

Team: Lifelong Learning & Standards and Assessment

Discussion Topic:

Distance Learning Guidelines Draft Proposal and update on committee work

Alignment with Goals: Goal 5; Objective D; Strategy 2; Indicator (a)

Addresses SBE Focus Strategy: “Develop options/models of technology integration to improve the delivery of high quality instruction to serve all students; Develop options/models for distance learning to improve the delivery of high quality instruction to serve all students.”

Background Information:

A subcommittee, including representatives from the department and from the field, has been working on guidelines for distance learning in Vermont – to answer questions that have been arising in the field.

Purpose of Discussion:

The purpose is to provide the Board with information regarding status of the distance learning guidelines initiative in Vermont, and to prompt a discussion with the Board about support for the guidelines.

Cost Implications:

Unknown at this time

Staff Available:

Tracy Gallo, Director, Division of Lifelong Learning
Bill Romond, Educational Technology Coordinator

**Vermont Distance Learning Guidelines
&
General Recommendations**

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Vermont State Board Education

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Vermont Distance Learning Advisory Committee

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We would like to express our thanks to the members of our advisory committee for their hard work and dedication and to the school districts who allowed them the time to participate in this very important work.

Many thanks to those who reviewed this document:

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Preface

This document was created with the intent of lending support to those in the field interested in using distance learning as a mode of educating students. The information provided here is intended as guidelines and recommendations for best practice and not a set of requirements or mandates to be implemented in the field.

In these guidelines we will outline the Department of Education's distance learning mission and philosophy and the connection to the State Board of Education and Department of Education Strategic Plan, School Quality Standards and *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*. Additionally, we will provide guidelines and general recommendations for program standards, management and administration and technical specifications.

We hope that you will find the following information helpful as you endeavor to provide your students with the option of distance learning.

For additional information please contact: Tracy Gallo (tracy.gallo@state.vt.us) or Bill Romond (bill.romond@state.vt.us).

MISSION

To develop and implement guidelines for assuring quality distance learning models based upon learning, research, dialogue, practice and collaboration.

PHILOSOPHY

Distance learning (DL) is an instructional system which connects learners with educational resources. DL provides and augments the learning opportunities for all learners regardless of time and location. The implementation of DL is a process which uses available resources and will evolve to incorporate emerging technologies.

BELIEFS

We believe that:

Distance learning programs should promote a sense of community by encouraging an interactive face-to-face component for every course, ensuring a relationship between the type of program and the type of offering including appropriateness, consideration of synchronous vs. asynchronous, and by developing opportunities for student engagement.

- All distance learning programs should be built on a solid fiscal model that includes an appropriate tuition based on a feasible fee structure, including the number of students needed to make a course viable and clear administrative oversight.
- Distance learning programs should emerge from a collaborative process including negotiation with regional and local partners and should be tied or closely linked with other initiatives in the region.

These guidelines align with and support the following Department of Education initiatives:

The Vermont State Board and Department of Education Strategic Plan

Goal I: Promote high-quality, innovative instruction to improve student achievement

Objective A: All students achieving their full potential

Strategy 4: Support the implementation of High Schools on the Move principles as the statewide vision for secondary education

Goal V: Practice and promote effective use of all resources

Objective C: Technology that improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department

Strategy 5: Expand the use of teleconferencing options

Objective D: Cost effective, high-quality delivery models for students

Strategy 2: Promote independent study, distance learning and common classes through technology

The Vermont School Quality Standards

Section 2120.8.2: Staff

(f) Each school should employ instructional and administrative staff who possess the knowledge and skills to implement the Framework or comparable standards. Each school should use such methods as staffing patterns, scheduling, distance learning, computer technology and partnerships with higher education, businesses and human services agencies to maximize the effectiveness of staff.

Section 2120.8.9: Curriculum Leadership, Content and Coordination

(a) General

(6) Each school should integrate technology into their curriculum by December 31, 2006

(c) Secondary Students

(2) (D) Provide students with opportunities for advanced course work such as Advanced Placement courses and college level courses.

Section 2120.8.13: Access to Current Technology. Each school should:

(a) provide access to a variety of up-to-date information, assistive, and other technology to support students in meeting or exceeding the standards contained in the *Framework* or comparable standards,

(b) provide access to state and national learning resources through electronic information sources, and

(c) adopt and implement written policies on electronic resources, acceptable Internet usage, and procedures for handling complaints.

The Vermont Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities

The purpose of the state's *Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities* is to develop rigorous and challenging standards that will enable all students to become lifelong learners and productive citizens of the 21st century.

The Vermont Educational Technology Plan

The core beliefs set forth in the Vermont Educational Technology Plan Vision: "Vermont's vision for K-12 educational technology is that all our students, teachers, and school leaders — our entire

school communities — are engaged with technologies that enhance student learning in a rich array of powerful ways. Educational technology is not about automating what has been done before. It centers, instead, on supporting new means of learning in our schools, and on opening up for our students the world of learning beyond school walls.”

These guidelines are designed to assist with the development and implementation of distance learning models at both the system and school levels.

Vermont Distance Learning Guidelines – General Recommendations

A. Local Distance Education Programs should support Vermont’s Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities and appropriate Grade Expectation initiatives.

<http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/pubs/framework.pdf>

<http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pubs/framework.html>

Note: The following are suggestions, guidelines and recommendations based on best

B. Development of Standards-Based Distance Education Programs or courses

1. Responsibilities of the Receiving LEA or School (A "receiving" LEA or School is defined as any LEA or school that has students enrolled in programs or courses via distance learning.)

- a. The receiving LEA or school should seek distance learning experiences for students that are offered by institutions or organizations recognized by a known accrediting body;
- b. The receiving LEA or school should ensure that the content, instruction and assessment of each distance education course are comparable in rigor and breadth to a traditionally delivered course;
- c. The receiving LEA or school should ensure that instruction is provided by licensed teachers with appropriate credentials, or by an instructor with the oversight of a licensed teacher;
- d. The receiving LEA or school should ensure that all students enrolled in a distance learning course are provided with the necessary course materials, textbooks, and technical support.
- e. The receiving LEA should evaluate the effectiveness of each distance education course offered in the district

2. Responsibilities of the Provider of any Distance Learning Course (A provider could be an LEA, school, agency or educational organization.)

- a. The provider should define minimum prerequisite technology competencies for student participation in distance education courses if such competencies are required for course access;
- b. The provider should identify and provide necessary and relevant resources, including, but not limited to, research information, periodicals, supplemental materials and/or extension resources;
- c. The provider should ensure that teachers/instructors delivering instruction in distance education courses use a variety of methods to assess student mastery of the content as reflected in *Vermont’s Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities* (or appropriate Grade Expectations);
- d. The provider should ensure that qualified teacher/instructor delivering instruction in distance education courses provide timely and informative feedback to students for support and remediation;
- e. The provider should provide a complete syllabus prior to course implementation;
- f. The provider should provide course content that is systematically designed, clearly written and revised based on student performance and feedback;
- g. The provider should provide courses which are designed to engage students in learning activities based on various learning styles and to accommodate individual differences, including student disabilities;
- h. The provider should ensure that all course content complies with copyright fair use laws and policies;

- i. The provider should ensure that instruction provides opportunities for student-to-teacher and student-to-student interaction; it is important to include a face-to-face component to ensure student success.

C. Management and Administration

1. Responsibilities of the Receiving LEA or School:

- a. The receiving LEA or school should ensure that teacher course load, and student-teacher ratio are appropriate for the particular method of delivery and particular course content as based on Vermont's School Quality Standards.;
- b. The receiving LEA should award credit for distance education courses; as sited in B. 1. a. above.
- c. The receiving LEA or school should ensure that a qualified teacher/instructor is assigned to each student participating in distance education courses;
- d. The receiving LEA or school should ensure that the teacher/instructor is provided adequate technical support to ensure ease of use for faculty and students;
- e. The receiving LEA or school should provide adequate and appropriate technical support to students and teacher/instructor ;
- f. The receiving LEA should provide the teacher/instructor ongoing professional development to support distance education courses technically and instructionally;
- g. The receiving LEA should ensure that students have appropriate and adequate access to equipment required for course participation.

2. Responsibilities of the Provider

- a. The provider should maintain appropriate teacher course load and student-teacher ratio as appropriate for the particular method of delivery and particular course content as based on Vermont's School Quality Standards.;
- b. The provider should ensure that the teacher/instructor providing instruction is provided adequate technical support to ensure ease of use for faculty and students;
- c. The provider should furnish training and/or support in designing course content to fit the delivery methods proposed for distance education courses;

3. Responsibilities of the teacher, or instructor with the over site of a licensed teacher

- a. The teacher/instructor delivering instruction and the facilitator should be responsible for verifying student participation and performance;
- b. The teacher/instructor delivering instruction should provide alternate course procedures and activities for use in case of technical problems when technical problems prevent normal course delivery;
- c. The teacher/instructor delivering instruction should maintain a secure environment which includes, but is not limited to, monitoring online discussions and other instructional activities;
- d. The teacher/instructor delivering instruction should practice ethical and legal use of equipment;

4. Responsibilities of the Facilitator

- a. The facilitator should practice ethical and legal use of equipment;
- b. The teacher/instructor delivering instruction and the facilitator should be responsible for verifying student participation and performance;

- c. The facilitator should implement alternate course procedures and activities when technical problems prevent normal course delivery;
- d. The facilitator should maintain secure environments, including, but not limited to, monitoring online discussions and other instructional activities as they occur in the classroom as directed by the teacher delivering instruction;

D. Technical Specifications

1. The receiving LEA should provide students enrolled in distance education courses technical access that includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. A viewing screen which is large enough for all students to have unobstructed views;
 - b. Sound which can be clearly heard by all students;
 - c. Equitable use of computers and peripherals required for participation in the course.
2. The receiving LEA should provide instructional and communication hardware which meets current industry standards;
3. The receiving LEA should provide adequate funding for hardware maintenance;
4. The receiving LEA should provide immediate and sustained technical support.