadership forums, obtaining necessary agreements to conduct even initial research has been labor and time intensive for the Center. Because of the complexity in online education, these agreements and projects generally require negotiation with multiple service providers including districts, online schools, and private vendors with whom districts may contract for digital materials and delivery. In addition, contracted online service providers may have multiple sub-contracting vendors (often for online support services such as ASR, glossaries and multi-media dictionaries, survey and assessment utilities, etc.), each of which may require a separate negotiation in order to acquire student-specific information. Establishing guidance policies and associated procedures for assessing, implementing, and monitoring the placement of students with disabilities in online settings could provide those responsible for ensuring that placements are appropriate with the information they now lack.

**Practice:** State directors indicate that both they and local education agencies lack the necessary data to support active decision making relative to what is working and what could be improved regarding the placement of students with disabilities in online learning. Participants in both the school superintendents' and the vendors' forums reported establishing practices that mandated an IEP review or revision once a student became enrolled in full-time virtual or blended schooling in order to address the contextual differences between brick-and-mortar and online learning. Procedures such as these, that have emerged from day-to-day practice, need to be acknowledged and considered when students with disabilities are enrolled in online learning, especially full-time virtual settings. [7]

Other Center research projects have found that the lack of educator preparation and understanding of online and blended learning



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is a primary concern of all participants in the field of practice. Unfortunately, no simple solution exists for supporting the education of students with disabilities in full-time virtual or blended settings. The initial work within the Center suggests that districts might consider what data exists or how to gather the data necessary for actively making data-based programming decisions about online services. Generally, IEP teams should consider the context, including the benefits and potential deficiencies of online learning environments, prior to placement decisions and programming options around FAPE. Districts and IEP team members might also consider how to obtain the knowledge and skills needed to make placement and programming decisions for students with disabilities in online settings.

**Research:** From descriptive studies, stakeholder forums, surveys, and other inquiries, additional research questions have emerged. For example, is it possible to interpret a local education agency's lack of an online learning environment among its placement options as a possible denial of FAPE for some students? Would an online environment be considered the LRE for students with health issues? For those students at risk of dropping out? Those students served under the juvenile justice system? Are decision makers — parents, school personnel, IEP team members and others — well enough informed about what the online environment entails to make placement decisions? These and other research questions persist. [8]

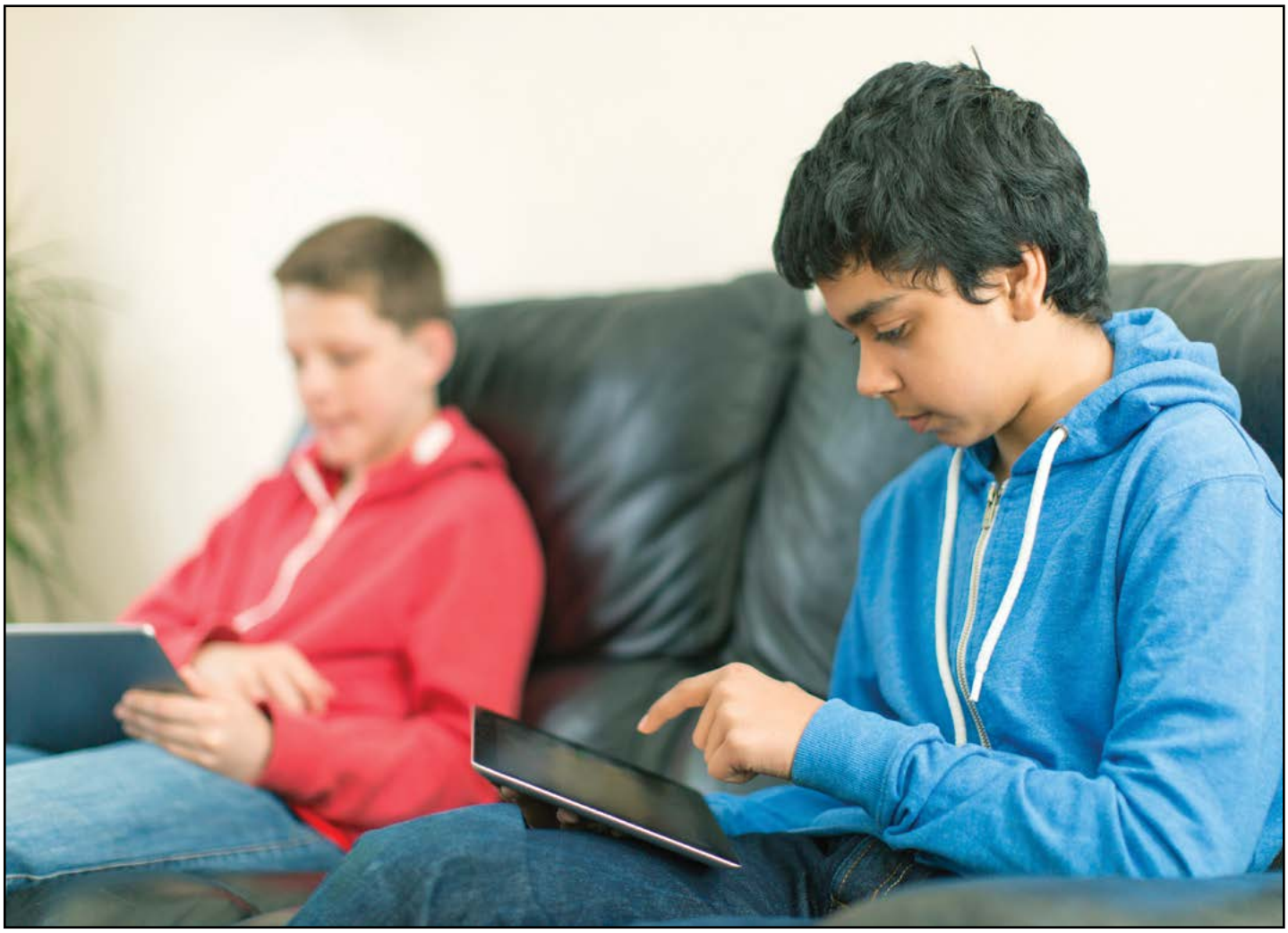
Conducting large-scale research projects in online and blended learning is challenging. The complexities associated with the lack of required data collection/reporting, multiple public and private service providers, and a rapidly evolving field of practice make such research difficult to initiate, conduct, and maintain. That being said, a profound need persists to understand the newly emerging relationships among the IEP, placement of students, and online settings. From a research perspective, developing agreements that provide access to the necessary data for answering critical questions and encouraging greater understanding across the field of practice is a time consuming, yet necessary, undertaking. The Center has identified that research collaboratives involving the LEA, the online school, and the online vendor (if different) is the recommended approach to gain access to all the necessary data and decision-making pathways impacting students with disabilities. Without understanding the students (demographics), their academic outcomes (achievement), and the resources and activities in which they engage in (system usage), only partial determinants emerge. Researchers are encouraged to pursue explorations that involve all of these components.

Importantly, the next section of the chapter will review findings that provide insight on supporting students with disabilities in these online environments.

## Supporting Students with Disabilities in Online Learning

### Introduction

All teachers need pedagogical and instructional design skills. With the rapidly evolving use of computers and other devices in their instruction, teachers should be able to integrate technology into their practice. Teachers using the Internet as either the primary or sole medium of interaction with students are additionally charged with implementing new pedagogical strategies as part of a reconceptualization of teaching and learning. As students perform digital learning tasks—absent the immediate supervision of teachers, parents, or other supervisors—students, too, must assume more active roles in their own learning. This transformational learning environment requires students to assume greater self-regulation of their own learning. For all students—but for students with disabilities in particular—self-regulation strategies cannot be presumed to exist and can be encouraged by the effective use of online-specific instructional strategies and learning supports embedded in online systems. [9]



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Research indicates that students with disabilities face a variety of challenges as they attempt to participate in and engage with curriculum via the supplemental, blended, or full-time virtual contexts of online learning. In particular, teachers whose experience and expertise is primarily with brick-and-mortar practices are often unprepared to transition to using online offerings. Effective transitioning requires attention to the context of the learning environment and, for students with disabilities, ensuring that proper support practices and technologies are in place. The Center's work confirms that full-time, virtual online environments are vastly different from traditional brick-and-mortar or blended learning settings. When these contextual distinctions are effectively addressed, many students with disabilities can experience considerable success in online learning. For example, the online environment provides teachers with an opportunity to collect extensive information about students' approaches and responses to instructional tasks. This information can be monitored in real time to allow targeted, timely feedback, and adapt the learning tasks to improve learning and performance. [10]

Center and other research confirms the need for online learning systems to be designed with the widest possible range of potential users in mind. This design involves focusing on technical aspects to ensure that instructional content and navigation elements can be rendered or acted on in multiple ways—auditory, visual, tactile, etc.—either natively via embedded options or cooperatively by supporting third-party assistive technologies. Further, many online learning systems offer mechanisms for supporting and/or monitoring student engagement, moving support beyond basic physical and sensory accessibility and into the realm of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). [11]

To begin to identify the challenges faced by students with disabilities in online settings and the factors that help address those challenges, the Center has explored a number of findings.

- During a Center-hosted forum of six state special education directors, participants indicated that they uniformly perceived online education as differing substantially from face-to-face practice, and that the integration of evidence-based practices in online teaching was doubly challenging. First, the directors indicated an impression that evidence based practices from traditional instructional settings are not assumed to be effective in the online environment. Because the online learning environment is a different instructional and learning experience from the brick-and-mortar classroom, a generalization of efficacy or effectiveness should not be assumed. For example, in the online environment, the concern is that the instructors implementing lessons are not always responsible for creating the lesson plans, and, as a consequence, more room exists for erroneous interpretation and lower implementation fidelity. Second, the most salient question that arose was whether empirically tested, evidence-based practices previously used in traditional classrooms are sound when transferred to the online environment. The shared perception was that the existing research is insufficient to support any virtual instructional practices as evidence-based.

  Participants also noted that changes in teacher evaluation procedures are necessary in order to hold instructors accountable both for teaching and developing students' learning abilities and skills (i.e., helping them become more strategic learners). They observed an increased emphasis on ensuring students are learning what they need to learn, but less emphasis on assuring that students have access to information and an understanding of how to acquire necessary information. As a result, some SEAs are beginning to address how teachers are delivering content in order to help them challenge the deficit of instruction on executive functioning.

  Collectively, forum participants expressed three important issues in addressing the topic of evidence-based instructional practices and the availability of strategy instruction in the online environment: 1) teaching of content, 2) teaching of executive functioning, and 3) trust needed between educators and the state and local education agencies in order to make the shift toward more learning strategy instruction. Integration of evidence-based instruction in the online environment was viewed by several participants as the most important of all of the forum's topics. They noted that integrating such instructional practices was not an issue discrete to special education, nor solely applicable to online or technology-enhanced education. The teaching of course content was discussed in terms of how the implementation of evidence-based instructional practices applies to instruction across students' grade and ability levels, content areas, and settings. Teachers feel pressured to teach to the content requirements and approved curriculum, which does not always include teaching specific learning strategies or executive functioning skills. Teachers also feel pressure to focus on curricular content as instructional time is limited and students' content knowledge is assessed by local, state, and national assessments (students' performance is viewed as an evaluation of their teacher). [12]

- Center researchers obtained data from 921 students in a large, urban, Midwestern school district in the U.S. These data were collected from students in grades 9-12 who were taking supplemental online courses as a means of credit recovery. English/language arts was selected as the course for analysis because this subject is one that all students study and is required for multiple years (often three or more) during high school. Selecting English/language arts for the data collection ensured that data came from a course in which students were generally familiar with the subject matter and the types of tasks that might be assigned in the course.

  Researchers analyzed the moderating effects of several variables on learning outcomes: 1) gender, 2) race/ethnicity, 3) free/reduced lunch status (as a proxy for socioeconomic status), 4) disability status (with a disability or without), and 5) status as an English language learner. In order to eliminate the chance of obtaining findings that might be based simply on reading ability, researchers controlled for this variable against a standardized reading score. Finally, researchers included the age of students in the analysis in order to ensure

that higher grades were not simply earned by older or younger students. Researchers found that males, on average, earned slightly higher final grade percentages than females. In addition, students from African-American and mixed racial backgrounds in this data set scored a higher grade percentage than students with other racial/ethnic backgrounds tested. Status as an English language learner and free/reduced lunch eligibility did not predict low course grades. However, students with disabilities—of all genders, racial/ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds—were more likely to earn low course grades than did students without disabilities. In fact, disability status was the only major predictor of having a low course grade percentage in the class.[13]

- Center researchers studied the accommodation actions of four teachers in three content areas (English, math, and physical education) and three special education administrators. These educators worked together as a team at a large, state-sponsored, online program offering full and part-time classes. Each educator participated in 4-6 research interviews during a three month period. In addition, researchers were given access to artifacts that teachers shared directly, or to which their school permitted access. Major types of artifacts included interaction records with parents, students, and teachers, as well as data from IEPs. After data collection was completed, educators gave additional perspectives.

  In this study, researchers examined the process by which accommodations were provided to students as they progressed through their coursework. They determined that the exercise of authority emerged as an important factor. State and local administrators and teachers all emerged as decision-makers, and each could use this authority to impact educational practice. However, further analysis indicated that teachers had few options for exercising authoritative decision-making. They were beholden to parents to engage with them (return phone calls/texts, etc.), and tasked with adhering to pre-packaged lessons in the course content. Teachers did report efforts to modify the curriculum and noted support from special education administrators who leveraged their knowledge of special education law to mediate between teachers, students, and their families. Ultimately, teachers came to rely heavily on the strength of relationships (with parents, students, and administrators) to support students with disabilities. Through these relationships accommodation decisions were made, often above and beyond what IEP plans required. Teachers made significant efforts to establish cooperative relationships so that students would be forthcoming about their educational needs.[14]

- Researchers investigated the impacts of traditional evidenced-based reading supports on digital texts. This study included 14 middle school students, each with an identified learning disability specific to reading comprehension. Students were asked to read two passages, both at the 6th grade reading level. Both passages were online and featured digital text, a text-to-speech function, and digital images to help expand the students' reading comprehension. Between the first and second passage, students completed an online lesson that introduced the basics of a visual support in the form of a graphic organizer that could be used to assist reading comprehension. The second passage embedded this visual support into the passage. Students were asked to complete a pre- and post-test for both passages.

  As the passages and items of similar reading levels were placed on the test forms at random, the two tests were geared to have equal difficulty. The pretest contained 10 items and 10 possible points, while the post-test had nine items and nine possible points. Consequently, the totals for both tests were computed as proportion correct. Results from this inquiry indicated significant benefits to reading comprehension with the introduction of embedded visual supports into the process of instruction.[15]

## General Impressions

In many instances, educators are having difficulty conceptualizing and enacting their new roles in online environments. Responsibilities may include:

- Designing digitally enhanced instruction.


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- Integrating evidence-based practices in the digital environments.
- Quickly interpreting larger sets of student data.
- Managing and recommending tools for learning, designing curriculum that truly leverages the capabilities of the technologies.
- Relinquishing some classroom control to the learners.
- Encouraging and designing systems to support student self-regulation.
- Explaining their roles and responsibilities to other stakeholders, particularly parents.

Powerful partnerships can emerge as teachers and districts integrate these new approaches. Districts, teacher preparation institutions, researchers, and vendors can learn from these partnerships by reviewing how the design of technology-enhanced, evidence-based environments can improve systems and practices focused on all learners, including those students with disabilities. [16]

## Initial Considerations for Policy, Practice, and Research

**Policy.** Research-based policy guidance designed to inform stakeholders about the selection and use of online materials, their appropriateness for use by all students, and their educational efficacy, is needed (see section on Practice). As these systems become more proliferate, maintaining an accurate catalog or listing of advantages, disadvantages, and high quality educational materials is a lofty goal, one that might be addressed via crowdsourcing or an expansion of resources such as the Learning Registry (http://learningregistry.org/), an

initiative supported by the United States Department of Education. Additionally, providing educators and parents with decision-making tools is likely to foster and increase positive experiences with online learning.

Beyond gaining facility and skill in selecting and using digital materials and delivery systems, teachers need specific guidance and mentoring to address the demands and responsibilities inherent in full-time virtual teaching. In blended environments, the expectations on teachers shift yet again as they are asked to incorporate online skills into face-to-face settings. As referenced in the state and territory scans, some states are beginning to offer (or require) endorsements and/or certificates in online teaching, and these initiatives should be closely observed for their impact on teacher practice and their applicability to a more broadly-embraced teacher certification policy.

**Practice.** Districts embracing supplemental, blended, or full-time virtual opportunities should thoroughly review the systems and materials they intend to integrate prior to investing large resources in the process. These reviews should consider various stakeholders and the systems and practices needed for supporting all learners, including students with disabilities and those students with other diverse learning needs, and the teachers who support them. Specifically important is investigating the usability and feasibility of different tools from the perspectives of learners, teachers, and, as warranted, parents or caregivers. Considerations should include how a system or tool will be used by a student with diverse learning needs (e.g., a student with comprehension issues, low reading ability, English-language learner, difficulty in socializing online with others, limited technology skills), in the context of the normal class or case-load of a teacher, and in consideration of a parent who has his/her own variability (e.g., might not understand the content, speak English, or have a good understanding of technology skills). Because educational policy is often far removed from daily interactions with children within the confines of a family or household, much of the responsibility will fall on the schools. Within the school—in blended and supplemental online settings in particular—teachers have the most contact with students, therefore, supporting and sustaining teachers in the process of teaching and learning in digital environments is critically important.[17]

**Research.** The Center perceives a need to explore how technology can play a role in helping teachers and related-services staffs build and maintain relationships with (and for) students with disabilities and their support system (e.g., parents) in online learning environments. Existing research also suggests the need for further exploration of pedagogical skills in the online environment. Additional research should also examine how the perspectives of culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse parents may impact student engagement and outcomes in online learning. Fostering online collaboration skills offline might involve having teachers and parents meet formally, and, aside from communication around specific students, to learn with and from one another using technological tools.

In full-time virtual (and many blended) settings, if teachers and parents share roles to ensure student success, additional research is needed: What prompts, sustains, or threatens the stability of role sharing? How can teachers and parents prepare to engage in interactions with students (and one another) that are different from what occurs in brick-and-mortar settings? What characterizes the home setting and parental involvement for students achieving high success in online learning? Additional research is also needed regarding university and college schools of education and how they prepare teachers for designing and delivering instruction in digital learning environments.

# Endnotes

1. Repetto, et al. 2010, Rhim & Kowai, 2008 and Cavanaugh & Clark, (2007). All raise concerns about the wisdom of adopting, in online settings, special education or service plans designed for brick and mortar settings. Greenway & Vanoureck (2006) re-articulate the significant distinction that exists between traditional classroom instruction and individualized support available in brick and mortar settings and the extent to which these are, or can be, implemented in online schools.

2. These differences in IEP development and delivery were articulated by the leaders of online schools spanning each of the three structural categories (full-time virtual, blended, and supplemental) in a School Superintendent's Forum hosted by the Center in March, 2015. (http://centerononlinelearning.org/publications/center-research/). A similar perspective was offered by a participant in the COLSD Vendors Forum in August, 2015 by a representative of a full-time virtual service provider who indicated that their operations involved direct responsibility for IEP implementation. The need to approach IEP development from a contextualized perspective was also referenced by Wicks, M. (2010) and Rose, R. M. (2007).

3. Independently, researchers rated accommodations and services, and then inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cohen's Kappa (k=.81), which is a very strong agreement (McHough, 2012).

4. IEPsurveyreport.pdf; COLSD.

5. Burdette, P. J., & Greer, D. L. (2014). Online Learning and Students with Disabilities: Parent Perspectives. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning,* 13(2).], Retrieved from http://www.ncolr.org/jiol/issues/pdf/13.2.4.pdf.

6. The District Administrator Survey Results indicate a shift in perspective from 2012 to 2013 with an increased reporting of parents as placement deciders. In a Center-hosted forum, state directors reported that placement decisions were far from uniform, that little eguidance existed for that process, and that local level practices varied site to site. Practices and Challenges in Online Instruction for Students with Disabilities: State Education Agency Forum Proceedings Series (Report No. 1).

7. East, B., Burdette, P. , Greer. D (2103), Perspective from State Special Education Directors on Online Learning, COLSD White Paper Series, retrieved from http://centerononlinelearning.org/wp-content/uploads/Perspectives_from_State_Special_Education_Directors_on_Online_Learning_2013.pdf
School superintendents forum; vendors forum; COLSD, http://centerononlinelearning.org/publications/center-research/.

8. http://centerononlinelearning.org/what-state-directors-of-special-education-need-to-support-students-with-disabilities-in-online-education/#more-1835.

9. Self-regulation challenges for all learners, and the extended challenges faced by students with disabilities are cited by Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner (2005). Coppa, (2004) and Patrick, Kennedy, & Powell (2013) also address the distinctions raised for students and teachers between online and face-to-face learning. Borup, West, Graham, & Davis, (2014) discuss the importance of adolescent self-direction in online settings and Curtis (2013) reviews the key role of parents as learning preceptors for students in full-time virtual settings.

10. Serianni & Coy (2014) found that students with disabilities taking math classes online were afforded a far greater opportunity for adjusting the pace of their work to their individual learning styles. Simultaneously, they also experienced increased demands related to time management and planning. Currie-Rubin & Smith (2014) found that in full time virtual settings the parents of students with disabilities were needed to commit extended time to support their learners. The context of online learning – where, when and how it occurred – was addressed by Smith & Basham (2014) and further validated by the Center's School Superintendents Forum discussions. Retrieved from http://centerononlinelearning.org/publications/center-research/.

11. Hashey & Stahl (2014) summarize the challenge faced by students with disabilities when faced with online systems not designed with these learner needs in mind. Bakia, et al (2013) emphasize the importance of addressing all of the Universal Design for Learning principles (beyond just physical and sensory access) in their review of a variety of online algebra courses.

12. Retrieved from http://centerononlinelearning.org/?s=forum.

13. Deshler, D., Rice, M., Greer, D. (2014, April). *Which demographic variables predict final grades for high school students enrolled in online English/ELA courses? Results from a regression analysis.* Presentation at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Philadelphia, PA.

14. Greer, D., Rice, M. & Carter, R. A., Jr. (2015, April). *"Like they're the only ones": Online educators providing special education services.* Presentation at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Chicago, IL.

15. A paired samples t test was conducted with proportion correct as the dependent variable. Students performed significantly better when reading the passage with embedded visual supports, t (13) = 2.90, p = .013. The effect size was large, d = 1.02. Rice & Greer (2014).

16. Greer, Smith, & Basham (2014) found professional development and teacher training opportunities related to online learning to vary widely site to site. Greer, Rowland, & Smith (2014) reiterated the importance of viewing the process of online instruction as distinctly different from traditional face-to-face practice.

17. School Superintendents Forum, March, 2015; Vendor Forum, August, 2015. Retrieved from http://centerononlinelearning.org/publications/center-research/.

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Chapter Four

# The Changing Structure and Roles within Online Education

**New technologies, media, and practices are changing the familiar educational experience for students, their parents, and instructors. This changing landscape has been described as creating a radical connectedness which includes shifting power from institutions to individuals.**

Education is but one sector where networked technology—specifically the anytime, anywhere connections offered by the internet—is changing how individuals relate to institutions. Stakeholders in the educational process—including students, teachers, administrators, commercial curriculum developers, technology companies, policy makers, and parents—are faced with unprecedented challenges, as well as opportunities. At the Center, along with its partners at the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), researchers with decades of experience focused on researching and implementing digital and technologically supported learning environments have been working to understand these challenges and opportunities, especially as they lead to promising practices associated with K-12 online learning. Four interconnected research interests focusing on students with disabilities and their families have driven this collaborative work:[1]

- Understanding the contexts (home, school, or elsewhere) that impact online learning outcomes.
- Identifying and promoting promising approaches for the design and delivery of online education relative to diverse learners.
- Exploring the data capabilities of the online environment to support distinct student learning needs.
- Investigating the unique expectations placed on educators as they provide instruction and administrative support in online learning environments.

This chapter explores key impressions for improving the educational experiences of students with disabilities (and other diverse learning needs) from various research projects and field-based activities across some of these focus areas. The first part of the chapter will address issues associated with gathering usable data to support online instruction within these systems. The second part of the chapter will review a few projects in which researchers from the Center have investigated the role of parents in online learning. Each of the sections concludes with overall impressions and then considerations for policy, practice, and research. As previously mentioned, it is important to note that research in online learning, whether full-time virtual, blended or supplemental, is an emergent field of study, and

that the represented studies, associated findings, as well as implications should be viewed as only preliminary. This publication is being written to inform multiple stakeholders of the developing systems of practice, to encourage greater dialogue across these stakeholders, as well as to support a greater focus on research in K-12 digital learning for individuals with disabilities and other diverse learning needs.

## Acquiring Usable Data: Challenges and Benefits to Compliance and Instruction

When state special education administrators are asked, "How many students with disabilities are enrolled in online learning, which of these students perform best in which types of environments, and how are they progressing?" they may be able to identify how many of these students were enrolled at the start of a semester, and whether the academic achievement for these students was at, above, or below the established standards. However, beyond basic initial enrollment and outcome information, they simply do not know the answers to these questions. More critically, administrators are required to provide (annually) information on the enrollment, persistence, and achievement of students with disabilities to the Office of Special Education Programs on their State Performance Plan (SPP), but the more frequently that students with disabilities enroll in full-time virtual, blended, or supplemental online programs, the more remote that information becomes. Not only is the information often unavailable, but, even when it can be collected, interpreting how to report the data can pose a challenge.[2]

**State Directors Survey 2012 (N=46)**

Does your state have data on which students with disabilities are receiving their instruction through an online environment?

| | |
|---|---|
| Online program<br>Yes: 24%<br>No: 76% | Blended program<br>Yes: 7%<br>No: 93% |
| Supplemental online course<br>Yes: 11%<br>No: 89% | Related services<br>Yes: 9%<br>No: 91% |

Table 4.1

For example, the expectation is that students with disabilities will be enrolled with their non-disabled peers in general education settings to the greatest extent possible. The SPP terminology refers to general education as "regular class." Is a full-time virtual, blended or supplemental course a "regular" class? How is that known? Beyond enrollment, persistence in a course of study, and outcomes, determining which factors actually promote learning—pathways, media, supports, activities, technologies, interpersonal connections (virtual or face-to-face)— is a more significant challenge.

The education personnel (at both the local and state levels) charged with reporting on the progress of students with disabilities struggle to access the information they need which makes reporting extremely difficult. Often, entities in possession of the relevant data sets may not be aware that the data they have collected could, when combined with other entities' data, benefit all of the stakeholders in a system. Others may be unable or unwilling to share the data with others.

Center research, including surveys of state directors in 2012-2013 and a state directors' forum held in 2014, indicated that the acquisition and use of student data is an ongoing, central issue. In particular, early research indicated that many seemingly basic questions about the recruitment, enrollment, retention, progress, and performance of students with disabilities in online environments cannot readily be answered using extant online data, either because the necessary data do not exist, the data exist but cannot be accessed, or what data do exist cannot be made usable for research purposes at reasonable cost (if at all).[3]

Two Center research efforts have discovered that the cost-effective collection of large amounts of detailed data on student behavior is a potential benefit of online learning environments. This data collection and subsequent analysis may create new opportunities for understanding student learning behavior and progress, as well as for providing more individualized support for diverse learners. Research efforts, including interview data from the stakeholder forums and online providers, and descriptive data from long-term, site-based observations, have shown that this data exists, and is, in some cases, readily available to local and state-level personnel

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(this availability is not yet the norm). It is reasonable to conclude that when learning moves from offline to online environments, more operational data is collected. Often, however, the inability to aggregate this data with student demographic information (disability type, for example) isolates its usefulness.[4]

The summaries below present, in counterpoint, two examples of the present state of data collection, aggregation, and reporting relative to tracking the placement, progress, and provision of services to students with disabilities. In the first example, students with disabilities are fully integrated into a blended learning environment where they received approximately 50% of their access to curricular materials, assessments, and activities online, using a personalized learning system that provides them, their teachers, and their parents with real-time, actionable information about their academic progress. The personalized system was designed to be interoperable with district demographic information and with summative academic tests.

In the second research summary, the progress of students with disabilities (and of all students) in online supplemental courses offered by a national virtual school was untraceable due to a lack of interoperability across the myriad of entities collecting that information. This summary is presented both as a cautionary tale and as an example of student data and reporting barriers that persist as the rule rather than the exception.

In 2012, the Center began conducting research in a reform district in one of the most disadvantaged cities in the U.S. The district served roughly 6,500 students in 12 inner city schools. Nearly all students previously attended chronically low performing schools. At the time of the reform district takeover, approximately 20% of students were identified as special education eligible. Following the first year of the district's operation, the identification of students receiving special education services dropped to 12%.

In its approach to disrupting the status quo, the district embraced a "student-centered" paradigm where pedagogy, assessments, support systems, and culture were refocused to facilitate student progress, and organized

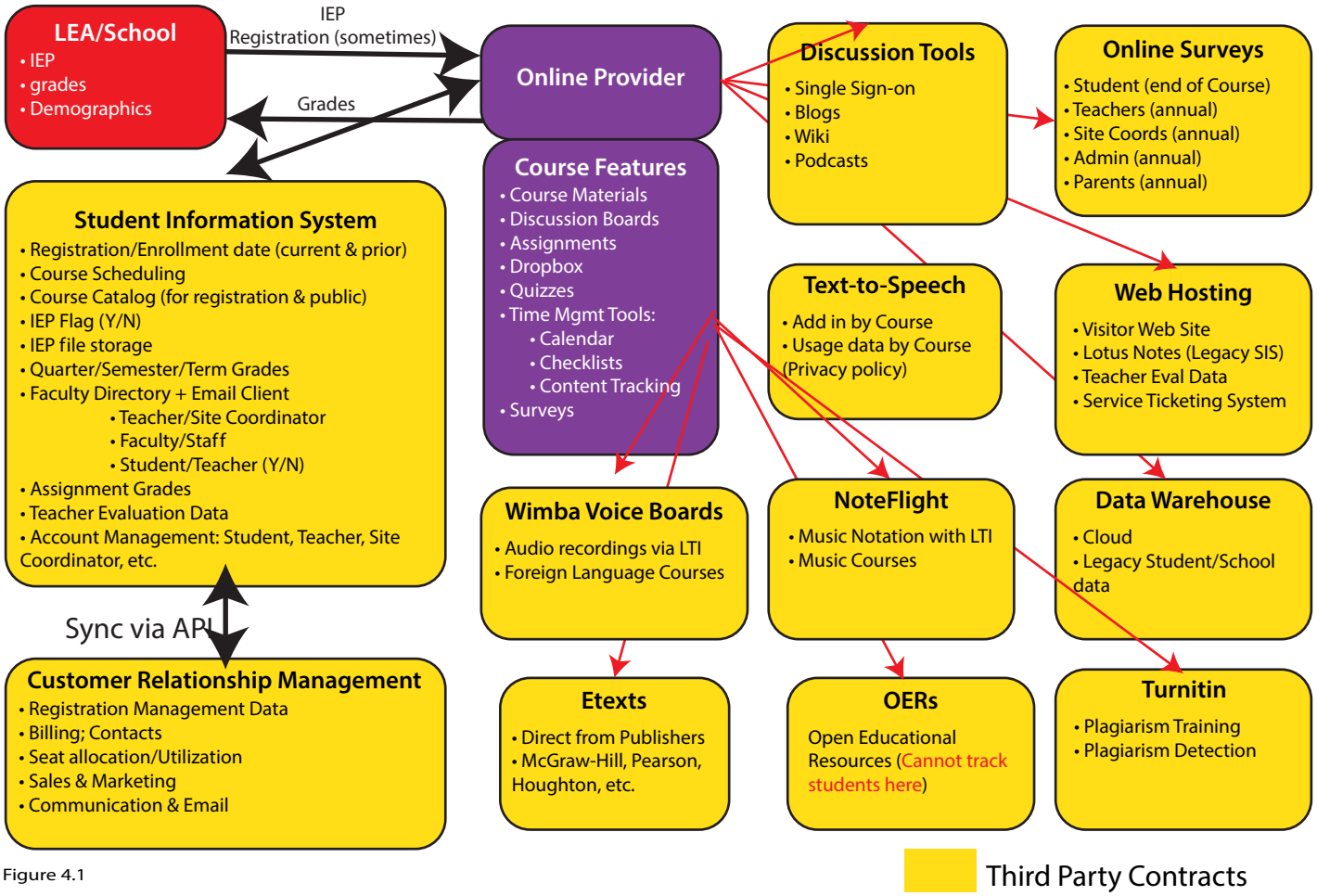


Figure 4.1

around mastery instead of age and seat time. In these schools, students became active contributors, assuming responsibility for their learning. Students participated in planning, setting goals, and producing evidence of what they had mastered.

Technology was a critical component of the district's blended curriculum design. Technology did not replace the teacher but rather was readily available to serve a multi-faceted role, including virtual instruction, tutoring, 21st century skill-building, and enrichment. Core to the revised curriculum was a centralized content delivery system—designed to support digital academic materials from commercial, open, and teacher-developed sources—across all elementary and secondary instructional areas. The system's architecture allowed for easy and flexible movement of standards-aligned content into and out of the digital delivery platform, and strong analytics with real-time access to daily progress data. This data tracking provided students and teachers with a daily assessment of student progress which allowed students to record their levels of interest, effort, and understanding. To identify design principles and practices, researchers conducted numerous long-form and short-form observations and interviews over an 18-month window, across multiple classrooms and other learning environments within the district.[5]

In an initial evalution of factors associated with academic achievement, data analysis revealed that a higher percentage of students with disabilities met two-year growth targets in English Language Arts than their non-disabled peers. However, the effect size estimates were small for all those differences. In English, having an IEP was found to have a significant effect: students with an IEP were 16% less likely to meet at least one-year growth than students without an IEP. In mathematics, students with disabilities showed a higher percentage of meeting two-year growth and at least one-year growth than students without disabilities. The effect sizes, however, were small.

The initial findings suggested that students with disabilities made substantial gains in both academic areas in this blended setting, especially in mathematics. Throughout all of the models tested, age demonstrated a significant primary interaction on the level of student achievement. This interaction was maintained across

students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers. Irrespective of these correlations, the personalized learning system employed in this environment was established from the outset to be interoperable with other systems containing student data, and these linkages meant that the progress of students with disabilities could be tracked and reported at a granular level sufficient to address local and state reporting requirements.

In an initial descriptive study of an online supplemental course provider (NE1) and their online learning platform (LMS), vendor (NE2), researchers collected and analyzed quantitative data on students with disabilities related to recruitment, enrollment, retention, progress, and performance, and contextualized these data with information from a series of surveys and structured interviews. From these sources a diagram was compiled depicting the primary information systems in which student and other usage and outcome data are stored. The intent was to extract a minimal "unified student record" from historical data as a pilot approach with the following types of data elements:

- Demographic: Student ID, IEP status (Yes/No)
- Usage: Frequency of login, time spent on platform, features used, pages visited
- Learning Outcomes: Assignment scores, end-of-course grades, course completion (Yes/No)

Figure 4.1 provides a visual portrayal of the data relationships between the student's "home" school (LEA: in red), the online school offering supplemental courses (NE1: online provider in purple), and the vendor's (NE2) LMS (and the vendor's 3rd party connections) in yellow.

Once the structural relationship among these entities was identified, Center researchers worked closely with NE1 and NE2, as well as with a third partner responsible for providing text-to-speech functionality (ASR), to develop a technical specification. This specification would call for generating a unified student record by compiling appropriate data from each partner into a single, centralized database as students progressed through an academic semester in an online course. Within this design, each partner would facilitate collection and aggregation of the unified student record from which Center researchers could measure students' instructional outcomes and use of ASR supports. The intent of this data aggregation was based on the assumption that, by combining student demographic usage and learning outcome data for IEP and non-IEP students and then applying evidence-based learning analytics, indicators associated with successful and unsuccessful learning profiles and pathways would emerge.[6]

While the creation of a unified student record was viable in theory, this was not possible to achieve in practice. The student data (demographic, achievement, and system usage) collected and stored by each of the entities involved in the design, delivery, and implementation of online courses was either not interoperable, not tracked at the individual student level, or not available for research purposes due to perceived student data privacy uncertainties. [7]

Many of the data generated by online learning systems (to date) are ill-suited to support research on student progress and the factors supporting, inhibiting, or neutral to academic achievement. For example, it is possible to provide most online services—eBooks, websites, multimedia—and online supports (e.g., ASR and glossary support) without recording any information about students, student activity, or outcomes. However, without some capacity to associate a student-level identifier to individual data points (clickstream, dwell time, entry/exit addresses, etc.) making the data usable for research is nearly impossible after the fact.

In this instance, valuable and important data were "siloed" by the complex interaction of technical, legal, policy, and economic issues that exist between organizations, despite the fact that they are all working collaboratively towards a common goal of delivering quality online learning opportunities.

## General Impressions

From the Center's research on students with disabilities in online learning environments, the management of student data has emerged repeatedly as a central issue. In particular, early research and reports from the field indicated that many seemingly basic questions about the recruitment, enrollment, retention, progress, and performance of students with disabilities in online environments cannot readily be answered using extant online data, either because the necessary data do not

exist, the data exist but cannot be accessed, or what data do exist cannot be made usable for research purposes at reasonable cost (if at all).

The first research summary makes a strong case for how the appropriate use of data and the design of the learning environment can support learning outcomes for all students. Nearly all students in the learning environment demonstrated sizeable growth. An important finding is that this district was able to achieve greater integrated data usage because data systems were built with a focus on personalized learning for all students. Educational personnel and students used these data and systems to support progress in a competency-based model of learning. The combined systems and practices allowed for needed flexibility in achieving learning outcomes. Overall, the researchers found that inclusive practices, data-based personalization, and student self-regulation were overarching factors in the design of the district's learning environments.

## Initial Considerations for Policy, Practice, and Research

**Policy:** This research highlights the need for developing cooperative partnerships amongst states, school districts, and industry to create learning environments that support and provide usable information about all learners. Within these digitally enhanced environments, data to support more effective decision making is possible, but the field's lack of understanding, interpretation of privacy policy, lack of industry data interoperability, and sharing standards and policies make data-driven personalization difficult. These new environments require educators to be more focused on how data-driven progress monitoring occurs. Purchasing requirements that require interoperability in digital materials have been enacted in some large districts—a step in the right direction. However, unless a more unified—even national—approach is established, local initiatives threaten to burden an already complex system with differing data requests. The data reporting requirements associated with students with disabilities offer a unique impetus for establishing a voluntary unified data standard that could be embraced by and offer benefits to both industry and educators.[8]

**Practice:** The unprecedented growth of technology in schools can be overwhelming and difficult to conceptualize within the traditional instructional and curricular frameworks. While the technology itself has the potential to dramatically shift teaching and learning, the greater impact may actually come from the data these systems generate. Combining real-time data collection from technology provides the potential to achieve individualized educational outcomes that may otherwise be unattainable, especially for students with disabilities and other diverse learning needs. To maximize this potential, designing environments that consider—from the outset—learner variability is critical. Personalized environments use the best of online education along with data to support all students in a highly engaged, often competency-based environment, where each student works at their own pace, on their own path, and has an individualized learning plan. Numerous school districts are already attempting to develop or implement these personalized environments. The ability of these systems to share data about student usage and decision-making should be a key factor in procurement decisions. Moreover, teachers need to be prepared to gather data, use data, and make data-based decisions. Currently, many teachers have difficulty in using data in the decision making process which limits their ability to implement more innovative approaches and technologies in the classroom.[9]

**Research**: Strategies regarding privacy, data ownership, and usage need to be researched using sample, possibly case study-based, data sharing agreements. A unified student record that includes demographic, usage, and outcome/achievement data linked to an individual student is a necessary requirement for realizing the full potential of online learning environments. Such records should include monitoring student progress, adapting instruction for diverse learners, and, significantly, conducting research on what works for which students and under what conditions, testing design assumptions, and identifying ways to continuously improve the system. The comprehensive progress monitoring that such unification would provide would be important for all learners, and especially for students in the margins (such as students with disabilities) who often require the most adaptation and support to succeed.

Much in the same way that the roles and responsibilities of state special education directors are impacted by the enrollment of students with disabilities in online

learning, the role of parents may also change dramatically depending upon the context and scope of their student's online involvement. The next section addresses some aspects of those changes that have emerged from the research of the Center and other inquiries.

## The Role of Parents in Online Learning

Across various Center research projects, stakeholders in digital learning environments have expressed that technology has changed both the *what* and *how* of learning for all students. Concurrently, groups and individuals participating in the Center's research (and that of others) have articulated difficulty interpreting how these changes align with or diverge from special education statutes. As a result of the contextual variation presented by full-time virtual, blended, and supplemental online learning, uncertainties exist regarding the roles of administrators, educators, and, in particular, parents, as students become increasingly involved in these different educational settings. Questions arise about how to optimize the design and delivery of curriculum, remediation, accommodations, and related services (speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, etc.); who is responsible for carrying out the various aspects of special education; and how the delivery of these IEP-mandated supports and services should be monitored and documented.

Although administrators, teachers and parents are hopeful that digital learning and mandates included in the Individuals with Disabilities

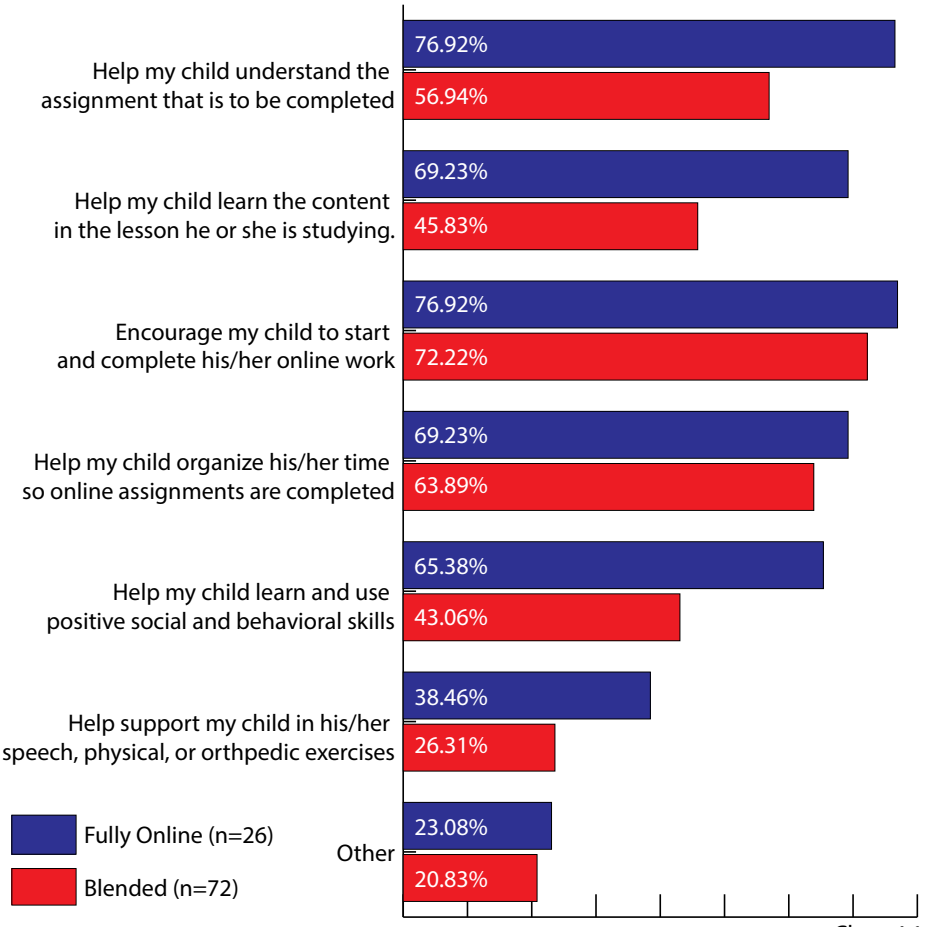


Figure 4.2

Education Act (IDEA) are essentially compatible, no consensus exists as to how that relationship is actually defined. Online learning, with its full-time virtual, blended, and supplemental variants, has introduced substantial contextual variability and students with disabilities, are, by definition, a highly diverse group with highly differentiated needs. Addressing IDEA mandates in these environments will require careful thinking around the practical and ethical issues at stake in providing services to students with disabilities in online settings. Similar to the inception of Public Law 94-142, identifying needed changes must come from a vast array of stakeholders—including parents.

In considering the role of parents, addressing fundamental distinctions in how online learning is structured and delivered become even more important. Online learning in elementary and secondary settings generally falls into three categories: full-time virtual schooling, blended environments where students receive some considerable percentage of their instruction online, and supplemental online courses that offer credit recovery or a content area focus not locally available. For students enrolled in supplemental coursework, the provision of special education services generally follows the established brick-and-mortar procedures and parental involvement may not differ greatly from what occurs in schools not offering supplemental online courses. Parent involvement in blended settings is generally more active since, in most blended settings, students are

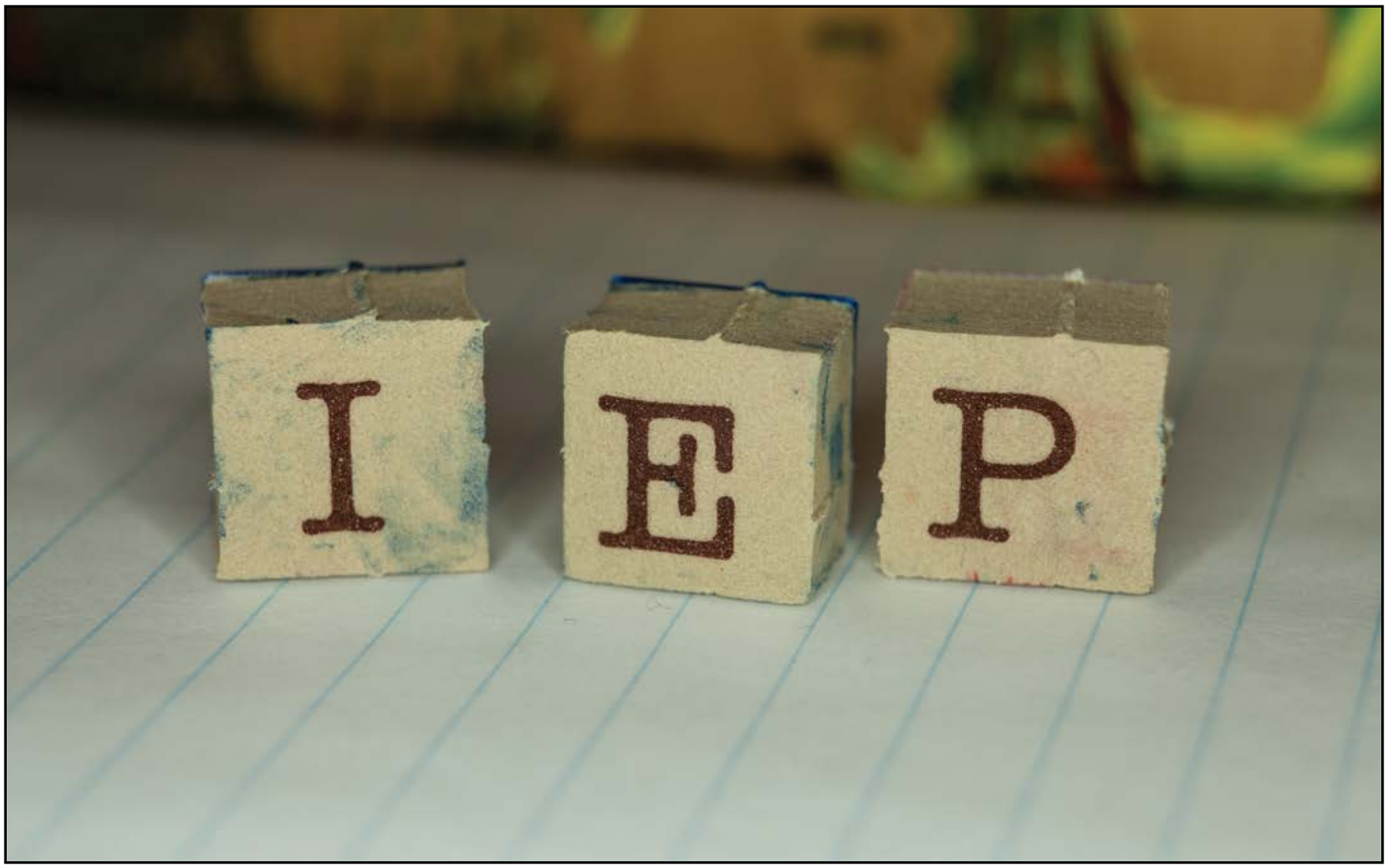


Photo credit: iStock

expected to engage in some online learning at home. Alternatively, in full-time virtual settings parents may spend 1–3 hours per day supporting their students.[10]

The research summaries below highlight some of the Center's findings related to the role of parents in full-time virtual and blended settings.

Center researchers deployed two parent surveys, one in 2012 and one in 2013, to different sets of parents of students with disabilities enrolled in online learning. Each of the 102 respondents in 2012 and 101 in 2013 addressed the question, "What role do parents play in their child's day-to-day online learning experience?" The chart below depicts the 2012 findings which disaggregated full-time virtual from blended settings.

The percentage responses to this question from the 2013 survey (49% blended; 51% full-time virtual) were very similar to the 2012 survey, and the chart above (from the 2013 survey) illustrates the differing levels of involvement of parents of students with disabilities in full-time virtual placements versus that of parents of students in blended placements.

In the 2012 survey, 38% of parents indicated that the most challenging aspects they faced supporting their students were 1) issues with knowing how to accommodate for the student's disability in an online setting, 2) issues with timing or scheduling, and 3) issues with access to school personnel. The 2013 survey indicated some substantial shifts. Timing or scheduling emerged as the greatest challenge (40%), followed by issues with knowing how to accommodate for the student's disability in an online setting (24%). Issues with access to school personnel dropped to 9%.

In the 2012 survey, 29% of parents reported that their child received no special education services in a blended setting similar to the 28% reported (full-time virtual and blended) in the 2013 survey. Since this response was not paired with information related to the provision of special education services offline, it is difficult to assess the extent to which no services of any kind were provided to these students—this finding bears further investigation. However, in the 2013 survey, 29% of 101 parents reported either "no" or "don't know" to the question "Is there a certified special education teacher

assigned to your child?" which also raises concerns.[11]

These results mirrored the impressions from a prior case study of six students with disabilities attending two full-time virtual schools. From direct observations of the students and caregiver, along with teacher interviews, that inquiry revealed that parents did not receive any formal training or guidance in how to deliver appropriate scaffolding to students.[12]

Researchers from the Center developed and administered an additional survey to parents (half of whom had students in full-time virtual settings, and half in blended settings) regarding: 1) their level of involvement, 2) how they accommodate and modify the online work for their children, 3) what benefits, challenges, and barriers are encountered, and 4) what supports or guidance the online schools are providing to them in order to educate their children online. Findings were drawn from 119 responses across the U.S. from individuals identified as parents of students with disabilities. The reported disability categories of students in full-time virtual and blended online learning were:

- Specific learning disability 29%
- Autism 13%
- Other health impaired 13%
- Speech or language impairment 9%
- Intellectual and multiple disabilities 8% (both)
- And emotional disturbance 7%
- Hearing impaired <3%
- Orthopedic impaired <1%
- Traumatic brain injury <1%
- Visually impaired <1%

Thematic findings from this research illustrated some of the changed contextual factors in online learning: 1) in full-time virtual settings parents often act as the primary teacher in their child's fully online education, representing a marked shift from teacher-led instruction to parent-led instruction, 2) parents are responsible for engaging the child, ensuring the child completes the assigned lessons, supporting the child when challenged, identifying and implementing adaptations, collaborating with the teacher to determine the appropriateness of the lessons, determining (with the teacher) the grade-level of the lessons assigned and the amount of work the student can complete, and similar components of the child's day-to-day learning, 3) good communication between the teachers and parents is a necessity in this process, 4) in some instances, the teacher's role in instruction is one of supporter, problem solver, and facilitator with day-to-day contact with the student, and 5) parent level of commitment and expertise appears to be a factor supporting student success.[13]

In another study, Center researchers conducted interviews with parents of elementary and middle school-age children with disabilities. Parents were referred by teachers in fully online programs (thus, the students were participants in a full-time virtual program). From this list of referrals, 13 parents were interviewed. These participants were mostly mothers who had some college education or full college degrees. Several male caretakers also participated in the interviews as support for the mothers. The students' disabilities included autism, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and specific learning disabilities. During the single interview, parents were asked 17 questions around four constructs:

1. Support for parental involvement from the online school program;
2. Parental engagement necessary for a child's academic achievement;
3. Their role in children's learning and academic success; and
4. Benefits and challenges embarking on online coursework.

In addition, two questions queried parents about their children's exceptionalities and how they came to be in their current online school. Parents in this study generally articulated that their primary reason for choosing fully online education was to avoid certain circumstances in their own local school, rather than a desire or preference for online education. Precipitating circumstances included bullying and a perceived lack of appropriate follow-through on disability service plans.

Parents considered the time they spent in close proximity helping children with their school work as primary evidence of their engagement. All but one parent agreed that their child's success depended on the active involvement of parents. These parents also acknowledged providing considerable instructional support (e.g., implementing instructional interventions), similar to

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that of a teacher. In particular, the parents provided encouragement, basic accommodations and modifications, and developed techniques for quick, informal progress monitoring.[14] A limitation to acknowledge is that the interviewees from this study were considered a convenience sample from the school. Thus the degree to which the participants may or may not be representative of a larger sample is uncertain. Nonetheless, the Center staff believes the study's findings are important to share because the findings are reflective of other informal communications Center researchers have had with parents of students with disabilities across the field of online education.

## General Impressions

Parent participation is one of the core principles of IDEA, and the rapid infusion of online learning into elementary and secondary education challenges previous understandings of how—and to what extent —parents are involved in the education of students with disabilities. Addressing the role of parents as active agents supporting students in online settings should be a concern of policymakers, school administrators, teachers, and families. Parents are an especially important source of support in full-time virtual settings because they will actively engage the child in completing the work. When parents are unable to or unavailable for fulfilling this role, online learning coursework providers often require, or strongly advise, the participation of another adult who can be in the physical presence of the child on a regular basis. For many students with disabilities, this additional adult presence is critical because too often the students lack the self-regulatory, reflection, and self-monitoring skills necessary to persist and succeed in online learning. The adult provides this support through their presence. The demands and requirements of fully online learning, especially for elementary-aged students, lead to the need for a parent or other caretaker to be present.[15]

Center research indicates a need to better understand how to optimize the role of parents working to support students with disabilities in full-time virtual, blended, and supplemental learning contexts. The increased expectation for parent involvement in these settings suggests the need for adequate training and support in this role. With respect to IDEA mandates and safeguards, while the survey results do not indicate how many of

the responding parents were actually involved in providing special education services for their children, the fact that few, if any, of them were certified special education teachers raises the question of how IDEA's "qualified teacher" requirements are being met.

## Initial Considerations for Policy, Practice, & Research

**Policy:** The role of parents varies considerably depending on the context of online learning, with full-time virtual schooling requiring more extensive parental involvement, especially if the students are elementary aged. Preliminary research reflects that approaches to supporting parents in areas of specialized instruction, online accommodations, and time management vary from one online instructional setting to another. As other Center research summaries have detailed, state-level special education administrators often have limited information regarding the placement, persistence, and outcomes associated with students with disabilities in online settings—information that is often insufficient for use in establishing policies. Alternatively, some states have moved to address the issue of parent roles by requiring a specific or "sufficient" teacher: student ratio in full-time virtual settings that enroll students with disabilities, or have established statewide policies for supporting both parents and teachers working with students with disabilities in blended settings. Clearly, IDEA safeguards should be considered across all three contexts of online learning to determine if and how these learning environments facilitate or inhibit the delivery of effective and appropriate special education services.[16]

State-level special education administrators who participated in a Center-hosted forum in the fall of 2014 agreed that a delineated system for parent preparation, support, and monitoring would be immensely helpful. As yet, states do not feel comfortable that this system has been developed or tested. In addition, another missing component is a set of best practices to facilitate a clearer understanding of each party's responsibilities. In addition, administrators are uncertain about shifts in responsibility for providing services or accommodations when the student is educated in a full-time virtual setting. In a typical school setting, the school provides related services and accommodations. In an online setting, uncertainty exists about those same responsibilities as some are beyond what the parent can provide for their children with disabilities.[17]

**Practice:** Not all online learning contexts require the same level of parent involvement, although each requires different parental roles with different responsibilities. Some online schools require parents to meet with teachers or watch an orientation or training video that includes modeling tools and applications to help parents in their learning support role. However, in some circumstances, little to no follow up occurs to ensure that parents understand these expectations. In the absence of any monitored orientation and support, parents may not be able to provide the accommodations and interventions necessary to implement their child's IEP with fidelity. One should also consider that many parents are not asking for this level of support, so the district and online school may not know that the need exists or may not have instituted a clear communication protocol for parental input into what training might be needed, or how to deliver it.

Center research has identified a need for those engaged in the delivery of online learning—a local, regional or state provider, a commercial vendor, or both—to provide an orientation program and on-going support resources for parents. These offerings might include instructional support, time management strategies, parent mentorship sessions, and parent meetings specifically for parents of students with disabilities. While some purveyors of online learning do offer these types of resources to parents, it is not the norm. Clear and easily discoverable procedures should be in place to identify who has responsibility to communicate with parents about their child's schoolwork. Protocols should be implemented regarding the sharing of student information, as should procedures for communicating with parents about their child's schoolwork and instructional expectations. Communication plans need to include accountability benchmarks appropriate for all stakeholders, including goal setting, progress monitoring, changes in interventions or placements, participants' respective roles, information flow, and dispute resolution. Where possible, parents should be offered the opportunity to communicate with other parents of enrolled students with and without disabilities to form social support networks. Beyond access to these resources, parents could benefit from assistance in facilitating these "parent peer" interactions. Video and phone conferencing, email and text

communications would expand the support options available to parents.

**Research:** From a research perspective, the Center perceives a need to explore how technology can play a role in helping instructors and related services staff build and maintain relationships with and for students with disabilities and those persons (e.g., parents) who support them in online learning environments. Existing research also suggests that further exploration of the pedagogical skills required by teachers, parents, or other "learning coach" adults is warranted. Additional research should also examine how the perspectives of culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse parents may impact student engagement and outcomes in online learning. In full time virtual and many blended settings parents and teachers may share (or exchange) roles related to instruction, and additional research is needed to investigate the impact of these changes on student achievement. For example, what prompts, sustains, or threatens the stability of role sharing? How can teachers and parents prepare to engage in interactions with students (and one another) that are different from what occurs in brick-and-mortar settings? What characterizes the home setting and parental involvement for students achieving high success in online learning?

## Endnotes

1. Basham, Smith, Greer, and Marino, 2013; Deshler, Rose, & East, 2011

2. The State Performance Plan (https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/bapr/2008/2partbmeatable081308.pdf) includes 20 indicators regarding the education of students on IEPs. For example, Indicator 5 asks states to identify the percent of children with IEPs aged 6-21 who have been: a) removed from regular class less than 21% of the day, b) removed from regular class greater than 60% of the day, or c) served in public or private separate schools, residential placements, or homebound or hospital placements. (20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(A))

3. The State Directors Forum indicated that data on the enrollment, persistence, progress and achievement of students with disabilities in online education was the most pressing need. Retrieved from http://centerononlinelearning.org/whats-important-to-state-departments-of-education/.

4. State Leaders Forum, November, 2014; School Superintendents Forum, March, 2015; Vendor Forum, August, 2015. Retrieved from http://centerononlinelearning.org/publications/center-research/.

5. During initial observations, researchers used an open observation technique to identify common principles and practices across settings. In later observations, the researchers used a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Instructional Observation Instrument to align practices to the UDL framework. In the process of identifying design principles and practices, researchers also interviewed both instructional staff and students to determine how these principles and practices were operationalized on a day-to-day basis within the environment. To investigate the factors associated with student outcomes, researchers accessed 2012-2013 school year data. These data included all student and school-wide data associated with academic performance, behavioral incidences, and enrollment. These data also included student demographic information, including but not limited to disability status.

6. Research by Means, et al. (2014) and Norris, et al. (2008) reference the potential benefits of student data analytics to enhance the accuracy of measuring learning trajectories. They note the potential benefits of combining student demographics, and achievement and usage data, to create an overview of how these factors are interrelated (how learning environments act on students and how students act on environments), and to help determine effective instructional pathways customized to learner needs.

7. The effort was both significant and informative—significant because the study revealed the hidden complexities related to the management, access to, and use of student data, and informative because the study exposed, in this circumstance, the existing technical, legal, policy, intellectual property and economic barriers that currently block the ability of any stakeholder (including students, parents, instructors, policymakers, and online providers) from using existing information to evaluate materials, policies, procedures, and practices.

8. Both Anderson (2008) and Wilson & Stacey (2004) emphasize the potential of teacher/student interaction and close progress monitoring opportunities available in online learning environments to build on real-time data that may otherwise be difficult or impossible to collect in non-digital settings.

IMS Global Accelerates Adoption of Integrated Digital Curriculum. Retrieved from http://gettingsmart.com/2015/09/ims-global-accelerates-adoption-of-integrated-digital-curriculum/.

Big Districts Pressure Publishers on Digital-Content Delivery. Retrieved from http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/12/03/13techstandards.h34.html.

9. Basham, Smith, Greer, and Marino (2013) argue that while technology is a powerful vehicle for delivering instruction and monitoring student progress, instructional goals and curricular design principles continue to be critical factors for ensuring student success. Means, et al., (2011) address the need for teachers to develop skills in the timely use of student data to inform instructional decision-making.

10. Burdette & Greer (2014) noted wide differences in parent involvement and student support with 27% of the parents in their study spending three hours or more per day assisting students in full-time virtual settings, especially if the child was elementary-age. A participant, who represented a full-time virtual service provider, in the COLSD Vendors Forum offered a similar perspective in August 2015 and indicated considerable parent involvement for parents of students with or without IEPs. The need to address parent responsibilities from a contextualized perspective was also referenced by Wicks, (2010) and Rose, (2007). For many full-time virtual schools, "learning coach" is the title given to the parents of enrolled children. While little is known about what learning coaches do to support their children as students, or how they do it (Black, 2009), most of the available information comes from descriptive literature (Bogden, 2003; Butler, 2010; Van Dusen, 2009). Some information can be found in literature produced by third-party curriculum vendors (e.g., K12.com, connectionsacademy.com).

11. COLSD Parent Surveys 2012 and 2013.

12. IDEA, 2004 §300.18 requires special education teachers to meet specific standards and engage in professional development that is sustained and intensive. Retrieved from http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/,root,regs,300,A,300%252E18. In December 2012, the Center established a collaborative relationship with two fully online schools, one located in the West and one in the Midwest regions of the U.S. Researchers examined what actually happens when students with disabilities participate within these fully online learning environments. To do so, researchers studied six children with disabilities, along with their parents and their teachers, using multiple methods of gathering contextual information: 1) two structured observations of each student while engaged in online course work (e.g., in their homes), 2) 30-60 minute interviews with students, parents, teachers, support staff, and administrators, and 3) 60-90 minute focus groups with parents, teachers, administrators, and support staff. In addition, information on student achievement, disability, and engagement was collected. Additional similar findings were reported in Coy, et al. (2014).

13. The population of students in online learning includes all of those found in brick-and-mortar settings, including students with disabilities (Barbour, et al. (2013). The opinions, perceptions, and orientation of parents to their students' education is as important in online environments as it is in "traditional" school settings (Black, 2009). Significantly, the role of parents in online settings expands to become that of a "learning coach" (Burdette & Greer, 2014, and Klein, 2006). While little research assessed the academic outcomes of more intensive parent instruction of students with disabilities in full-time virtual or blended environments, the preliminary impressions from the Center indicate general parental satisfaction. The extent to which this satisfaction correlates with student academic achievement is unknown.

14. Smith & Burdette (2013), Parent Engagement in K-12 Instruction; COLSD.

15. Borup, West, Graham, & Daves, 2014; Hasler-Waters, Menchaca, & Borup, 2014

16. Retrieved from http://www.doe.mass.edu/odl/cmvs/ and http://www.ncvps.org/index.php/ocs-blended-learning/.

17. Retrieved from http://centerononlinelearning.org/wp-content/uploads/SEA_Topic_2_Summary_May_2015.pdf.

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Chapter Five

# Special Topics: Access to Online Education, Data and Privacy, and Graduation

**To make online learning more accessible, engaging, and effective for K-12 students with disabilities, the Center has reached out to the education community to make the Center's projects and activities truly reflective of stakeholder needs.**

Center researchers view stakeholders as teachers, parents, students, administrators, online learning product developers, and policy-makers at the program, state, district, and school level. Through its projects and activities, the Center is creating research-based guidance, solutions, scholarly reports, webinars, white papers, issue briefs, research/evidence-based models, prototypes, or enhancements (e.g., embedded analytics) in online products to help stakeholders navigate the changes and fluctuations in online learning. As stated earlier, the Center hopes this publication supports further collaboration among stakeholders as they support the betterment of online education for all learners, but especially those learners with diverse learning needs and disabilities.

As is reflected in the preceding chapters, the Center's charge has been broad and has highlighted questions from across various stakeholder groups. Over time our research has found that the various questions converge into a shared set of issues that impact each stakeholder group in distinct ways. Specifically researchers have found it important to focus on students with disabilities and their families, the personnel and institutions in which these students are being served, and the digital materials, delivery systems, and practices that support learner interactions within online learning environments. Understanding this focus, throughout the writing of this publication and in conducting the policy scan (see Chapter 2) three important topics emerged that bear further discussion: 1) Access to Online Education, 2) Student Data and Privacy, and 3) Graduation. The largest part of this chapter will focus on providing more perspective on each of these areas. The chapter will end with a summary and provide some considerations for the future of online education.

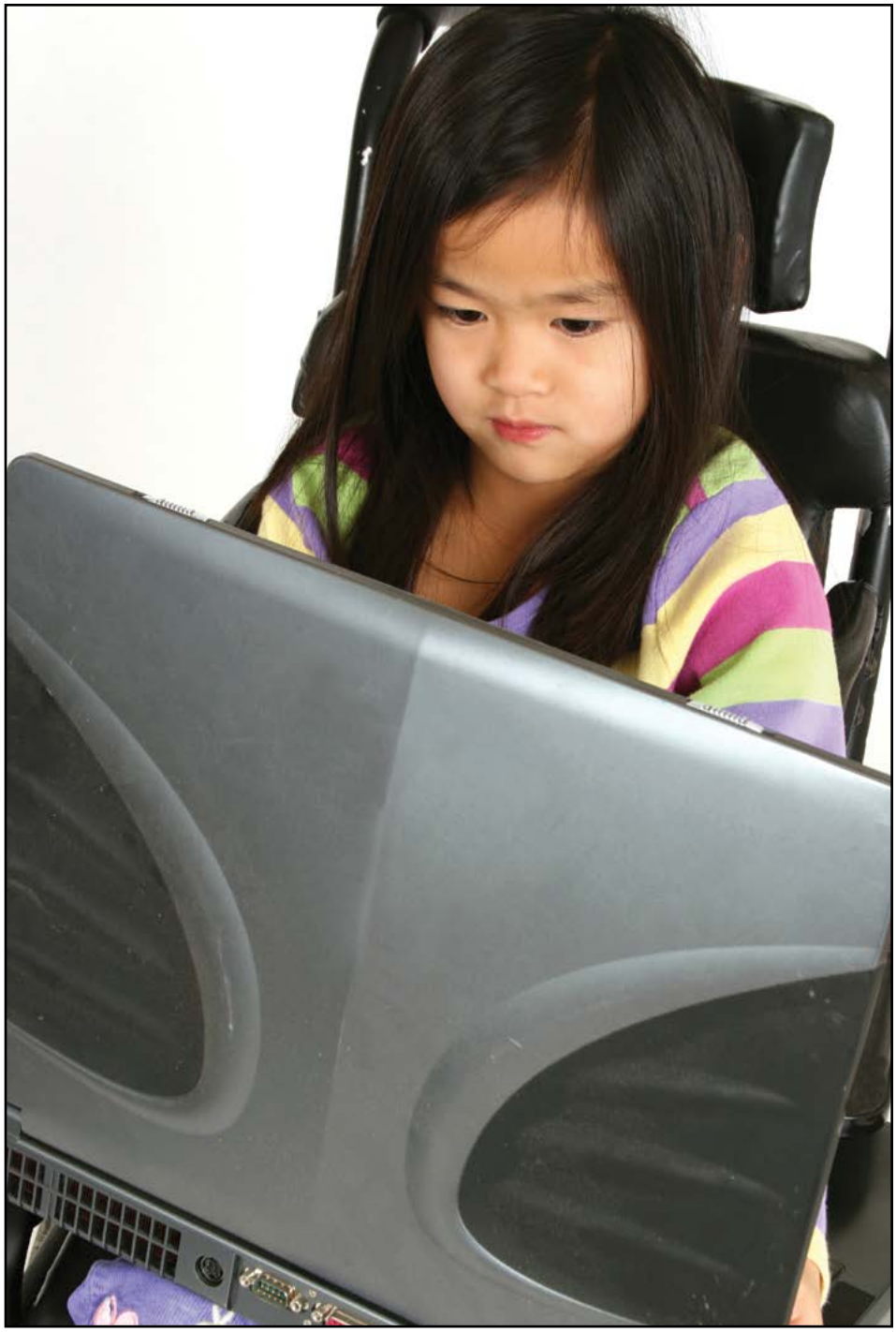
## Access to Online Education

*Does the state have a fully online school?* This appears to be a simple question. However, the variance in practices of online education directs a need for much greater attention to what is actually the nuanced nature of this question. State departments of education generally oversee educational components including the specification of curriculum standards, teacher certification, accreditation, textbook adoption, benchmarks of proficiency, and other issues. During the rapid expansion

of online education, state departments of education have faced new challenges. The controls afforded by the states could be compromised by for-profit companies that are making online courses available to K-12 students outside of the state's regulations and protections. A deeper understanding—by all educational stakeholders—of online learning is critical to helping parents and students make informed decisions.

When Center researchers decided to include a response item on the 2015 Center scan that asked if states had fully online schools, the initial rationale was that such information would provide respondents with a foundation from which to respond to the subsequent items. In addition, the Keeping Pace[1] report was a source of initial information as to whether or not a state had a fully online school and helped reviewers locate primary information about online activity in states. Keeping Pace reported that 30 states and one territory had fully online schools in operation. In order to verify the Keeping Pace findings, a secondary source was deemed necessary for confirmation and thus this scan included the item.

Based on scan results, Center reviewers found an additional eight states that offered at least one fully online option. Each of these additional eight states were identified as having fully online options because an independent online vendor was operational in each state. When representatives from states were asked to verify Center scan answers through the state agency check, there were nine states that disagreed with the Center's findings.



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Specifically, some state respondents indicated that they did not consider independent vendors offering fully online options in their states sufficient reason to answer affirmatively to that question. In other words, while vendors offer (and market) a fully online school option in a state, and while students may be attending school in an online setting, state educational agency officials indicated that fully online education was not taking place in their state (or territory). Thus, a vendor might enroll students in that state, but with no guarantee that the offerings had been approved by state officials. Moreover, as parents are interested in having their children engage with online curriculum, the traditional boundaries of the state education agency may play little or no con-

sideration in their enrollment process. The delivery of education irrespective of state boundaries or borders and the participation of students in online learning activities in locations that state policies do not technically acknowledge provides an emerging and foreseeable complexity for various stakeholders. The Center is concerned these complexities could give rise to a lapse of appropriate educational services and supports being delivered to all students, especially those with disabilities.

The lack of state oversight of vendor-provided online learning could potentially confuse parents who are seeking an online option for their children's schooling. Part of the potential appeal of an online curriculum offered through a vendor is that the standardization does not appear as constraining as it may in a brick-and-mortar school setting. In an online setting, learners can engage with curriculum with—theoretically—increased efficiency (i.e., learners can log on and complete lessons at their own pace, in a physical location of their own choosing).[2] Online learning may be especially appealing for parents of students with disabilities whose dissatisfaction with the services provided to their children in traditional schools has been well documented.[3] In addition, research has also shown growing dissatisfaction of parents of racial, cultural and/or linguistic minority students[4] and/or students who live in rural areas[5] with the traditional school setting.

This situation is potentially confusing for parents or other stakeholders when vendors have the technical capability to offer a course but not the endorsement of state educational agencies, who typically have extensive accreditation, review, and monitoring processes not for just schools, but individual courses offered within schools—be they online or traditional. While parents are likely very dedicated to finding education and other services for their children, it is unlikely that they are savvy about the state approval process. After all, when a vendor advertises availability in their state, why would a parent question the vendor's legitimacy in the eyes of the state?

An additional source of potential confusion to parents is how they should distinguish among a vendor's offerings. Technical distinctions exist among online schools, online programs, and online courses that state educational agencies and vendors make, but these distinctions are not readily apparent to parents. The immediacy that a parent feels in seeking a better situation for their child may deter them from asking questions about the courses, curricula, and the provider's legitimacy.

This confusion is exacerbated by the fact that many parent resources found on state department websites deal mostly with issues about technology and preparing their children for the differences in online and traditional learning. Findings from the 2015 Center state and territory scan item affirm the paucity of information about choosing curriculum vendors:

> ***Does the state have documentation or technical assistance established to help districts, teachers, and parents identify support structures for SWDs in fully online, blended, and digital learning settings?***

In the scan results, none of the states or territories had documentation or technical assistance established to help districts, teachers, and parents identify support structures for students with disabilities in fully online, blended, and digital learning settings.

More guidance is needed to ensure that parents are able to ask the right questions that help them determine if and how student protections are in place for their children. For example, the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) *A Parent's Guide to Choosing the Right Online Program*[6] provides a series of checklists for parents to use during the selection process.[1] The parental guide provides contextual information and eight checklists including: Getting Started with Online Learning, Accreditation and Transferability of Credits, Effectiveness, Governance, Curriculum, Instruction, Support Services, and Socialization.[7] In addition, regional accrediting agencies are cited in an effort to encourage parents to review how their state's accreditation ensures high standards are adhered to in online programs. It is thought that states and vendors should have more transparency with the various items associated with this checklist. For instance, establishing a national database with these (and potentially other) associated checkpoints would be an initial step in supporting greater transparency among all stakeholders.

## Student Data and Privacy

The use of student data for decision-making (within a school for tracking student progress and for compliance reporting) has grown steadily with the increase of technological innovation and legislation mandating accountability in schools.[8] Student data may be obtained from a variety of sources including teachers, academic records, assessment results, demographic information, and student outcomes.[9] When educators, administrators, and parents work together to ensure that student data is available, complete, relevant, secure, effective, communicative, supportive, and used for continual improvement, a more complete picture of how to support students' learning can occur.[10] The specific nature of student data and who can access these data is gaining national attention as educational options continue to expand, particularly through digital learning.

The digital learning environment adds a new layer of complexity to the use of student data. A growing concern is that student data in these environments does not meet federal or state regulations for security. Thus, data privacy issues have been identified as a major barrier to effective online learning.[11]

Two major federal laws impact the use of student data: The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prohibits the disclosure of education records, and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), regulates marketing to children under 13 years old (data collected in educational settings has value for commercial ventures). These pieces of legislation quite likely were not written with the digital learning environment in mind: FERPA legislation is 40 years old; COPPA has been in effect for 20 years.

FERPA provides protection of student information, affords parents the right to access their children's student records, and offers certain controls over the disclosure of their students' records to third parties.[12] In efforts to bridge gaps between FERPA and state education policy, in 2014, 110 educational privacy bills were introduced in 36 states.[13]

A widely shared view is that student data still remains vulnerable.[14] In response to this concern, COLSD researchers asked state department of education staff in 50 states and five territories two questions:

1. Does the state have guidance, documentation, policy, or statutes that reflect how confidentiality/data privacy of records, for all students, should be managed in supplementary/ blended and full time digital learning environments?
2. Is there a policy or procedure for how data for students with disabilities should be managed?

Findings from the two questions are discussed below in their ordered sequence. Center reviewers gathered any evidence that the state or territory included some mention of confidentiality and data privacy of records in guidance, documentation, policy, or statutes associated with digital learning environments.

Findings for question one revealed that no states or territories specifically addressed how confidentiality and data privacy of records for all students, (including students with disabilities) should be managed in supplementary, blended, and full-time virtual digital learning environments.

However, 21 states did include some type of statement on student confidentiality and data privacy of records in online learning environments in guidance, documentation, policy, or statute. Center reviewers documented ways in which states and territories are approaching confidentiality and data privacy in these policies. Five approaches were identified.

**Approach 1:** The most common approach, which was reflected in the policies of 11 of the 21 states, was to embed a statement (in virtual school policy) mandating compliance with FERPA and/or COPPA regulations. These mandates included language such as "will abide," "will maintain," "must ensure," "shall adhere," and "be in compliance." For instance, Virtual Virginia states that the school will abide by the FERPA mandate and lists five sets of interested parties that are allowed access to student records. See the associated text for example language.

Photo credit: iStock

*"Virtual Virginia will abide by the student privacy guidelines set forth by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The following individuals have access to student records: Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) board members, the Virtual Virginia administrative team, the professional staff of the student's school (teacher/school counselor), and appropriate administrative support staff members and other professionals who have a legitimate educational or legal interest in student records. A final grade report is available to the student's local school upon completion of their online course(s) or at any time upon the request of the local school and/or student's legal guardian."* [15]

**Approach 2:** In the second approach, Center reviewers were only able to locate confidentiality and data privacy of records in online learning environments from state legislative documents. The legislation, identified in three states, typically requires school districts and operators to use a process that aligns with FERPA. The Department of Legislative Services from the Maryland General Assembly in 2015 Session House bill 298 offers an example of student data privacy legislation that includes online services. See the associated text for example language.

*"This bill requires an operator of specified websites, online services, online applications, and mobile applications designed primarily for a preK-12 public school purpose operating in accordance with a contract to (1) protect covered information from unauthorized access, destruction, use, modification, or disclosure; (2)*

***implement and maintain reasonable security procedures and practices to protect covered information; and (3) delete covered information upon request of the public school or local school system. In addition, an operator may not knowingly (1) engage in targeted advertising based on the data collected through the website, online service, or application; (2) except in furtherance of a preK-12 school purpose, use information to make a profile about a student; (3) sell a student's information, except as provided; or (4) disclose covered information, except as detailed in the bill. Operators may use aggregated or de-identified information under certain circumstances. The bill does not apply to general audience websites, online services, online applications, or mobile applications, even if a login is created."***[16] ***(The bill takes effect July 1, 2015).***

**Approach 3:** The third approach was evident in three states' application processes to be completed by an online provider. States embedded confidentiality and data privacy requirements in the online provider applications. The Arizona State Board of Education Application for Arizona Online Instruction (AOI) Schools and Programs for the 2014-2015 school year includes two confidentiality and data privacy criteria that the applicant must address in order become an approved provider. See the associated text for example language.

***"7. Describe the availability of private individual electronic mail between pupils, teachers, administrators and parents in order to protect the confidentiality of pupil records and information.***

***Evaluation Criteria:***
***The extent to which:***

- ***The AOI school/program has an internal email communication system available within the CDS that is only available to the student and any staff, parent, guardian or other stakeholder that plays an integral part in monitoring and supporting the success of the student.***
- ***Any communications between staff, student, and parents is logged and secure."***[17]

**Approach 4:** In the fourth approach, COLSD reviewers were unable to find publicly available policy or guidance on confidentiality and data policy on state and territory websites. Instead, reviewers relied on a secondary source for the information. For these three states, the existence of student data and security laws with service vendors was indicated through information published by the Software and Information Industry Association (SIIA) Education Division.[18] The published information included an overview of data privacy and security policies passed in the 2014 legislative session.

**Approach 5:** The fifth approach was used by one state and was focused on the students' demographic and personal identifier information. Other student data were not referenced in the related policy. The Washington Superintendent of Public Instruction Digital Learning Department ensures that contact information and other personal information is shared only with the online course provider of the specific course in which the student is enrolling. See the associated text for example language.

***"When schools register students for online courses through the DLD, the DLD collects information—including contact information such as phone numbers, mailing addresses, and email addresses—about the student, the student's parents, and the school staff***

***member ("Mentor") working with the student. This information is shared only with the course provider offering the specific course for the purposes of registering the student for the course."***[19]

Consistent with the Center state and territory scan findings presented in Chapter 2, policy and guidance statements on confidentiality and data privacy in online learning environments vary greatly in nature as is reflected in the five approaches from states and territories.

Additional complications with confidentiality and data privacy in online learning environments can arise when a student with a disability participates in digital learning. Students with disabilities have educational records (such as an IEP) that contain goal statements and other sensitive data protected under IDEA and FERPA. States are also prohibited from reporting to the public any information that indicates any personally identifiable or student performance information.[20] There has been growing concern that the data generated by and about these students makes them vulnerable to commercial exploitation as well as discrimination.[21] Importantly, while there is concern that these practices are taking place, there is also no found evidence indicating that such practices currently occur.

The second question Center researchers asked in the area of confidentiality and data privacy includes how data for students with disabilities should be managed in the context of online learning. This question was designed to gain a greater understanding of how stakeholders are currently addressing this topic in an ever-changing educational setting.

Center reviewers were unable to find any states or territories that had a policy or procedure for how data for students with disabilities should be managed in online settings. There were, however, two states that addressed confidentiality and data privacy for students with disabilities that can be directly applicable to online environments.

First, Center reviewers found that Idaho made an addition to the Idaho Special Education Manual for 2015 to include a statement to ensure student data protection. The updated manual included a statement that requires districts to protect the personally identifiable information of students with disabilities. Although this statement does not specifically reference online settings, it could be implied. See the associated text for example language.

***"Added that districts must have a policy to protect personally identifiable information from security risk resulting from unsecured data transmittal or storage."***[22]

The second policy statement comes from the Oklahoma State Department of Education Special Education Handbook. The statement mandates that charter and virtual charter schools have policies, procedures, and practices that align with six listed federal mandates, including FERPA. See the associated text for example language.

***"B. Rights of Charter or Virtual Charter School Students and Their Parents A charter school student is a public school student. Students with disabilities who attend charter schools and their parents have all of the same rights granted to students who attend other public schools. These rights are provided under the IDEA; the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504); the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Oklahoma law specifically states that charter schools cannot discriminate against any student on any basis prohibited by federal, State, or local law. Under Oklahoma law, the charter of an authorized charter school outlines***

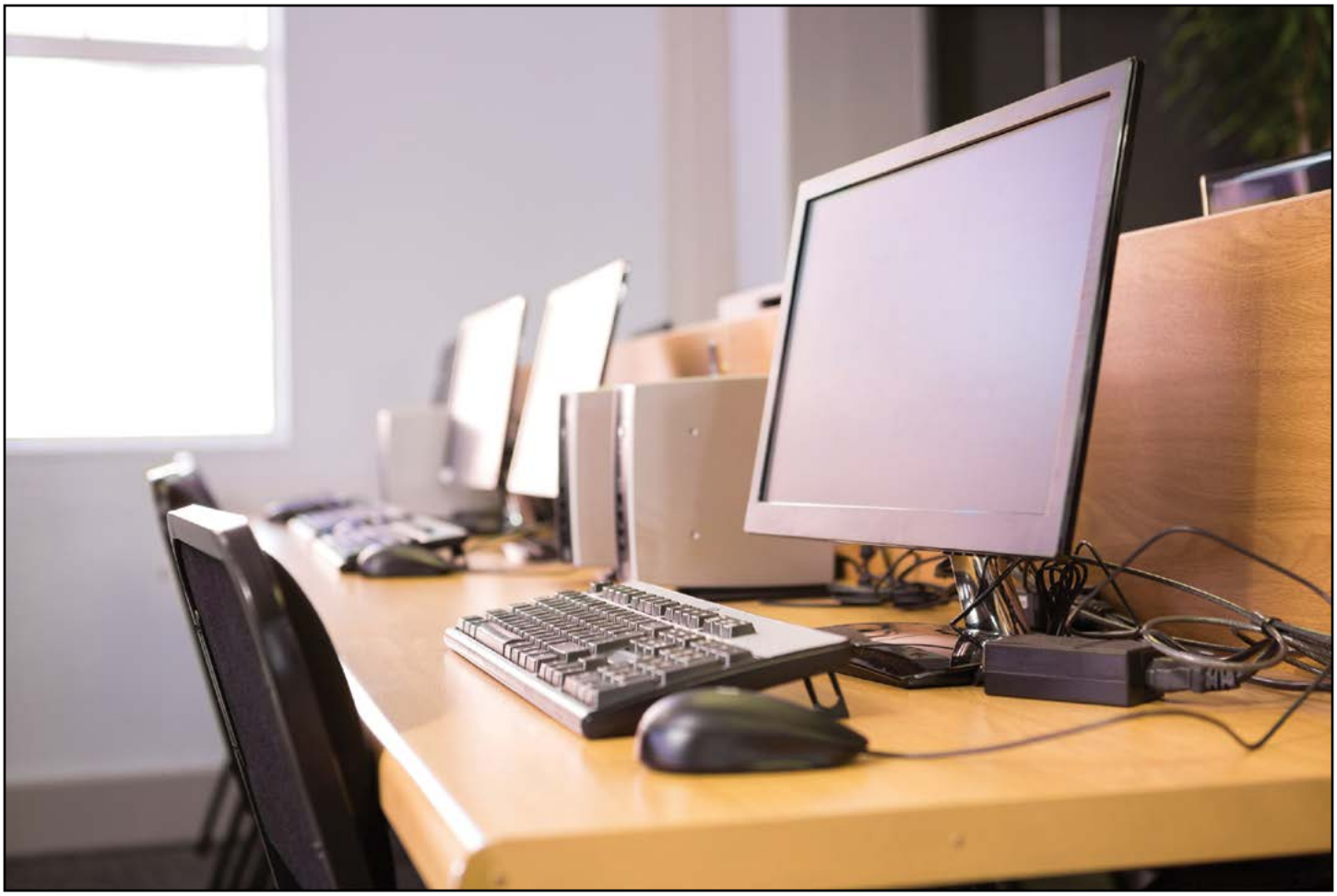

Photo credit: iStock

***specific mission statements, policies and procedures or practices. Pursuant to Oklahoma State law, charter schools are required to comply with all federal and State laws relating to the education of students with disabilities in the same manner as a school district."***[23]

As has been discussed, there is a large volume of data inherently available in these online systems. This information could potentially be turned into knowledge used to support student learning. Nonetheless, the Center has found it difficult to access the people, sites, and data in online learning environments to permit building that knowledge. Multiple reasons explain the presence of these barriers. Because of the rapid adoption and deployment of online environments and the attendant instabilities, decision makers and implementers at the state, district, and school levels are often reluctant to respond to requests for information, and even more reluctant to share data for research purposes.

Center researchers have heard from many education agencies that they are overwhelmed, and often there is a lack of clarity (or ownership) of who maintains oversight of existing data sets. At the same time, developers (both commercial and state-based) have a great deal of data about the quality of their products' implementation and effectiveness, but often have been reluctant to share that information because there are: 1) concerns about student privacy, 2) concerns that data may not provide positive results, 3) developers who lack the incentives to share, 4) developers who lack an understanding of why it would be beneficial to share their data, or 5) developers who view student usage data as their intellectual property.

Until there is a shared acknowledgement that the benefits of analyzing student demographic, achievement, and system usage data can yield information about student learning that is otherwise impractical or impossible to attain, and that these analyses can benefit everyone involved, educators and digital learning system developers will continue to silo their data sets. Such an

acknowledgement could lead to one or more privacy- and property-compliant strategies for sharing data sets in order to improve the process of education for all learners, especially those with disabilities.

Ironically, information about students with disabilities—including such things as who these students are, what they are doing, where they are doing it, how they got there, how long they stayed, and where they went—is readily available in traditional school settings. When combined with achievement information, moment-to-moment data commonly available in online environments can provide a relatively clear picture of what design configurations and practices are working and what is not. Overlapping these data with special education services mandated by a student's IEP would provide a comprehensive understanding of appropriate service delivery. Unfortunately, in current practice, once a student engages in online learning (full time or part time), these data becomes disaggregated, diffuse, and is often unavailable. As a consequence, neither educators, parents, administrators, nor curriculum developers can associate instructional activities to student outcomes with any meaningful accuracy.

The lack of purposeful and transparent acquisition, analysis, and use of data from online education tools by the education system is of growing concern to Center researchers. These data have the potential to transform the education system by providing near real-time feedback and more informed decision making. The current lack of data collection, existing data silos, and other concerns associated with data usage hinder the progress of the education system. The lack of open research and discussion across these data issues have various unintentional consequences including things such as the ability for an online system to be marketed as an appropriate solution for all students when in reality there may be little to no data to support that claim. This lack of independent research also has the potential to provide inequity across learners. Specifically, the process of school systems making acquisition decisions (or parents independently enrolling students) in the absence of objective of outcome data has the potential to perpetuate inequitable outcomes across learners; outcomes that could be avoided by more open data sharing and better research in online education.

Overall, Center researchers encourage more open research across and within online education entities and education stakeholders. Center researchers also encourage more open and privacy-compliant sharing of data being collected and used by both private and public online education providers. This sharing could be provided through cooperative, incentivized or legislated efforts with independent researchers who can publicly report data-based findings on issues related to meeting privacy standards, designing accessible learning materials, and supporting the needs of all students, especially those with disabilities.

## Graduation

In traditional school settings, students with disabilities are at higher risk than their non-disabled peers for dropping out of high school altogether and/or not attaining a regular diploma.[24] The risk of non-completion is higher for students with significant cognitive disabilities,[25] and students with disabilities who are also from families with low incomes, or are from minority groups.[26]

Scholars have also found that the disparity between graduation rates for students with disabilities vs. those without increased during the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) era (2002-2015) and continues to do so.[27] This disparity persists despite the intentions of NCLB to include students with disabilities in general education classrooms (with highly qualified teachers), and to assess the academic achievement of these students against general academic standards. It was also during this time that expectations for graduating with a regular diploma increased in many states.[28]

In most states, a high school diploma is attained by completing a certain number of credits and certificates of attendance/completion, and/or by successfully passing a "high stakes" test or series of tests prior to graduation. States continue to determine their individual graduation requirements—some specifying a specific number of hours, some not. In short, many students with disabilities have historically left high school early, leaving with neither a standard diploma nor a certificate.

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The emerging requirement for graduation—beyond the standard accumulation of a certain number of credit hours—for mandated participation in online courses may emerge as problematic for some students with disabilities. The Center state and territory scan identified five states (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Michigan, and Virginia) that have an online course high school graduation requirement. Center reviewers looked at the five states' distance learning requirements and the policy or guidance associated with this requirement to determine if and how the variable needs of students with disabilities were addressed.

## Alabama

The Alabama Department of Education's Administrative code Chapter 290-3-1 Supp. 6/30/15 3-1-1 addresses the online technology graduation requirement and notes that exceptions can be made through IEP graduation modifications. See the associated text for example language.

> ***"3. Distance Learning. Effective for students entering the ninth grade in the 2009-2010 school year, Alabama students will be required to complete one on-line/technology enhanced course or experience prior to graduation. Exceptions through Individualized Education Plans will be allowed."***[29]

An Alabama State Department of Education April 2014 memorandum outlines graduation options for students with disabilities that include two pathways: a general education pathway option and the essential skills pathway option (which includes non-accredited courses). Students can choose either pathway or work with the IEP team to build a graduation plan that includes classes associated with both graduation routes. The memorandum does not, however, address the online course graduation requirement.

## Arkansas

Arkansas House Bill 1785 mandates that students must take one digital learning course to graduate. The bill does not address provisions for students with disabilities. Center reviewers could not locate publically available special education graduation guidance. See the associated text for example language.

> ***"Beginning with the entering ninth grade class of the 2014-2015 3 school year, each high school student shall be required to take at least one 4 (1) digital learning course for credit to graduate."***[30]

## Florida

Florida House Bill 7198 (passed in 2011) requires that one online course be completed for graduation. The Florida Department of Education issued a memorandum in December 2012 that provides exemptions for meeting the online graduation requirement for students with IEPs if it is determined that an online course would not be appropriate or that a student has only been enrolled in a Florida high school for one year or less. See the associated text for example language.

> ***"... requiring at least one course required for high school graduation to be completed through online learning; creating s. 1003.498, F.S."***[31]

> ***"Governor Rick Scott signed House Bill 7063, Digital Learning, into law with an effective date of July 1, 2012. One of its provisions amends section 1003.428(2)(c), Florida Statutes (F.S.),relating to the online graduation requirement for the 24-credit general requirements for high school graduation option, to do the following:***
> ***· Provide exemptions for meeting the online course graduation requirement for students who have individual educational plans (IEPs) that indicate an online course would not be appropriate or for students who have been enrolled in a Florida high school for one year or less."***[32]

In addition, Florida offers four high school diploma options that are only available for students with IEPs: Standard Diploma, Standard Diploma with Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) 2.0 Waiver for Students with Disabilities, Special Diploma (with two options). The Florida online graduation requirement applies only to students who are meeting the standard diploma requirements.

## Michigan

The Michigan Merit Curriculum law requires Michigan students to complete one online course, with technology and access provided by the student's school or district. Students can enroll with the Michigan Virtual School or the Michigan Connections Academy. See the associated text for example language.

> ***"What the Michigan Merit Curriculum Law Says:***
> ***1278(1)(b) Meets the online course or learning experience requirement of this subsection. A school district or public school academy shall provide the basic level of technology and internet access required by the state board to complete the online course or learning experience. For a pupil to meet this requirement, the pupil shall meet either of the following, as determined by the school district or public school academy:***
> ***(i) Has successfully completed at least 1 course or learning experience that is presented online, as defined by the department.***
> ***(ii) the pupil's school district or public school academy has integrated an***

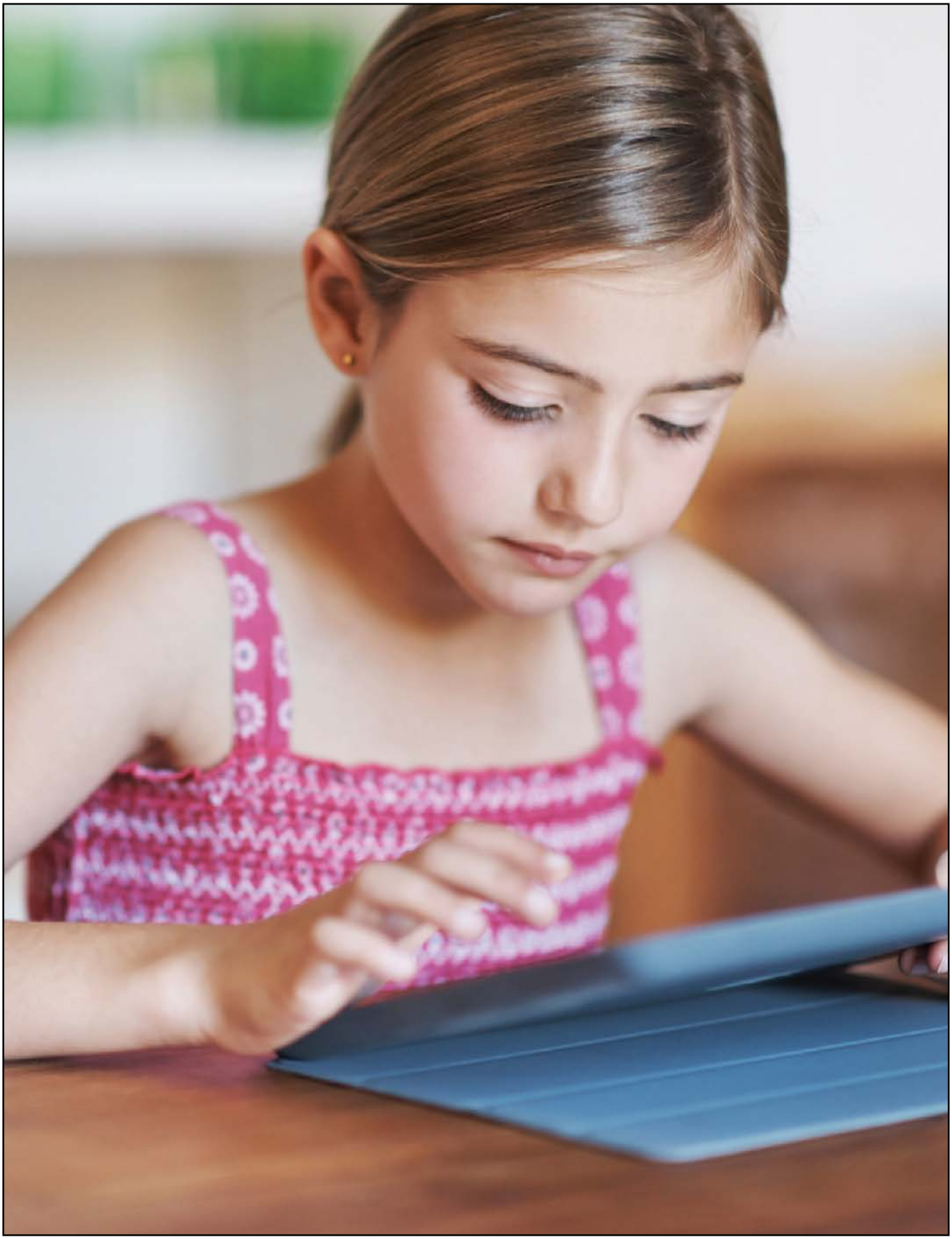

Photo credit: iStock

***online experience throughout the high school curriculum by ensuring that each teacher of each course that provides the required credits of the Michigan merit curriculum has integrated an online experience into the course."***[33]

Michigan Department of Education also offers an alternative graduation plan that provides flexibility for students who may need accommodations or modifications to support their enrollment. Accommodations and modifications are not specifically referenced in association with the online course requirement. See the associated text for example language.

***"Option for a student's parent to request a personal curriculum for the student which is developed with the high school counselor or other designee selected by the high school principal. The personal curriculum is for that small percentage of students who seek to exceed the requirements of the MMC or for students with disabilities who need special accommodation and modifications." (p. 47) "According to state law, a PC's may be developed in order to: · Go beyond the academic credit requirements by adding more math, science, English language arts, or world languages credit. * modify the mathematics requirement. * modify, if necessary, the credit requirements of a student with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)." "For a student with an IEP: A documented need requires modifications because the student's disability affects access to and/or demonstration of proficiency in the curriculum. Lack of progress on the MMC despite documented interventions, supports, and accommodations." (p. 49) "Students eligible to take classes at MVS include gifted and talented students, special needs students, students who need to "make up" credit, public and non-public school students, and home-schooled students."***[34]

## Virginia

Virginia requires that all students complete an online course, credit-bearing or non-accredited, prior to high school graduation. Students with disabilities are expected to complete a virtual course as a part of their standard diploma requirements.[35] The 2015-2016 Virtual Virginia Mentor Handbook notes that it is the course instructor's responsibility to provide course "adjustments" for students on IEPs or 504 plans, but no additional guidance is provided.[36] See the associated text for example language.

***"Beginning with the 9th grade class in 2013–14, the graduation requirements to earn a standard or advanced studies diploma include the "successful completion of one virtual course. The virtual course may be a noncredit-bearing course." "HB 1061and SB 489 in the 2012 General Assembly eliminated the Modified Standard Diploma and directed the Board of Education to make provisions in its regulations for students with disabilities to earn a Standard Diploma. On June 28, 2012, the Board approved emergency amendments to 8 VAC 20-131-50 of the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia indicated its intent to establish***

***guidelines for credit accommodations for this purpose. On March 28, 2013, the Board of Education approved Guidelines for Standard Diploma Credit Accommodations for Students with Disabilities. As such, the Modified Standard Diploma will no longer be an option for students entering the ninth grade for the first time in 2013-2014 and beyond. Students with disabilities may be eligible for Standard Diploma credit accommodations in certain subject areas as noted in footnotes in previous sections of this document." "Credit accommodations provide alternatives for students with disabilities in earning the standard and verified credits required to graduate with a Standard Diploma. Credit accommodations for students with disabilities may include:***

- ***Alternative courses to meet the standard credit requirements***
- ***Modifications to the requirements for locally awarded verified credits***
- ***Additional tests approved by the Board of Education for earning verified credits***
- ***Adjusted cut scores on tests for earning verified credits***
- ***Allowance of work-based learning experiences through career and technical education (CTE) courses"***[37]

Much of the research on completion data for students with disabilities in online learning environments has focused on course completion rather than on graduation. Allday and Allday[38] analyzed data from more than 345,000 students in a virtual school from one state with the purpose of comparing the pace requests and final grade outcomes of students with disabilities to that of their peers without disabilities. They found that students with and without disabilities both make similar pace requests and complete courses in the same amount of time. Research findings demonstrated that extended time in completing a course correlated to lower final grades—this in light of the fact that the most often used accommodation in special education is extended time.[39] These findings suggest that extending time in online courses does not translate into enhancing course completion. When courses are not completed, progress towards graduation is not made.

When Rice and Carter[40] interviewed teachers in a large virtual school program, their participants described the spring season as chaotic because prospective graduates were hurrying to finish coursework. The teachers' anecdotal logs and their personal impressions indicated that many of the students who were unable to finish the courses and ultimately graduate were students with disabilities. The teachers attributed this failure to self-pacing difficulties. These findings, when considered along with Allday and Allday's, suggest that students with disabilities are often not receiving appropriate support in making progress towards graduation. This circumstance deserves attention because students with disabilities have historically been funneled into alternative diploma programs that have negative consequences for their future employment and educational opportunities.[41]

When these course completion targets are unmet, students with disabilities (like all students) have limited choices: 1) drop out, 2) remain in the online environment and continue to work to pass courses, 3) return to the brick-and-mortar environment and continue to work to pass courses, 4) leave the high school and enroll in a technical and career education program (e.g., Job Corps), or 5) enroll in a graduate equivalency degree (GED) program through their school district or a local educational institution. The concern that students with disabilities often lack the support to be successful in online education is of interest in light of the fact that online courses are often considered a solution to credit recovery challenges.[42] For various reasons, including the aforementioned lack of data sharing, there is no known research base that investigates students with disabilities' participation and success with initial online coursework in progressing towards graduation or credit recovery.

## Summary

As referenced in this publication, researchers at the Center have conducted various investigations across the field of online education during its first three years of operation. While this publication has only highlighted a limited number of these studies, we are beginning to gain a better understanding of online education for students with disabilities. Clearly, online education is reshaping the education system for all students and has potential consequences for all stakeholders but especially those students with disabilities.

For instance, one finding that has been threaded throughout much of the Center's research findings are the newly emergent roles of both teachers and parents in online learning environments. These role differences are especially notable in full-time virtual learning environments. In these environments, the role of a teacher is often one that is primarily focused on designing instruction, providing consultation, and supervision to paraprofessionals or parents rather than direct instruction to students. Alternatively, depending on the online system, these teachers may be doing very little instructional design and simply using the default commercially designed system. On the other hand, parents are often the primary providers of instruction and are expected to deliver or supervise most of their child's instruction, adjust instruction as necessary, maintain contact with professional teachers, make instructional choices, and conduct ongoing evaluation.

In blended classes or supplemental courses, parents are not typically the primary providers. Instead of acting in consultation to parents, teachers often have a direct consultative role to students. In this role, the primary sequence of instruction is provided by the online delivery system. Teachers oversee student progress and adjust or adapt sequences as warranted, often consulting with students about their progress and preferences, and sometimes providing supplemental groups or tutorials to address gaps in instruction. While there is great variance in teacher roles, the tendency is for the teacher to be more supplemental and adaptive, acting as a designer and direct facilitator when necessary. These shifts in roles have perceived but unknown implications on the field of practice as well as to the parent-child relationship. Further research is needed across how these new roles within education impact student outcomes.

We have also found that actual policies across online learning are varied and inconsistent (see Chapter 2). Existing policy differences are consequential, affecting nearly every aspect of online learning: what students can enroll, who is found to have a disability, how such determination is made, who may use online data, who is qualified to teach, who administers the program, who is eligible for accommodations, what outcomes can be appropriately measured, etc.

The emergent system of online education has precipitated a highly complex policy environment that, in turn, has generated barriers to implementing, researching, and evaluating online learning. The work at the Center has found that nearly every state and district has its own unique policies regarding the way that online learning is provided, financed, administered, evaluated, or assessed, making it very difficult to identify consistently effective approaches. The lack of data access or interoperability impedes analyses that would sharpen everyday academic practices and interventions. The achievement and outcome data for students in full-time virtual elementary and secondary schools is concerning. A recent data analysis of online charter schools in 17 states found that the academic achievement of approximately 70% of enrolled students was below that of their peers in both brick-and-mortar public and charter school settings. Even more compelling, this study's findings indicated that attending a charter school, per se, was not a factor negatively impacting achievement, but that negative achievement outcomes were specifically associated with the online component.[43] Study findings also reported that enrollment in an online charter school reduced the negative academic achievement impact of having an IEP—compared to non-IEP students in the same setting—but the overall result of online charter school enrollment for students with disabilities was negative when compared to similar students in public brick-and-mortar schools.[44]

The Center's findings, along with the findings of others, with respect to online learning and students with disabilities, raise questions and identify areas of needed additional research relevant to all students engaged in full-time virtual, blended or supplemental learning. Because students with disabilities present the widest sensory, physical, cognitive and behavioral variabilities,

these students challenge the education system to become more flexible, responsive, and effective. Students with disabilities offer a unique opportunity for designing learning systems that can address their learning variabilities from the outset, not as an afterthought, and, in doing so, more effectively encompass the needs of all learners—those with disabilities, and those without. The Center researchers encourage stakeholders to work together to research and design better online learning environments for all learners.

## Endnotes


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# Appendix A
# Glossary

## Accessibility

In the context of technology, accessibility refers to providing access for all users, including students with disabilities, to digital environments and tools. Designing digital materials and delivery systems to support the use of audio-only screen readers, text browsers, and other adaptive technologies; offering contrasting colors for readability; and providing alternative text tags for graphics are examples of accessibility. The Office of Civil Rights, United States Department of Education has issued a "significant guidance document" detailing the responsibility of elementary and secondary schools to meet accessibility requirements under both civil rights and special education law. [1]

## Accommodations

Accommodations, modifications, and other services for students with disabilities are legally protected when included in a highly structured Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a more flexible plan created under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. An IEP is developed and implemented as a requirement of Special Education, and a 504 plan is developed and implemented by the educational institution to address civil rights mandates.[2]

## Blended Learning

"A formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online learning, with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace; at least in part in a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home; and the modalities along each student's learning path within a course or subject are connected to provide an integrated learning experience."[3]

## Child Find

Child find is the legal requirement that schools identify children with disabilities who may be entitled to special education services. This requirement covers children from birth through age 21. This identification process allows schools to evaluate students.[4]

## Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)

"COPPA imposes certain requirements on operators of websites or online services directed to children under 13 years of age, and on operators of other websites or online services that have actual knowledge that they are collecting personal information online from a child under 13 years of age."[5]

## Competency/Proficiency-Based Learning

In this curricular structure, students progress based on mastery of successive goals. Students are often grouped by age and/or proficiency levels—not by grades—and movement through a course of study is based on evidence-based skills or knowledge learning, not seat time.

## Digital Delivery Systems

Content management or learning management utilities that display, provide access to, or otherwise render digital materials for students' use. Most of these systems require an individual student login via username/password or unique student identification number, and record and display student usage and achievement data.

## Digital Learning

Use of digital technology to support learning. The use of this term is context-free, including the type of technology, environment, pedagogy, instructional design, and learner-interaction with the material, technology, or environment. Digital learning includes, but is not limited to, online, blended, or personalized learning. Digital learning would also encompass non-online environments that are simply focused on integrating digital technologies to support learning.

## Digital Materials

Electronic textbooks, workbooks, activities, simulations, assessments, and other components of the elementary and secondary school curriculum made available to students via computer, tablet, or mobile devices.

## Due Process/Procedural Safeguards

Compliance with the procedural requirements of the IDEA to ensure processes for parents regarding timelines for actions, receiving notice of changes, expressing disagreements with program recommendations, and resolving disputes through mediation or a fair hearing.

## Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

"The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records."[6]

## Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

A term used to describe the educational rights of students with disabilities. It refers to an educational program designed to provide individualized supports and services needed for students with disabilities to access the general education curriculum that align with state education standards in the public school system. This educational program is provided at no cost to the parents of the student with a disability..[7]

## Full-time Online Learning

When students are primarily taking all academic classes in online environments. This type of learning generally takes place in virtual schools or what are referred to as fully online schools.

## Individual Education Program (IEP)

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1997), an IEP is a statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals designed to meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; and meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disabilities (Sections 300.320(a)(2)(i)(A) and (B)).[8]

## Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

"The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997 (P.L. 105-17) established parameters for services provided in an educational setting. Part B of the document indicated that eligibility for services required that the impairment "adversely impacts educational performance."[9]

## Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Education of students with disabilities with their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate.

## Online Learning

Education in which instruction, content, and learning are mediated primarily by network technologies such as the Internet.

## Parent Participation

Collaboration with parents in children's individualized educational program development and implementation.[10]

## Personalized Learning

An approach in which the instructional approach, outcomes, content, activities, pace, tools, and supports are customized for each learner's needs. Personalized learning takes advantage of the real-time progress monitoring capacity of many digital delivery systems to provide timely (e.g., daily, weekly), actionable updates on student learning and/or achievement through a course of study. Many personalized learning settings also follow a competency or proficiency-based instructional design.

## Protection in Evaluation for Services

Installment of assessment processes to determine if a student has a disability protected under IDEA and if he/she needs special education services.

## Section 504

"Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects the rights of persons with handicaps in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance. Section 504 protects the rights not only of individuals with visible disabilities but also those with disabilities that may not be apparent."[11]

## Supplemental Online Learning

When students are enrolled in an online environment to supplement another primary learning environment. An example would be someone taking a course in Mandarin Chinese or object-oriented programming online rather than in a face-to-face classroom environment because the local school does not offer the course.

## Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

A scientifically-based framework that is focused on supporting the variability of every learner through proactive and iterative design that integrates multiple means of engagement, representation of information, and action and expression of understanding.

## Zero Reject

Responsibility of school officials to locate, identify, and provide special education services to all eligible students with disabilities.[12]

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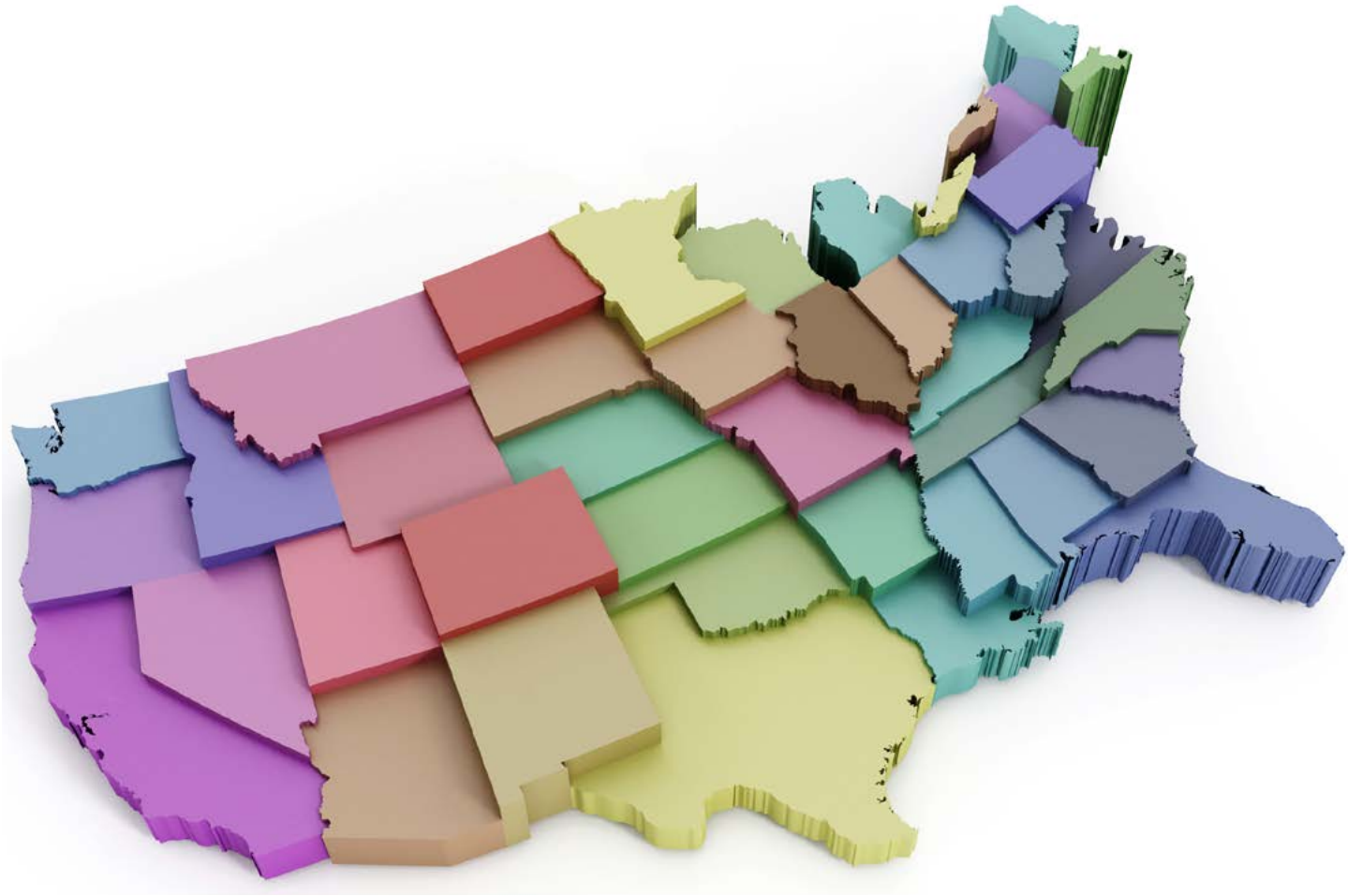
# Appendix B

# State and Territory Scans



## Scan Legend

**NORTHEAST**

Connecticut
Delaware
Maine
Maryland
Massachusetts
New Hampshire
New Jersey
New York
Pennsylvania
Rhode Island
Vermont
West Virginia

**SOUTHEAST**

Alabama
Arkansas
Florida
Georgia
Kentucky
Louisiana
Mississippi
North Carolina
South Carolina
Tennessee
Virginia

**MIDWEST**

Iowa
Illinois
Indiana
Kansas
Michigan
Minnesota
Missouri
Nebraska
North Dakota
Ohio
South Dakota
Wisconsin

**NORTHWEST**

Alaska
Hawaii
Idaho
Montana
Oregon
Washington
Wyoming

**SOUTHWEST**

Arizona
California
Colorado
Nevada
New Mexico
Oklahoma
Texas
Utah

**TERRITORIES**

District of Columbia
Guam
U.S. Virgin Islands
Northern Mariana Islands
American Samoa

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# Alabama

The majority of the online learning activity in Alabama is provided through Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, and Students Statewide (ACCESS), a state sponsored supplemental program for blended learning environments.[1] "Essentially all the online education activity in Alabama is through the state virtual school, ACCESS Distance Learning."[2]

Online options are increasing for K-12 students, including local online high schools offering online learning options. These options are not state-run schools, but rather online schools run by districts, and the documentation is not clear (at this time) if these schools offer fully online options.[3]

According to the ACCESS Policy Manual for Teachers, applicants must meet background checks, have classroom experience in the area being taught, be certified in Alabama, highly qualified in the content area being taught, or be highly qualified faculty from an accredited institution of higher education.[4] Alabama does not currently have an initial teaching licensure and/or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

Alabama provides teachers with a list of professional development options for online instructors, including Moodle Course Management System, Developing Online Learning Communities, and Becoming a Competent Online Facilitator.[5] In addition, Alabama is recognizing the growing need to provide professional development to online instructors working with students with disabilities. Courses such as Special Students in Regular Classrooms: Technology, Teaching Universal Design are available to practitioners.[6] ACCESS also provides a resource page that includes a virtual library, Alex, which is an educational resource web portal providing video archives of previous lessons, SAS Curriculum Pathways, and other resources.

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| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | Unclear |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

# Alaska

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

"The State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) provides funding and support for the Alaska Learning Network (AKLN)."[1] AKLN is a state virtual school that offers online courses through districts statewide that are vetted with for their alignment with iNACOL (National Standards for Online Courses) standards.[2] Alaska also has school districts that offer fully online options through vendors such as K12 Inc.[3]

Alaska does not require initial teacher licensure or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning for online instructors.

Alaska's Department of Education links to the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project, which has professional development for teachers through a series of online resources. The Mentor Project posts videos specifically aimed at supporting teachers' professional development.[4] This project does include resources for teachers working directly with students with disabilities. However, the mentor project does not provide professional development for teachers in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

1. Alaska's Learning Network: History. http://www.aklearn.net/about/history.html (Retrieved August 25, 2015)
2. Alaska's Learning Network: Academics. http://www.aklearn.net/aklnacademics/index.html (Retrieved August 25, 2015)
3. Keeping Pace: Alaska http://www.kpk12.com/states/alaska/ (Retrieved August 25, 2015)
4. Alaska Statewide Mentor Project Videos. http://videos.alaskamentorproject.org/index.php?VidCat=SPED (Retrieved August 25, 2015)

# Arizona

Arizona has many fully online options and supplemental programs.[1] The Arizona Department of Education website supports online instruction by providing a centralized location for K-12 online programs and course offerings.[2]

Arizona does not have an initial teacher licensure or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

Arizona has made digital learning a priority for professional development topics for the state's teachers. Some of the past training topics included:

- Digital Tools for Digital Learners Webinar Series: Going Interactive with Thinglink
- Productivity Tools Webinar Series: Digital Classroom Collaboration with Lino Collaborate
- Chrome Extensions for Struggling Students
- *Productivity Tools in the Classroom Series: Evernote part 1*[3]

COLSD reviewers were unable to determine if Arizona professional development included topics on digital learning and students with disabilities.

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Unclear |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Unclear |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. Keeping Pace: Arizona. http://www.kpk12.com/states/arizona/ (Retrieved August 3, 2015)
2. Arizona Department of Education: Arizona Online Instruction. http://www.azed.gov/innovativelearning/azonlineinstruction/ (Retrieved August 3, 2015)
3. SIT Archived Webinars. https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1o-qe9wjXirHqfvjqZ8ybTTYQQf4ugmnzr_BCMLI7rr3s/edit#gid=0 (Retrieved August 3, 2015) (needs additional resources)

# Arkansas

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

Arkansas offers fully online school options through the Arkansas Virtual Academy, which operates as a charter school. The program is provided by K12 Inc.[1] Arkansas's state-sponsored school, Virtual Arkansas, is not a fully online school but supplements the public school districts with online course options. This partnership between Virtual Arkansas and the local education agency (LEA) preserves the district's ability to issue credits and diplomas to students.

After a review of Arkansas Department of Education Teacher Competencies and Arkansas Department of Education Additional Licensure Plans, COLSD reviewers did not find an initial teacher licensure and/or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

The Internet Delivered Education for Arkansas Schools site has a professional development course catalog that is under construction and may include courses on facilitation in online settings.[2] COLSD reviewers were able to find a few professional development offerings through Virtual Arkansas for new course facilitators.

1. K12. http://my.info.k12.com/Q214_All.html?st=ar&vendor=ef&lead_source=sem&product=ARVA&utm_medium=sem&utm_campaign=AR%3A+Arkansas+Local+-+Brand&utm_term=&ad_group=Arkansas+Virtual+Academy&lead_source_detail=Microsoft+Bing+Ads&keyword_match=&ef_id=VdsjsQAABT9Tw2Op:20150905212141:s (Retrieved July 27, 2015)
2. IDEAS: Internet Delivered Education for Arkansas Schools. http://ideas.aetn.org/ (Retrieved July 27, 2015)

# California

There are fully online programs available in California, but there are no state administered virtual schools.[1] Students may still access online courses, but they are provided through school districts or district partners.[2]

California does not require teacher licensure for online, digital, or blended learning environments.[3]

The California Department of Education does offer various types of professional development through the CCSS Professional Learning Modules for Educators,[4] and there are few available resources that mention online, blended, or digital learning environments, such as "CUE Video Collection" and "Math Star."[5] The few resources that do mention online, blended, or digital learning environments do not mention students with disabilities. [6]

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No With Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. California Virtual Academies powered by K12 http://cava.k12.com/ (Retrieved June 24, 2015)
2. Keeping Pace page 81 *"California does not have a state virtual school and students have access to supplemental online courses only if those courses are offered by their district or a district partner."* http://www.kpk12.com/wp-content/uploads/EEG_KP2014-fnl-lr.pdf (Retrieved June 24, 2015)
3. California Department of Education Credential Requirements http://www.ctc.ca.gov/credentials/requirements.html (Retrieved June 24, 2015)
4. CCSS Professional Learning Modules for Educators http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cc/ccssplm.asp (Retrieved June 24, 2015)
5. Digital Chalkboard "CUE Video Collection" and "Math Star" https://www.mydigitalchalkboard.org/portal/default/Content/ContentBrowser (Retrieved June 24, 2015)
6. Digital Chalkboard https://www.mydigitalchalkboard.org/portal/default/Content/ (Retrieved June 24, 2015)

# Colorado

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Unclear* |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence* |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Unclear* |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Unclear* |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

The Colorado Department of Education does not sponsor a virtual school, but instead has a list of online schools available in Colorado in the form of multi-district online charter schools, multi-district online schools, supplemental online programs, and single district online schools.[1]

Colorado does not currently have an initial teacher licensure and/or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

Colorado has an online list of available professional development opportunities. The Colorado Office of Blended and Online Learning's Technical Assistance website also provides technical assistance and professional development, including a webinar series on best practices in online and blended learning settings.[2] The COLSD staff could not determine if the technical assistance and professional development initiatives include considerations for students with disabilities.

1. Colorado Department of Education: Online Schools and Programs. http://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/schools (Retrieved August 20, 2015)
2. Colorado Department of Education: Technical Assistance. http://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/events (Retrieved August 20, 2015)

# Connecticut

Connecticut does not have a full time public option for students. Students are encouraged to pursue  options in Vermont.[1]

Connecticut does not have an initial teaching certification or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

The Connecticut State Department of Education website lists professional development trainers and contractors, but COLSD reviewers were unable to find actual professional development materials posted online.[2]

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative. http://www.vtvlc.org/students/out-of-state-students/ (Retrieved August 20, 2015)
2. Connecticut State Department of Education: Professional Develpment Providors. http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2613&q=321398 (Retrieved August 20, 2015)

# Delaware

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | No With Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

Delaware does offer fully online learning options but the state does not sponsor an online school.[1]

Delaware does not currently have an initial teaching licensure or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

COLSD reviewers were unable to find professional development in online, blended, and digital learning for students with disabilities posted on the Delaware Department of Education website.

1. K12: Delaware. http://www.k12.com/schoolfinder.delaware.html (Retrieved September 2, 2015)

# Florida

Florida provides provisions for K-12 students seeking online learning options. Florida makes full- and part-time online learning available through district programs as well as through Florida's state-sponsored entity, the Florida Virtual School (FLVS).[1]

Florida does not currently require FLVS teachers to attain an initial teaching certification or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning. "FLVS is able to consider candidates with both professional and temporary Florida teaching certificates."[2] Candidates applying from out-of-state must obtain a reciprocal teaching certificate from the Florida Department of Education.[3]

FLVS offers professional development course offerings that include a "Teaching Online Series." Courses include:

- Teaching in an Online Learning Model
- Teaching in a Blended Learning Model
- Advanced Strategies for Online or Blended Instruction
- Teaching Literacy Strategies in an Online or Blended Learning Model
- Teaching Strategies in a Digital Environment[4]

COLSD reviewers found two courses, "Exceptional Student Education In A Virtual World" and "Applying Florida's Planning and Problem-Solving Process (Using RtI Data) in Virtual Settings,"[5] that provide online teachers with additional perspectives when working with students with disabilities in the online learning environment.[6]

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Yes With Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No With Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. Keeping Pace: Florida. http://www.kpk12.com/states/florida/ (Retrieved August 13, 2015)
2. Florida Virtual School: Teaching at FLVS. http://jobs.flvs.net/teaching-at-flvs (Retrieved August 13, 2015)
3. Florida Virtual School: Teaching at FLVS. http://jobs.flvs.net/teaching-at-flvs (Retrieved August 13, 2015)
4. FLVS Global Professional Development Catalog: 2015. http://www.flvsglobal.net/wp-content/uploads/FLVS_Global_Professional_Development_Catalog.pdf (Retrieved August 13, 2015)
5. Applying Florida's Planning and Problem-Solving Process (Using RtI Data) in Virtual Settings. http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7509/urlt/0085374-mtss-virtual.pdf(Retrieved August 13, 2015)
6. FLVS Global Professional Development Catalog: 2015. http://www.flvsglobal.net/wp-content/uploads/FLVS_Global_Professional_Development_Catalog.pdf (Retrieved August 13, 2015)

# Georgia

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Yes With Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No With Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

Georgia has three fully online schools and the Georgia Virtual School (GAVS), a program sponsored by the Georgia Department of Education's Office of Technology Services. GAVS offers middle school and high school level courses in partnership with schools across Georgia.[1]

Georgia offers a professional online teaching endorsement. Although teachers applying to GAVS are not required to hold the online teaching endorsement, applicants must complete the Effective Online Teaching course to be considered for employment.[2]

GAVS offers professional development opportunities for teachers, including the Badges program. The GAVS Badges program provides a means for teachers to track and expand their professional learning. The Teaching Online Open Learning (TOOL) badge requires teachers to demonstrate a series of skills for effective online teaching that includes using digital tools to support students with special needs.[3]

The Georgia Department of Education website provides a list of resources for teachers. Resources include ways to integrate apps for students with disabilities in the classroom and iPad and iPod resources that cater to the needs of students with disabilities.[4]

1. Georgia Virtual School. http://gavirtualschool.org/ (Retrieved August 13, 2015)
2. Georgia Virtual School: Employment. http://www.gavirtualschool.org/Educators/Opportunities.aspx (Retrieved August 13, 2015).
3. TOOL: Effective Online Teaching. https://www.openteachertraining.org/skills/ (Retrieved August 13, 2015)
4. Georgia Department of Education: Spring Meeting Handout http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/Spring- Leadership-Meeting-2011-Handouts.aspx (Retrieved August 13, 2015)

# Hawaii

Hawaii has several full- and part-time options for online schools. Hawaii's state sponsored school, Hawaii Virtual Learning Network (HVLN), provides a variety of online courses and support to expand blended programs, educational resources, and consultation to schools.[1]

Hawaii does not currently offer an initial teacher licensure or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

HVLN provides technology related professional development for instructors in interactive whiteboards; VoiceThread; online course facilitation, and Microsoft products, (e.g., Excel, Word, and Powerpoint).[2]

COLSD reviewers searched the special education page and the HVLN page and were unable to locate professional development resources that are specific to online learning and students with disabilities.

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. Hawaii State Department of Education: Virtual Learning Network. http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/EducationInnovation/VirtualLearningNetwork/Pages/home.aspx (Retrieved August 3, 2015)
2. Hawaii Virtual Learning Network: Technology Integration Staff Development Workshops. http://hawaiivln.k12.hi.us/membership-benefits/44-technology-integration-staff-development-workshops (Retrieved August 3, 2015)

# Idaho

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

Idaho provides students with online education options[1] including access to the state virtual school, fully online schools, and district programs. Idaho's state virtual school, Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA), partners with local districts.[2]

Idaho has an Online Teacher Endorsement that requires an eight-week online teaching internship and that participants study online teaching and learning in order to demonstrate knowledge skills as defined in the Idaho Standards for Online Teachers.[3] COLSD reviewers were unable to find evidence confirming that the online teaching endorsement includes competencies in online learning and students with disabilities.

The Idaho Digital Learning Academy posts professional development options on its website. Topics for blended teachers include understanding blended learning models, approaches and strategies; redesigning a course for a blended format; introduction to the BrainHoney LMS; and designing and developing a blended course.[4] Additional professional development topics include digital citizenship, social networking, designing a virtual field trip, mobile devices for learning, and cell phones as learning tools.[5] COLSD reviewers were not able to locate professional development resources that included digital learning and students with disabilities.

1. Keeping Pace: Idaho. http://www.kpk12.com/states/idaho/ (Retrieved August 13, 2015)
2. Idaho Digital Learning. http://www.idahodigitallearning.org/AboutUs.aspx (Retrieved August 13, 2015)
3. Idaho State Board of Education: Online Teacher Endorsement, Pre-K12, 2010. *https://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/psc/docs/2010/apr%2010%20attachment%201.pdf* (Retrieved August 13, 2015)
4. Idaho Digital Learning: Training. http://www.idahodigitallearning.org/Educators/BlendedLearning/Training.aspx (Retrived August 13, 2015)
5. Idaho Digital Learning: Training. http://www.idahodigitallearning.org/Educators/BlendedLearning/Training.aspx (Retrived August 13, 2015)

# Illinois

Illinois school districts have developed full- and part-time online learning programs and the Illinois Department of Education sponsors the Illinois Virtual School (IVS), a supplemental program for students in grades 5-12.[1]

Instructors interested in teaching for IVS must complete the online course "Teaching Online 101: Teaching in an Online Learning Model"[2] before their application for teaching is accepted. The application process also may include IVS Learning Management System or Course System training and System Information System training. No special licensure or endorsement is required (at this time) to teach online in Illinois.

IVS offers professional development opportunities to learn more about online learning as well as teaching in the online or blended learning environment. IVS does not have professional development courses targeted for support of students with disabilities. Below is a partial list of courses offered.

- Moving to Mobile Learning
- Creativity in the Mobile Classroom
- Introduction to Online Learning
- Teaching in a Blended Learning Model
- Introduction to Online Learning
- Teaching in a Blended Learning Model
- Teaching Online 101: Teaching in an Online Learning Model
- Teaching Online 102: Advanced Strategies for Online or Blended Instructors
- Collaboration in the Digital Classroom
- Bringing Mobile Learning into the Classroom
- Designing Blended Learning[3]

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Unclear |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence* |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Unclear |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear* |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. K12: All Participating Schools in Illinois. http://www.k12.com/participating-schools.html?state=illinois (Retrieved August 13, 2015)
2. Illinois Virtual School: Employment. http://www.ilvirtual.org/employment (Retrieved August 13, 2015)
3. Illinois Virtual School: Professional Development. http://www.ilvirtual.org/professional-development/online-courses-and-training (August 13, 2015)

# Indiana

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

Indiana has multiple fully online schools, but there are no state sponsored virtual schools.[1]

Though there are standards for virtual instruction[2], there are no requirements for teacher licensure or endorsements in the areas of online, digital, or blended learning.[3]

Indiana does offer Virtual Professional Development aimed towards special education[4], but it is unclear whether there are additional trainings for teachers working with students with disabilities in online classrooms. Some of the available trainings include "Support for Struggling Readers and Writers Blog"[5] and "2015 Summer of eLearning Map."[6]

1. Keeping Pace Indiana http://www.kpk12.com/states/indiana/ (Retrieved May 26, 2015)
2. Indiana Content Standards for Educators: Virtual Instruction April 2012 http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/licensing/virtual-instruction-standards-final.pdf (Retrieved May 26, 2015)
3. Indiana Department of Education Licensing and Certification http://www.doe.in.gov/licensing and http://certificationmap.com/states/indiana-teacher-certification/#req (Retrieved May 26, 2015)
4. Indiana Department of Education Virtual Professional Development http://www.doe.in.gov/specialed/virtual-professional-development (Retrieved May 26, 2015)
5. Support for Struggling Readers and Writers Blog http://indianadld.blogspot.com/search/label/special%20education (Retrieved May 26, 2015)
6. 2015 Summer of eLearning Map http://www.doe.in.gov/elearning/2015-summer-elearning-map (Retrieved May 26, 2015)

# Iowa

The State of Iowa supports online learning through Iowa Learning Online and Iowa Online AP (Advanced Placement) Academy. Iowa Learning Online is designed to expand local school districts by offering online courses to high school students.[1] The Iowa Online AP Academy offers advanced placement college course work through Apex, the online learning provider.[2] In addition to the two state sponsored virtual schools, Iowa has at least two fully online schools.[3]

All courses are taught by qualified teachers. Iowa does not currently have initial teacher licensure and/or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

Iowa provides ongoing professional learning experiences partially through Intel® Teach: [4]
Teaching with Technology: Tools 1&2
Teaching with Technology: Tool 3
Assessment in 21st Century Classrooms
Educational Leadership for the 21st Century

COLSD staff were unable to locate professional development and/or technical assistance initiatives in online, blended, or digital learning that mention students with disabilities. However, applications included on the ILO page that can increase student access to online instructors and learning coaches include Zoom for Videoconferencing and Voicethread.[5]

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Unclear |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | Unclear |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Unclear |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. Iowa Learning Online. http://iowalearningonline.org/ (Retrived August 14, 2015)
2. University of Iowa College of Education: Belin-Blank Center. http://www2.education.uiowa.edu/belinblank/Students/ioapa/About.aspx (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
3. Iowa Connections Academy. http://www.connectionsacademy.com/iowa-online-school/home.aspx, Iowa Virtual Academy. http://iava.k12.com/ (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
4. Iowa Department of Education: Intel Tech Program. https://www.educateiowa.gov/pk-12/educator-quality/intel-teach-program (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
5. Iowa Learning Online: Resources. http://www.iowalearningonline.org/resources.cfm#guidance (Retrieved August 14, 2015)

# Kansas

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | Unclear |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

Kansas does not have a state virtual school, but has an approval process for the state's digital programs, many of which are fully online.[1] Kansas's virtual education requirements state that, "*a. Kansas licensed/certified teachers must be employed to provide instruction, assistance and support to students. b. Teachers must be licensed/certified in their content area.*"[2] Currently Kansas has no requirements for initial teacher licensure and/or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

Kansas provides practitioners with a unique professional development opportunity through the Infinitect project.[3] This ongoing project provides professional learning in the uses of technology in the classroom and has been an ongoing initiative in Kansas for the past ten years. COLSD reviewers were unable to locate professional development for online, blended, or digital learning environments that included working with the unique needs of students with disabilities.

1. K12: Kansas. http://www.kpk12.com/states/kansas/ (Retrieved August 13, 2015).
2. Virtual Education Requirements for Kansas (August 2008,p. 2), http://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/TLA/GraduationandSchoolChoice/Virtual/VirtualEducationRequirementsinKansas.pdf (Retrieved August 13, 2015)
3. Infinitec. http://www.myinfinitec.org (Retrieved August 13, 2015)

# Kentucky

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) does not operate an online school, but both Barren Academy of Virtual and Expanded Learning (BAVEL) and Jefferson County Public e-School (JCPSeSchool) are operated by public school districts in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and KDE provides oversight of those districts.

Kentucky does not have an initial teacher licensure and/or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

KDE's Office of Next Generation Schools and Districts, Division of Student Success, offered professional development and technical assistance for online, blended, and digital learning in more than 28 districts during the 2014-15 school year, as well as regional professional development, according to Kentucky's response to the COLSD survey.

However, COLSD reviewers found that KDE's professional development page did not list professional development to support online or digital learning skills for teachers.

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Unclear |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | Unclear |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

# Louisiana

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Unclear |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

Louisiana offers fully online schools, including online charter schools.[1] The Louisiana Supplemental Course Academy (SCA) offers online high school courses. High school courses supplemented by SCA target "career and technical preparation, advanced coursework not available at the home school, dual enrollment, and intensive remediation for students struggling to stay on pace for graduation."[2] Louisiana does not currently have a state sponsored school.

Louisiana also lacks an initial teacher licensure or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

Tools and professional development resources are available for teachers to upgrade their skills in online, blended, or digital learning, and ways to work with students with disabilities.[3] Topics such as using free Internet sites to support accommodations and lesson development—as well as using an Apple mobile device to support modifying instruction—are included.[4]

1. Keeping Pace: Louisiana. http://www.kpk12.com/states/louisiana/ (Retrieved July 27, 2015)
2. Department of Education: Supplemental Course Academy. http://www.louisianabelieves.com/courses/supplemental-course-academy (Retrieved July 27, 2015)
3. Louisiana Department of Education: Online Registration System. http://www.solutionwhere.com/ldoe/cw/CourseByCateg.asp (Retrieved July 27, 2015)
4. Louisiana Department of Education. http://www.solutionwhere.com/ldoe/cw/showcourse.asp?1425, http://www.solutionwhere.com/ldoe/cw/showcourse.asp?3181 (Retrieved July 27, 2015)

# Maine

Maine's two fully online charter schools are the Maine Connections Academy and Maine Virtual Academy.[1] The schools are managed or delivered with state oversight and are funded with state subsidy funds. A state charter school committee oversees the charter schools' programs. The schools also receive federal funds and are subject to state monitoring of their compliance with IDEA and state regulations. The Maine Online Learning Program (MOLP) requires that all online learning providers are approved by the Maine Department of Education.[2]

According to Maine's application for online learning providers, teachers must hold valid a teaching certificate in the content area that aligns with the online course they will be teaching. Teachers must also receive preservice and in-service professional development that includes topics pertaining to class management, technical aspects of online education, monitoring students' assessment, and other training.[3]

In addition, the Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI) hopes to increase the uses and advantages of technology by equipping students with personal learning technology and increasing the amount of professional development available to teachers in the areas of online, blended, and digital learning.[4]

MLTI has begun to include courses such as Students with Special Needs Using MLTI and Universal Design for Learning as awareness increases for the need to understand how to better serve students with disabilities in the digital learning environment.[5]

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence* |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Unclear* |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. Maine Connections Academy: About Our Online School in Maine. http://www.connectionsacademy.com/maine-virtual-school/about (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
2. Department of Education: Maine Online Learning Program. http://www.maine.gov/education/technology/molp/ (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
3. Maine Department of Education: Application for approved status as an online learning provider. http://www.maine.gov/education/technology/molp/application.pdf (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
4. Maine Learning Technology Initiative. http://maine.gov/mlti/about/index.shtml (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
5. Maine Learning Technology Initiative: Supporting Students with Special Needs Using MLTI and Universal Design for Learning Workshops. http://www.maine.gov/tools/whatsnew/index.php?topic=MLTIP-D&id=436653&v=Calendar (Retrieved August 14, 2015)

# Maryland

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence* |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

Maryland law does not permit fully online schools and does not sponsor an online program. Maryland instead requires that the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) approve all online courses in order for students to receive high school credit. "Students may take a course through Maryland Virtual School (MVS) only with the permission of the local system and the school principal. Credit can only be awarded for MSDE-approved online courses."[1]

Teachers are not currently required to hold any certification or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

MDSE does offer professional development options in the area of digital learning, including:

- Learn to Blog
- The Connected Educator: Learning and Leading in the Digital Age
- Introduction to Social Media
- Creating a Social Media Presence
- The Edcamp Model
- Digital Learning in the Elementary Classroom[2]

The documentation was unclear to COLSD reviewers if any of the professional development courses on digital learning topics included strategies in working with students with disabilities.

1. Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities. http://mdk12online.org/ (Retrieved August 23, 2015)
2. Maryland Professional Learning: Fall 2015. https://msde.blackboard.com/webapps/blackboard/content/listContent.jsp?course_id=_552_1&content_id=_68190_1(Retrieved August 23, 2015)

# Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has an Office of Digital Learning dedicated to providing information and resources to stakeholders. The site articulates three types of public school arrangements that qualify to be Commonwealth of Massachusetts Virtual Schools (CMVS). These types of schools include a statewide CMVS "that can only be sponsored by an educational collaborative or a school district."[1] This type of CMVS must be able to serve students across Massachusetts. A CMVS can also be formed through a collaborative or multi-district agreement. Students served by this type of arrangement must reside in one of the member districts.[2] A single district can form a CMVS that is allowed only to serve students residing in that district.[3] Currently two CMVSs are approved and provide fully online options for qualifying students.[4]

Massachusetts' teacher license types and general requirements do not include online, blended, and digital learning.

The Office of Digital Learning provides digital learning tools including PBS LearningMedia, Federal Registry for Educational Excellence, and Out of Print: Reimagining the K-12 Textbook in the Digital Age.[5] In addition, professional learning resources are available to support the development of digital literacy in the K-12 classroom setting.

COLSD reviewers identified two professional development courses that are built to equip teachers with competencies needed to work with students with disabilities in the digital learning environment:

Assistive Technology and UDL: The Tools that Facilitate Learning Technology for Students with Visual Impairments and Multiple Disabilities[6]

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence* |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence* |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence* |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | Unclear* |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: Office of Digial Learning. http://www.doe.mass.edu/odl/cmvs/ (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
2. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: Office of Digital Learning. http://www.doe.mass.edu/odl/cmvs/ (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
3. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: Office of Digital Learning. http://www.doe.mass.edu/odl/cmvs/ (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
4. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: Office of Digital Learning FAQ. http://www.doe.mass.edu/odl/cmvs/faq.html?faq=ParentsStudents (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
5. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: Office of Digital Learning. http://www.doe.mass.edu/odl/cmvs/ (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
6. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: Office of Digital Learning: Professional Development. http://www.doe.mass.edu/pd/offerings.html (Retrived August 14, 2015)

# Michigan

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence* |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence* |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence* |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence* |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence* |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

Michigan currently has 10 Public School Academy (PSA) Cyber Schools and several other fully online programs at the individual district level. In addition, the Michigan Virtual School (MVS) provides supplemental online course offerings to Michigan students. MVS does not attach credit or award diplomas, but students do earn a certificate of completion from the local school district in which they are currently enrolled.[1]

Michigan offers a teaching endorsement in the area of Educational Technology. This endorsement requires teachers to "Successfully complete and reflect upon collaborative online learning experiences; demonstrate an understanding of and the ability to create an online learning experience and demonstrate continued growth in technology operations and concepts, including strategies for teaching and learning in an online environment."[2] COLSD reviewers were unable to determine if this endorsement includes the skills needed to work with students with disabilities.

Michigan provides professional development listings on the MVU website. The listing includes the inaugural iEducator 21st Century Digital Learning Corps that offers "extensive professional development in online and blended learning, attendance and presentation opportunities at leading edge state and national conferences, mentoring by an experienced MVS® educator."[3]

1. Michigan Virtual School: Getting Started with Online Learning. http://www.mivhs.org/Getting-Started (Retrireved August 13, 2015)
2. Standards for the Preparation of Teachers: Educational Technology, Adopted by the Michigan Board of Education May, 2008. www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/EducTech_NP_SBEApprvl.5-13-08.A_236954_7.doc (Retrieved August 13, 2015)
3. Michigan Virtual School: First-of-its-kind program prepares new teachers for 21st century teaching. http://www.mivhs.org/News/ID/301/First-of-its-kind-program-prepares-new-teachers-for-21st-century-teaching (Retrieved August 13, 2015)

# Minnesota

Minnesota offers several fully online education options that include charter schools and a number of single- and multi-district programs.[1] In addition, the Minnesota Learning Commons (MnLC), a joint initiative between the Minnesota Department of Education and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, provides a centralized portal for online resources, educational opportunities, and tools.[2]

The MnLC features the Open Education Resources project that provides resources and rubrics to share for public education.[3]

Minnesota does not currently have an initial teacher licensure or endorsement in online, blended, and digital learning.

The Minnesota Department of Education does provide professional development in the area of digital learning for students with disabilities:

*Apps to Support a Successful Transition*
*Go-To-Training — iPad Tips, Tricks and Apps Everyone Should Know℠*
*Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) — Are your materials accessible?*
*Google Chrome as Assistive Technology*
*Browser Based Assistive Technology*
*EReader Apps*
*Accessibility in a Bring Your Own Device Environment*
*Jigs and Gadgets: DIY Assistive Technology*
*Accessibility tools in Microsoft Word and PowerPoint*
*Alternative Access to Mobile Devices* [4]

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Unclear |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | Unclear |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. Minnesota Department of Education: Online Learning Providers. http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/EnrollChoice/Online/OnlineLearningProviders/004409 (Retrieved August 23, 2015)
2. Minnesota Learning Commons. https://mnlearningcommons.us/app/custom/about (Retrieved August 23, 2015)
3. Minnesota Learning Commons: Open Education Resources Project. https://mnlearningcommons.us/app/custom/project/Open_Education_Resources (Retrieved August 23, 2015)
4. Minnesota Department of Education: Special Education Webinars 2014-2015. http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=057904&RevisionSelectionMethod=latestReleased&Rendition=primary (Retrieved August 23, 2015)

# Mississippi

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

The Mississippi Virtual Public School (MVPS) is the primary online learning option for Mississippi students.[1] MVPS is run by a private provider, Connections Academy.[2] Some district online programs are also available in Mississippi.[3]

Mississippi does not have an initial teacher licensure or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

Mississippi has a professional development calendar posted, but COLSD reviewers were unable to locate resources or programs in the area of online, blended, or digital learning for students with disabilities.[4]

1. Mississippi Department of Education: Mississippi Virtual Public School. http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/PN/VPS (Retrieved August 20, 2015)
2. Mississippi Virtual Public School. http://www.connectionsacademy.com/mississippi-school/home.aspx (Retrieved August 20, 2015)
3. Keeping Pace: Mississippi. http://www.kpk12.com/states/mississippi/ (Retrieved August 20, 2015)
4. Mississippi Department of Education: MDE Calendar. https://districtaccess.mde.k12.ms.us/Lists/MDE%20PD%20Calendar/calendar.aspx (Retrieved August 20, 2015)

# Missouri

The Missouri Virtual Instruction Program is a state sponsored school that offers 150 different online courses.[1] Missouri also has part- and full-time online options for Missouri students through other schools, such as the Missouri Department of Education Online MU High School.[2]

Missouri does not have an initial teacher licensure or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

COLSD reviewers were unable to find/locate professional development in the area of online, blended, or digital learning and students with disabilities.

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: Guidance and Counseling Digest (2014). http://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/March%20%20Digest.pdf (Retrieved August 23, 2015)
2. Mizzou K-12 Online: Program Options. http://mizzouk12online.missouri.edu/?page_id=1177 (Retrieved August 23, 2015)

# Montana

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

The Montana Digital Academy (MTDA) is a state funded, tuition-free statewide program.[1] The MTDA is the only online program that offers statewide online learning services.[2]

Montana does not have an initial teacher licensure or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

COLSD reviewers were unable to locate professional development in the area of online, blended, or digital learning for students with disabilities.

1. onlineschools.com: Montana. http://www.onlineschools.com/report-cards/montana-digital-academy (Retrieved August 23, 2015)
2. Keeping Pace: Montana. http://www.kpk12.com/states/montana/ (Retrieved August 23, 2015)

# Nebraska

Online schools operate in Nebraska but none are sponsored by the state or by a local district, and the documentation is unclear whether any offer full time instruction.[1] Nebraska learners can find online programs such as the University of Nebraska High School which operates under the University of Nebraska Online Worldwide.[2] Currently Nebraska does not have initial teacher licensure and/or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

COLSD reviewers were unable to identify professional development courses posted online for Nebraska, but a statewide initiative called BlendEd is available through the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) and The Educational Service Unit Coordinating Council. BlendEd includes the following components:
Learning Object Repository (LOR)
Learning Management System (LMS)
Federated Directory System (single sign-on)
Statewide Professional Development System (PD)
Evaluation Components[3]

These offerings do not appear to address the instructional needs of students with disabilities.

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. Best High Schools Online. http://besthighschoolsonline.com/locations/usa/nebraska/ (Retrieved August 23, 2015)
2. University of Nebraska High School. http://highschool.nebraska.edu/About-UNHS/Why-UNHS/University-Based.aspx (Retrieved August 23, 2015)
3. Nebraska ESU Coordinating Council: What is Blended Learning. http://www.esucc.org/BLENDED (Retrieved Augsut 23, 2015)

# Nevada

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

Nevada has many fully online school and several supplemental programs. Nevada does not have a state sponsored school.[1]

Nevada does not have an initial teacher license or endorsement in online, blended, and digital learning.

COLSD reviewers were unable to locate professional development on the Nevada Department of Education website.

1. Keeping Pace: Nevada. http://www.kpk12.com/states/nevada/ (Retrieved July 27, 2015)

# New Hampshire

"The only online school currently approved by the New Hampshire Department of Education is Virtual Learning Academy (VLACS) in Exeter, NH."[1] VLACS offers full-time online learning options that are open to out-of-state as well as in-state students.[2]

New Hampshire does not require online teachers to obtain initial teaching certification or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital information.

Some professional development options are posted on the New Hampshire Department of Education's website, but COLSD reviewers were unable to identify professional development or resources to support online, blended, or digital learning initiatives, or to support instruction for students with disabilities.[3]

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Unclear |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence* |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | Unclear* |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence* |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | Unclear |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. New Hampshire Department of Education: Approved Charter Schools. www.education.nh.gov/instruction/school_improve/charter/approved.htm (Retrieved July 27, 2015)
2. Keeping Pace: New Hampshire. http://www.kpk12.com/states/new-hampshire/ (Retrieved July 27, 2015)
3. New Hampshire Department of Education: Technical Assistance and Professional Development. http://education.nh.gov/instruction/integrated/technical_assistance_professional_development.htm (Retrieved July 27, 2015)

# New Jersey

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | Unclear |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

There are several full- and part-time online schools in New Jersey. Newark provides a fully online experience, but students are allowed to participate only if they reside within the school district boundary.[1] New Jersey does not have a state sponsored online school.

New Jersey does not have an initial teacher license or endorsement in online, blended, or digital learning.

COLSD reviewers were unable to find any trainings posted on the State of New Jersey Department of Education website.[2]

1. K12: All Participating Schools in New Jersey. http://www.k12.com/participating-schools.html?state=new-jersey (Retrieved August 3, 2015)
2. State of New Jersey Department of Education: Special Education. http://www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/ (Retrieved August 3, 2015)

# New Mexico

Innovative Digital Education and Learning New Mexico (IDEAL-New Mexico) is the state sponsored school offering a platform for online and blended learning options.[1] New Mexico schools can partner with IDEAL-New Mexico take advantage of the statewide learning management system.[2]

Teachers interested in becoming an eTeacher for IDEAL-New Mexico must have three years of teaching experience at the secondary level, a content area endorsement, and online learning experience.[3]

Applicants must apply for IDEAL-New Mexico eTeacher training which includes face-to-face training as well as the completion of an online course.[4]

New Mexico does not currently have an initial teaching licensure and/or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

COLSD reviewers were unable to locate professional development posted online.

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Unclear |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. Ideal New Mexico http://idealnewmexico.org/ (Retrieved July 27, 2015)
2. Ideal New Mexico http://idealnewmexico.org/ (Retrieved July 27, 2015)
3. Ideal New Mexico: Become an eTeacher http://idealnewmexico.org/educators/become-an-e-teacher/ (Retrieved July 27, 2015)
4. Ideal New Mexico: Become an eTeacher http://idealnewmexico.org/educators/become-an-e-teacher/ (Retrieved July 27, 2015)

# New York

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

New York state policy allows students to take online credits, but COLSD could not find fully online schools.[1] There is not a state sponsored virtual school, although NYSED launched a statewide virtual learning network in order to support online learning.[2]

New York does not have requirements for additional teacher licensure or endorsements in online, blended, or digital learning environments.[3]

There are professional development opportunities available through the New York State Department of Education website, but it is unclear if there are resources available for online, digital, or blended learning environments or for students with disabilities in these settings.[4]

1. New York State Department of Education Technology http://www.p12.nysed.gov/technology/Online/online.html (Retrieved May 14, 2015)
2. Online and Blended Learning in New York State http://www.p12.nysed.gov/technology/Online/online.html (Retrieved May 14, 2015)
3. New York State Department of Education Teaching Certification http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/perm.html (Retrieved May 14, 2015)
4. Engage New York https://www.engageny.org/tle-library (Retrieved May 14, 2015)

# North Carolina

North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS) is the second largest state-sponsored online school in the US.[1] NCVPS offers North Carolina students online course options and a series of other services designed to help students move toward post secondary goals.[2] In addition, two virtual charter schools opened in North Carolina for the 2015-2016 school year.

The North Carolina State Board of Education (NC SBOE) requires teachers to meet the following criteria to teach at NCVPS:
NC Standard Professional II (SPII) teaching license in specific content area

NCVPS teacher applicants should also be prepared to demonstrate the following:
Excellent computer skills
Quality interactions with students in online environment
Adhere to regular office hours[3]

North Carolina currently does not have an initial teacher licensure or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

COLSD reviewers were able to find several trainings online for NC teachers related to digital learning and students with disabilities: Lights! Camera! Action!: Using Digital Media to Reinforce Social Skills[4], Assistive Technology? It's in Their Pockets!, Using Technology to Support Special Education Teachers and Students in Math.[5]

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | Unclear |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | Unclear |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | Unclear |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. North Carolina Virtual Public School: Getting to Know NCVPS. http://www.ncvps.org/index.php/getting-to-know-ncvps-2/ (Retrieved August 3, 2015)
2. North Carolina Virtual Public School. http://www.ncvps.org/ (Retrieved August 3, 2015)
3. North Carolina Virtual Public School: Teach for NCVPS. http://www.ncvps.org/index.php/teach-for-ncvps/ (Retrieved August 3, 2015)
4. Public Schools of North Carolina: Using Digital Media to Reinforce Social Skills. http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/conferences-profdev/annual-conference/2014/materials/30.pdf/view (Retrieved August 3, 2015)
5. North Carolina Public Schools: 64th Conference on Working with Exceptional Children. http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/conferences-profdev/annual-conference/2014/materials/45.pdf (Retrieved August 3, 2015)

# North Dakota

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Unclear |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

The North Dakota Center for Distance Education (NDCDE) is a state-sponsored school that provides online education to students grades 6-12.[1] The NDCDE also provides instructional support for online educational settings.

COLSD reviewers were unable to find evidence of an initial licensure or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning. However, North Dakota does require online teachers' certification for teachers working for NDCDE.[2]

The North Dakota Department of Education refers teachers to North Dakota State University (NDSU) Distance Education and Continuing Education for professional development. There are a number of classes for online, blended, and digital learning made available through NDSU, but nothing specifically for online, blended, or digital learning and students with disabilities.[3]

1. North Dakota Center for Distance Education.http://www.ndcde.org/Home.aspx (Retrieved August 27, 2015)
2. Keeping Pace: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice (2014). http://www.kpk12.com/wp-content/uploads/EEG_KP2014-fnl-lr.pdf (Retrieved August 27, 2015)
3. North Dakota State University Distance and Continuing Education: List of All Classes. https://www.ndsu.edu/dce/classes/listing/ (Retrieved August 27, 2015)

# Ohio

The Ohio Department of Education offers fully online learning opportunities through E-Community schools. Parents and students can view a list of Ohio online community schools and choose from statewide online schools or district-sponsored online community schools.[1]

Ohio also offers access to an e-learning platform called ilearnOhio. This statewide platform is funded by the Ohio General Assembly.[2] The ilearnOhio e-learning platform includes a resource repository, learning management system, training and support, and many online course options.[3] Ohio currently does not require initial teacher licensure and/or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning. In addition COLSD reviewers were unable to find professional development opportunities posted on the Ohio Department of Education website.

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence* |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. Ohio Department of Education: E-schools. https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Quality-School-Choice/Community-Schools/eSchools (Retrieved August 23, 2015)
2. ilearn Ohio. http://ilearnohio.org/about/ (Retrieved August 23, 2015)
3. ilearn Ohio. http://ilearnohio.org/about/ (Retrieved August 23, 2015)

# Oklahoma

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

Oklahoma has several fully online schools but does not currently sponsor a state virtual school.[1] Students have access to supplemental programs during the state's annual Open Transfer period.[2] Oklahoma teachers working in the online learning environment are not required to hold an initial teacher licensure and/or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning. Even though COLSD reviewers were unable to find professional development for the digital learning environment posted on the state website, the Oklahoma State Department of Education clearly states in the following statement their commitment to appropriate preparation for teachers working in digital learning environments:
"High quality, ongoing, and sustained professional development is critical to the successful integration of technology in the classroom. In support of this effort, the Instructional Technology/Telecommunications section actively provides face-to-face and online learning opportunities."[3]

As states move forward in their commitment to consider online, blended, and digital learning environments when making provisions for students with disabilities, a need exists to address issues such as accessibility to educational materials and accommodations in the new learning environment. Oklahoma's recently revised guide on accessible educational materials[4] and the the 2014 special education accommodations guide[5] are examples of how these provisions can be articulated and utilized by stakeholders.

1. OnlineSchools.com: Oklahoma. http://www.onlineschools.com/high-school/oklahoma (Retrieved July 27, 2015)
2. Keeping Pace: Oklahoma. http://www.kpk12.com/states/oklahoma/ (Retrieved July 27, 2015)
3. Oklahoma State Department of Education. http://ok.gov/sde/instructional-technologytelecommunications-professional-development (Retrieved July 27, 2015)
4. Technical Assistance Document Oklahoma Procedures for Providing Accessible Educational Materials (AEM)–(Oklahoma State Department of Education Special Education Services, 2014). http://www.ok.gov/abletech/documents/AEM%20TA%20document%203.12.15.pdf (Retreved July 27, 2015)
5. Oklahoma Special Education Handbook. (Oklahoma State Deptof Education, July 2014) http://ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/documents/files/Oklahoma%20Special%20Education%20Handbook_0.pdf (Retrived July 27, 2015)

# Oregon

Oregon has several fully online schools at the district level, and the Oregon Virtual School District (OVSD).[1] The Oregon Virtual School District is a program operated through the Oregon Department of Education and works with a consortium of online education providers to increase access and availability to Oregon teachers and students.[2]

Oregon does not have an initial teacher licensure and/or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.[3]

The OVSD does offer a few professional development trainings that include courses such as Cyber safety, What is Moodle?, and Using Podcasts and Videos in Lesson Plans.[4] COLSD reviewers were unable to locate professional development in online, blended, or digital learning and students with disabilities.

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. Keeping Pace: An Annual Review of Policy and Practice (2014). http://www.kpk12.com/wp-content/uploads/EEG_KP2014-fnl-lr.pdf (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
2. Oregon Department of Education: Oregon Virtual School District. http://orvsd.org/about-orvsd (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
3. Oregon Department of Education: Oregon Virtual School District http://orvsd.org/about-orvsd (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
4. Oregon Department of Education http://orvsd.org/explore (Retrieved August 14, 2015)

# Pennsylvania

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | Unclear |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | Unclear* |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Unclear* |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

The Pennsylvania Department of Education does not sponsor an online school, but currently recognizes 14 cyber charter schools across the state.[1] Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School (PA Cyber) is one example of a charter school that provides supplemental online learning for grades K-12 and serves a significant number of learners not only in Pennsylvania, but also across the nation.[2]

Pennsylvania recognizes a professional teaching endorsement in online instruction for grades PK-12 that equips teachers with digital instructional design skills, computerized assessments training, and teaching strategies working in the online environment in alignment with iNACOL standards.[3]

COLSD reviewers found limited professional development opportunities posted on the Pennsylvania Department of Education website, and were unable to locate professional development linked to digital learning and students with disabilities.

1. Pennsylvania Department of Education: 2014-2015 Cyber Charter Schools. http://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/K-12/Charter%20Schools/2014-15%20Cyber%20Charter%20Schools.pdf (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
2. PACyber: The Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School. http://www.pacyber.org/ (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
3. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Enterprise Portal. http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/portal/server.pt/document/1421666/the_framework_for_online_instruction_program_endorsement_guidelines_pdf (Retrived August 14, 2015)

# Rhode Island

Rhode Island does not have a state sponsored school or any fully online programs.

Rhode Island instructors who provide online credit-bearing coursework must meet one of the following criteria: "a) K-12 teachers providing online instruction directly to students in an online environment shall be content certified in the state from which they are providing the online content; or b) K-12 site-based teachers who are responsible for supervising students participating in credit-bearing online coursework that is not provided directly by an online instructor shall have appropriate Rhode Island content certification; or c) Instructors providing instruction for dual enrollment courses, which are identified as credit-bearing courses, shall be appropriately qualified from an accredited post secondary institution."[1]

Rhode Island does not have an initial teacher licensure and/or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

The Rhode Island Digital Consortium provides a number of professional development opportunities in the area of digital learning, including a Google Summer Institute, URI—Summer Institute in Digital Literacy, and Innovation Powered by Technology conference: Accelerating Personalization.[2]

COLSD reviewers were unable to locate professional development content specific to the online learning environment and students with disabilities.

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence* |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence* |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. State of Rhode Island Regulations of the Board of Regents Governing Virtual Learning Education in Rhode Island 2012. http://sos.ri.gov/documents/archives/regdocs/released/pdf/DESE/6874.pdf (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
2. Rhode Island Department of Education: Rhode Island Digital Consortioum. http://www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/EducationPrograms/VirtualLearning/DigitalLearningConsortium.aspx (Retrieved August 14, 2015)

# South Carolina

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

South Carolina has several fully online schools as well as the South Carolina Virtual School Program (Virtual SC) that is sponsored by the South Carolina Department of Education.[1]

South Carolina offers an Online Teaching endorsement that prepares teachers to teach in an online environment.[2] It is one of the few states that integrates skills in an online environment with students with disabilities. The endorsement credential offers an elective course, Enhancing Online Course Design for Students with Disabilities, as part of the endorsement.[3]

The eLearning South Carolina website has several professional development courses that support teachers in online, blended, and digital learning. Some examples of professional development topics include: Cell Phones as Learning Tools, Collaboration in the Digital Classroom, Facebook for Educators, and Finding the Best Educational Resources on the Web.[4]

It is unclear if any of the digital learning courses include working with students with disabilities. For example, one course, Technology, Teaching, and Universal Design, may apply to students with special needs, but COLSD reviewers were unable to find more than one example of this type of professional development topic.[5]

1. Virtual SC. https://virtualsc.org/ (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
2. South Carolina Department of Education. https://ed.sc.gov/agency/ee/Educator-Services/Licensure/documents/CertManual_Mar2015.pdf (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
3. South Carolina Department of Education. https://ed.sc.gov/agency/ee/Educator-Services/Licensure/documents/CertManual_Mar2015.pdf (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
4. South Carolina Department of Education: eLearning South Carolina. http://www.elearningscpd.com/portal/?page_id=132 (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
5. South Carolina Department of Education: eLearning South Carolina. http://www.elearningscpd.com/portal/?page_id=132 (Retrieved August 14, 2015)

# South Dakota

The South Dakota Department of Education approves all courses offered through the South Dakota Virtual School.[1] Students from South Dakota also have a fully online option through Black Hills Online Learning Community—with approval from their district.[2]

South Dakota does not currently have an initial teacher licensure or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

COLSD reviewers were unable to find professional development resources that included online, blended, and digital learning and students with disabilities.

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. South Dakota Virtual School. https://sdvs.k12.sd.us/ (Retrieved August 20, 2015)
2. K12: All Participating Schools in South Dakota. http://www.k12.com/participating-schools.html?state=south-dakota (Retrieved August 20, 2015)

# Tennessee

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

Tennessee does not have a state sponsored virtual school but does have several fully online options for students.[1] The state has an office of personalized learning that works to develop and strengthen online, blended, and digital learning models in school districts throughout the state.[2]

Tennessee does not currently have an initial teacher licensure or endorsement in online, blended, or digital learning.

The Tennessee Department of Education provides professional development opportunities through PBS Learning Media.[3] The PBS modules are built for Tennessee teachers and include the following topics:

*Will Online Courses Replace Classrooms?*
*Be Kind Online*
*Online Chat Begins at Home*
*Teaching and Learning in the Digital Age*[4]

1. Tennessee Virtual Academy. http://tnva.k12.com/ (Retrieved August 20, 2015)
2. Office of Personalized Learning, Tennessee Department of Education. http://tn.gov/education/topic/personalized-learning (Retrived August 20, 2015)
3. PBS Learning Media. http://tn.pbslearningmedia.org/search/?q=online+learning&selected_facets= (Retrieved August 20, 2015)
4. PBS Learning Media. http://tn.pbslearningmedia.org/search/?q=online+learning&selected_facets= (Retrieved August 20, 2015)

# Texas

Texas offers fully online options through the Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN). This state-sponsored entity is under the leadership of the commissioner of education and approves all TxVSN courses, professional development for online teachers, and has fiscal responsibility for the network.[1]

"Prior to teaching a course through the Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN), online teachers must be:
Texas certified in the course subject area and grade level taught, and have successfully completed approved professional development."[2]

Teachers also may be required to complete an approved professional development course. Approved courses listed include: Beginning Online Teachers and Beginning and Experienced Online Teachers, both of which are offered by a number of providers.[3] Additional professional development includes topics that support ways to make online courses accessible to students with disabilities. Course topics include Legal Reasons to Support Accessibility, Basic Web Design Techniques, and Video Captioning.

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Unclear |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Unclear |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. Texas Education Agency: Texas Virtual School Network. http://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=4840&menu_id=2147483665 (Retrieved August 23, 2015)
2. Texas Education Agency: Online Teaching & Eligibility Requirements. http://txvsn.org/providers/online-teaching-eligibility-reqs/ (Retrieved August 23, 2015)
3. Texas Education Agency: Professional Development. http://txvsn.org/professional-development/ (Retrieved August 23, 2015)

# Utah

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Unclear |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

Utah has a state virtual school (the Utah Electronic High School), four statewide fully online charter schools, and many districts offering online courses via the Statewide Online Education Program (SOEP), which is among the first and best-known course choice programs in the country.[1]

Electronic High School for Utah provides supplemental courses at no cost to students and offers open-entry/open-exit classes.[2] Teachers for the Electronic High School must be licensed by Utah and online teaching experience is preferred but not required. Teachers can work no more than part time for other schools.[3] Utah does not currently require licensure or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning in order to teach an online course.

Utah provides professional development through the Utah Professional Development Network (UPDN). The UPDN site provides teachers with materials, video-based coaching, webinars and other forms of professional development.[4] Although COLSD reviewers were unable to find professional development for teachers working in digital learning environments, a page within the site provides resources and learning opportunities in Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The UDL models provide teachers working in all learning environments with principles that can increase access and support to students with disabilities.[5]

1. Keeping Pace: Utah. http://www.kpk12.com/states/utah/ (Retrieved August 20, 2015)
2. Utah State Office of Education: Electronic High School. http://www.schools.utah.gov/edonline/Electronic-High-School-%28EHS%29.aspx (Retrieved August 20, 2015)
3. Utah State Office of Education: Electronic High School. http://www.schools.utah.gov/edonline/Electronic-High-School-%28EHS%29.aspx (Retrieved August 20, 2015)
4. Utah Professional Development Network. http://www.updnetwork.org/cms/index.php (Retrieved August 20, 2015)
5. Utah Professional Development Network: UDL. http://www.updnetwork.org/cms/index.php/resources-by-topic/universal-design-for-learning-udl (Retrieved August 20, 2015)

# Vermont

The Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative (VTVLC) is a state sponsored entity that facilitates online courses for students.[1] VTVLC offers a full time enrollment option for Vermont high school students.[2]

Vermont requires online teachers to obtain the Online Teaching Specialist (OTS) endorsement in order to be considered qualified to teach online courses.[3]

VTVLC offers professional development through the Intel® Teach Program. Training for Vermont teachers includes topics that "engage students with digital learning, including digital content, Web 2.0, social networking, and online tools and resources."[4] COLSD reviewers were unable to locate professional development in digital learning and students with disabilities.

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Unclear |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative. http://www.vtvlc.org/ (Retrieved August 20, 2015)
2. Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative: Full-Flex Pathway. http://www.vtvlc.org/full-flex/ (Retrieved August 20, 2015)
3. Vermont Virtual Learning Cooperative: Online & Blended Learning Conference 2015. http://pd.vtvlc.org/
4. http://pd.vtvlc.org/intel-teach-affiliate/ (Retrieved August 20, 2015)

# Virginia

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Unclear* |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Unclear |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

Virtual Virginia (VVa) is a program of the Virginia Department of Education and offers online courses targeted at world languages, core academics, elective courses, and advanced placement classes.[1] Virginia has additional online options (both full- and part-time) offered through online education vendors such as K12.[2]

Virginia does not currently have an initial teaching licensure and/or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning.

The Virginia Department of Education website provides trainings for teachers in online learning environments. Training courses include: Planning and Implementing Online Courses for Students, Online Course Design, Teaching Students in Online Courses , Teaching Students in Blended Classrooms, Advanced Online Teaching Skills and Techniques, and Mentoring Virtual School Students.[3]

COLSD reviewers were unable to locate trainings for online, blended, and digital learning and students with disabilities.

1. Virtual Virginia. http://www.virtualvirginia.org/aboutus/index.html (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
2. K12: All Participating Schools in Virginia. http://www.k12.com/participating-schools.html?state=virginia (Retrieved August 14, 2015)
3. Virginia Department of Education: Professional Development. http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/technology/professional_dev/online_teachers.shtml (Retrieved August 14, 2015)

# Washington

Washington has several full and part time online learning options.[1] The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) Digital Learning Department (DLD) is a state-led initiative that approves providers and also offers online courses to districts.[2]

Washington does not currently have an initial licensure or endorsement for online, blended, or digital learning.

The Digital Learning Department of the Washington Department of Education posts professional development opportunities and assistance for teachers.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction provides professional development opportunities in collaboration with several stakeholders—including Microsoft—that include topics such as Digital Information Literacy, Digital Tools for Personalized and Blended Learning, 21st Century Teacher Toolbox, and Don't Panic: Managing Devices in the Classroom.[3] There are also several links to Open Educational Resources (OER) that teachers can take advantage of that include OER quality rubrics, reading and video materials, and webinars related to the use and advantages of OER.[4] In addition, approved subject matter materials such as Algebra and English are available.[5]

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Unclear |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. Keeping Pace (Washington). http://www.kpk12.com/states/washington/ (Retrieved September 2, 2015)
2. Digital Learning Department: Online and Alternative Learning (State of Washington). http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/ (Retrieved September 2, 2015)
3. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1IvDSeX1maCwlSKLJGMYac-BrYUbSbSXds5SV-cp_Wb_M/edit
4. Digital Learning Department: OER Resources (State of Washington). http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/oer/resources.php (Retrieved September 2, 2015)
5. Digital Learning Department: OER Library (State of Washington). http://digitallearning.k12.wa.us/oer/library/resources/27 (Retrieved September 2, 2015)

# West Virginia

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Unclear |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence* |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | No with Evidence* |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence* |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence* |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

The West Virginia Virtual School (WVVS) provides online courses in order to provide additional course options for West Virginia students.[1] WVVS is supported by the West Virginia Department of Education and offers approximately 270 different courses.[2]

West Virginia does not currently offer an initial teacher licensure and/or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning. However, the West Virginia Department of Education provides a number of professional development opportunities that include:

*21st Century Instruction with Project Based Learning*
*Designing a Virtual Field Trip*
*Developing and Implementing WebQuests*
*Digital Story -Telling*[3]

There are also courses for teachers on how to design blended learning courses and collaborate in the digital classroom.[4] Center reviewers did not locate professional development and/or technical assistance initiatives in online, blended, or digital learning and students with disabilities.

1. West Virginia Department of Education: West Virginia Virtual School. http://virtualschool.k12.wv.us/vschool/index.html (Retrieved August 20, 2015).
2. Keeping Pace (West Virginia) http://www.kpk12.com/states/west-virginia/ (Retrieved August 20, 2015).
3. West Virginia Department of Education: e-Learning for Educators. http://wvde.state.wv.us/elearning/catalog.php (Retrieved August 20, 2015).
4. West Virginia Department of Education: e-Learning for Educators. http://wvde.state.wv.us/elearning/catalog.php (Retrieved August 20, 2015).

# Wisconsin

Wisconsin has 32 fully online charter schools and three schools proposed for academic year 2015-2016.[1] Wisconsin Virtual School (WVS) is Wisconsin's state sponsored school that provides supplemental online courses to middle and high school students.[2] In addition, the Wisconsin eSchool Network partners with districts to give access to digital learning resources and best practices guidance for online and digital instruction among other services.[3] These two entities, in conjunction with the Department of Public Instruction, make up the Wisconsin Digital Learning Collaborative which works on behalf of more than 230 districts to provide support and guidance.[4]

Wisconsin does not currently have an initial teacher licensure or endorsement for online, blended, or digital learning.

The Wisconsin eSchool Network provides professional development options in online learning, including the following topics:

Teaching in an Online Learning Model
Teaching in a Blended Learning Model Online
Facilitation: Taming the World of Online Learning
Advanced Strategies for Online or Blended Instruction
Teaching Strategies in a Digital Environment[5]

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Unclear |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | Unclear |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Unclear |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Unclear* |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Unclear |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Virtual Charter Schools 2014-2015. http://sms.dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sms/pdf/cs_2015_VirtualSchs.pdf (Retrieved September 2, 2015).
2. Wisconsin Virtual School. http://www.wisconsinvirtualschool.org/ (Retrieved September 2, 2015)
3. Wisconsin eSchool Network. http://www.wisconsineschool.org/why-wen/about-wen/ (Retrieved September 2, 2015)
4. Wisconsin Virtual School: Wisconsin Digital Learning Collaborative. http://www.wisconsinvirtualschool.org/wdlchome.cfm (Retrieved September 2, 2015)
5. Wisconsin eSchool Network: Training & Professional Development. http://www.wisconsineschool.org/resources/professional-learning/ (Retrieved September 2, 2015)

# Wyoming

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Unclear |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

Wyoming provides virtual learning support and guidance to the state through the Wyoming Switchboard Network (WSN).[1] The WSN approves distance education providers and lists partnering providers on the network. Wyoming does not have a state virtual school.

Wyoming does not have an initial teacher license or endorsement for online, blended, or digital learning.

COLSD reviewers were able to locate one professional development course in the area of blended learning on the Wyoming Department of Education website: Blended and Balanced Instruction: A Starter Toolkit to Embed Direct Instruction Performance Tasks with Authentic Projects.[2] However, COLSD reviewers were unable to find any other trainings pertaining to online, blended, or digital learning and students with disabilities.

1. Wyoming Department of Education: Distance Learning Providers. http://edu.wyoming.gov/in-the-classroom/technology/distance-ed/wyoming-switchboard-network/ (Retrieved July 27, 2015)
2. Wyoming Department of Education: Professional Development Opportunities.http://edu.wyoming.gov/educators/pd/ (Retrieved July 27, 2015)

# District of Columbia

There is one fully online school in the District of Columbia for elementary students, CAPCS, which is powered by K12.[1] There are no state sponsored virtual schools.[2]

The District of Columbia does not require teachers to have additional licensure to teach in online, blended, or digital learning environments.[3]

The District of Columbia Public Schools stated that they have increased spending on professional development opportunities, but COLSD was unable to locate specific examples of professional development on the District of Columbia Public Schools website.

"Our primary method of teacher support is through job-embedded professional development, which is one of the six elements of the Effective Schools Framework. To support our teachers, DCPS has 150 school-based Instructional Coaches, a position we added in the 2008-2009 school year. As integral members of school teams, coaches work to support teachers with planning, delivery and using student level data to inform instructional decisions to continuously improve teacher effectiveness. Coaches are non-evaluative. In addition to utilizing Instructional Coaches for job-embedded professional development, we also offer support to schools through a variety of other means, including workshops and training modules. Finally, we offer induction and mentoring to support the unique needs of our beginning teachers."[4]

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | Unclear |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Yes with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. CPACS Online Academy of Washington, D.C. http://capcs.org/our_campuses/online_academy.php (Retrieved July 15, 2015).
2. Keeping Pace Washington, D.C. http://www.kpk12.com/states/washington-dc/ (Retrieved July 15, 2015).
3. District of Columbia Educator Licensure and Accreditation, November 2014. http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/Educator%20Testing%20Flyer_11%202014_0.pdf (Retrieved July 15, 2015).
4. District of Columbia Public Schools Professional Development http://dcps.dc.gov/page/teacher-professional-development (Retrieved July 15, 2015).

# American Samoa

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

No fully online schools or state sponsored virtual schools were found in American Samoa.

There was nothing found on additional licensure or endorsements for teachers in online, digital, or blended learning settings.[1]

There are no professional development opportunities posted online.[2]

1. American Samoa Department of Education Teacher Quality http://www.doe.as/District/Department/27-TEACHER-QUALITY/2857-Untitled.html (Retrieved July 20, 2015)
2. American Samoa Department of Informational Technology Division http://www.doe.as/District/Department/18-Information-Technology-Division/Portal/Professional-Development (Retrieved July 20, 2015)

# Guam

After a search of the Guam Department of Education's website, COLSD reviewers were unable to locate evidence of online, blended, or digital learning. Staff also reviewed teacher certification requirements and found no indication of an initial certification or endorsement in online, blended, digital learning.

Only one professional development course, which was unrelated to digital learning, was listed on the Guam Department of Education's website. The University of Guam also had professional development for teachers listed, but the content did not include working with technology in the classroom.

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | Nothing Found |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

# N. Mariana Islands

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | No with Evidence |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

COLSD was unable to locate any fully online schools in the Northern Mariana Islands, but there was mention of the Instructional Technology Program that was formed to increase technology in the Public School System.[1]

There are no additional requirements for teacher licensure or endorsements in online, learning, or digital learning environments.[2]

No professional development opportunities were found on the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Department of Education website.[3]

1. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands https://www.cnmipss.org/online-courses/ (Retrieved July 16, 2015)
2. CNMI State Board of Education: Certification and Licensure Office https://www.cnmipss.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Teachers-Certification-Brochure-9.24a.pdf?701305 (Retrieved July 16, 2015)
3. Northern Mariana Island, 2011 Summer Professional Development https://www.cnmipss.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Updated-2011-Summer-PD-Schedule.pdf?90a493 (Retrieved July 16, 2015)

# U.S. Virgin Islands

Limited school-sponsored online learning activity occurs in the U.S. Virgin Islands. COLSD reviewers were unable to confirm that online learning opportunities were available for U.S. Virgin Island students, based on a search of the department of education's website. However, the U.S. Virgin Islands' Department of Education made the integration of technology in K-12 classrooms a priority in 2013. A two-year technology plan was drafted to address the growing need for technology skills and preparation for teachers. Currently, the professional development website is under construction, but a commitment to train teachers is clear in the statement provided by the technology plan:

"Provide school personnel (administrators, teachers etc) with sustained professional development in the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning in a measurable and cost-effective way."[1]

| Policy Questions | Results |
|---|---|
| Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA? | No with Evidence |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities? | Nothing Found |
| Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings? | Nothing Found |

** - State officials disagree with the Center's findings on this question.*

1. Virgin Islands Department of Education: Two Year Technology Plan, 2013-2015. http://www.vide.vi/data/userfiles/file/VIDE_Technology_Plan%20_2013-2015.pdf (Retrieved August 24, 2015)

# Appendix C

# 2015 State and Territory Policy Scan Survey Questions

# 2015 STATE AND TERRITORY POLICY SCAN

This document contains the results of the Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities (COLSD) 2015 State and Territory Scan. In this development activity, COLSD staff reviewed summaries from the Center's stakeholder forums, the Center's own research findings, and additional published research and policy literature to identify topical areas and issues. The Scan includes 14 questions and seven sub-questions centering on students with disabilities and the online learning environment. The questions have been grouped into nine topical areas:

- Access to Online Education
- Teacher Preparedness
- Appropriateness of Learning Environment
- Identification of Learners with Disabilities
- Provision of Disability Support Services
- Accessibility Issues
- Data and Data Privacy
- Parental Involvement
- Graduation

Please review the survey results for accuracy and completeness. If there are misinterpretations or omissions that should be corrected, please click on the link provided in the accompanying email and advance to the appropriate question to make changes as noted in the actual live survey.

After you review the data, if there are no corrections (you agree with all answers), please respond "No changes" to the email. Please note, if we do not receive a response from you within two weeks of this email, this state and territory scan information for your or territory state will be published unchanged on the COLSD website and annual publication.

## Response Scale for Multiple Choice Questions:

- **Nothing Found** - Necessary sources are not publically available.
- **No with Evidence** - All appropriate sources have been reviewed in order to confirm evidence does not exist.
- **Unclear** - There may be text that can be cited but is not consistent in all policy and guidance documents.
- **Yes with Evidence** - There is text that can be cited in order to confirm positive findings.

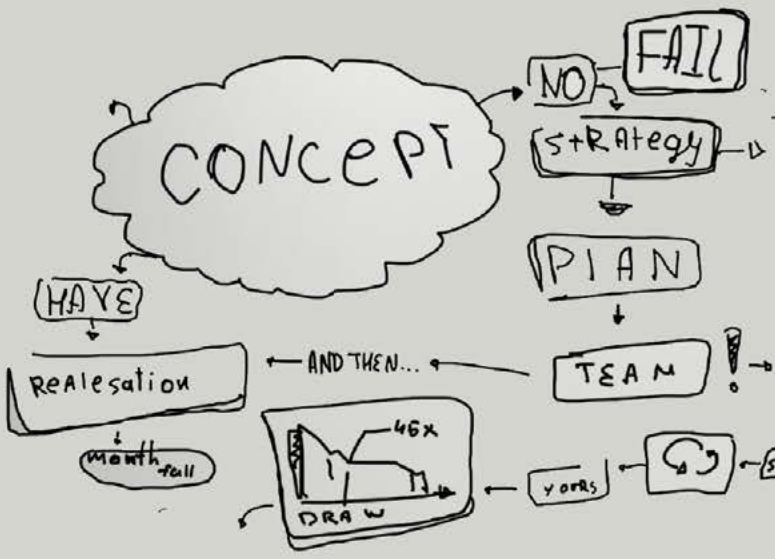
# STATE AND TERRITORY POLICY SCAN: [State Name]

| ACCESS TO ONLINE EDUCATION | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **QUESTION** | **RESPONSE** | |
| **1.** | **Does the state have fully online schools?** | | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | | |
| **1.1.*** | **Is there a state sponsored online school? (e.g., run by, managed or delivered with state oversight)?** | | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | | |
| * | **What is the name of the state sponsored online school?** | | |
| **TEACHER PREPAREDNESS** | | | |
| **2.** | **Does the state policy and/or guidance or requirements specify initial teacher licensure and/or endorsement in the area of online, blended, or digital learning?** | | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | | |
| * | **Please specify the area of focus and any specific details:** | **Online** | |
| | | **Blended** | |
| | | **Digital Learning** | |
| **2.1.*** | **Does this policy and/or guidance or requirements in online, blended, or digital learning mention with students with disabilities?** | | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | | |
| **2.2.*** | **Do the state teacher education standards reference or include iNACOL standards or similar digital learning teacher preparation standards?** | | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | | |
| **3.** | **Are the state's professional development and/or technical assistance efforts posted online?** | | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | | |
| **3.1.*** | **Do the professional development and/or technical assistance initiatives include online, blended, or digital learning?** | | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | | |
| **3.2.*** | **Do these professional development and/or technical assistance initiatives in online, blended, or digital learning mention with students with disabilities?** | | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Related and Noteworthy Items in Teacher Preparedness** | | |
| **APPROPRIATENESS OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENT** | | | |
| **4.** | **Does the state have documentation that provides a review of the IEP needs for students with disabilities prior to enrollment in fully online, blended, or digital learning experience?** | | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | | |
| * | **Please specify the area of focus and any specific details:** | **Online** | |
| | | **Blended** | |
| | | **Digital Learning** | |
| **4.1*** | **Does the state's IEP guidance or related documentation include discussion of online learning for students with disabilities?** | | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | | |
| **5.** | **Does the state provide examples of appropriate accommodations in an online learning environment for SWDs?** | | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | | |
| | **Related and Noteworthy Items in Appropriateness of Learning Environment** | | |
| **IDENTIFICATION OF LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES** | | | |
| **6.** | **Does the state have suggested procedures or guidance for identifying online learners that may qualify for disability services (including special education or Section 504 accommodations)?** | | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | | |
| | **Related and Noteworthy Items in Identification of Learners with Disabilities** | | |
| **PROVISION OF DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES** | | | |
| **7.** | **Does the state application or policy for a potential online provider of service reference regulations for serving SWDs?** | | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | | |
| **8.** | **Does the state have policy or guidance that articulates what entity bears the responsibility of providing for disabilities services (e.g., IDEA and 504) for SWDs enrolled in online courses?** | | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| * | **Please identify the entity(ies) that bear the responsibility of providing for disabilities services for SWDs enrolled in online courses (e.g., LEA, Online School, etc.)** | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | |
| **9.** | **Does the state have monitoring procedures in order to ensure that online schools and programs are in alignment with IDEA?** | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | |
| **10.** | **Does the state have documentation or technical assistance established to help districts, teachers, and parents identify support structures for SWDs in fully online, blended, and digital learning settings?** | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | |
| | **Related and Noteworthy Items in IDEA Related / Supporting Learners with Disabilities** | |
| **ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES** | | |
| **11.** | **Does the state have guidance, documentation, regulation, or statutes that ensures online courses are accessible to and open to enrollment by students with disabilities?** | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | |
| | **Related and Noteworthy Items in Accessibility** | |
| **DATA AND DATA PRIVACY** | | |
| **12.** | **Does the state have guidance, documentation, policy, or statutes that reflect how confidentiality/data privacy of records, for all students, should be managed in supplementary/ blended and full time digital learning environments?** | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | |
| **12.1*** | **Is there a policy or procedure for how data for students with disabilities should be managed?** | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | |
| | **Related and Noteworthy Items in Data & Data Privacy** | |
| **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT** | | |
| **13.** | **Does the state have guidance, documentation, or provisions for parents of SWDs in online courses to collaborate in the education of their children beyond participating in their child's IEP meetings?** | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Related and Noteworthy Items in Parental Involvement** | |
| **GRADUATION** | | |
| **14.** | **If your state mandates an online course prior to graduation, are students with disabilities required to take a fully online or digital course prior to graduation?** | |
| | COLSD Search Notes | |
| | **Related and Noteworthy Items in Graduation Requirements** | |





IDEAs that Work

Office of Special Education Programs
U.S. Department of Education