

**A MODEL DISTRICT POLICY  
DEVELOPED BY THE COLONIAL IU 20  
(a regional unit of PDE)**

**District eLearning Policy**

The role of eLearning in K-12 education has yet to be clearly defined, but it is certain that students will eventually use eLearning opportunities to expand, enrich, or review their present coursework. This policy was developed to address the issues that need to be considered when integrating eLearning into traditional instruction. The policy was a collaborative effort assembled through the work of several technology coordinators from various districts throughout Colonial Intermediate Unit 20. The goal of the policy was to provide a general framework for a school district that could then be used to create a more definitive document that addresses the district's unique issues and concerns.

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# District eLearning Policy – 7-18-02 (Draft)

## I. Introduction

eLearning encompasses a variety of media (e.g. Internet, CD-ROM, satellite, television), a variety of learning styles (auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, and visual) and a variety of opportunities (e.g. enrichment, remediation, AP coursework). The objective of this document is to outline policies and procedures that will facilitate eLearning opportunities at \_\_\_\_\_ School District and ensure that the standards of learning and quality of instruction are consistent with the standards for traditional instruction set forth by the district.

**Definition:** eLearning is a knowledge and learning portal where physical and virtual resources enhance knowledge management and learning among students. It allows spreading knowledge and understanding of subjects otherwise inaccessible to students by delivering comprehensive and dynamic learning content.

**Goals:** To expand the knowledge horizons of students by offering courses other than those offered in traditional classroom instruction. It enables self-directed learners to engage in exciting and authentic learning, fostering formal learning through electronic tools.

**Audience:** eLearning resources are available to students who seek to expand their interests beyond the local offerings due to the highly specialized nature of the course or potential scheduling conflicts. It also offers additional opportunities to students seeking enrichment and remediation.

## II. Course Requirements

All eCourses must be reviewed to ensure the content, delivery, and overall instruction is in keeping with the standards of quality set by the district for all curriculum offerings. As such, eCourses must be approved by the superintendent or his designee prior to student enrollment to ensure that the following criteria are met:

- Instructors/managers/staff of the courses or programs possess the appropriate academic and/or grade level credentials, training, qualifications, and experience equivalent to Pennsylvania requirements.
- The provider has indicated that all instructors/managers/staff have met requirements for current background checks and that they have met requirements equivalent to Pennsylvania for background checks.
- Documented evidence exists that strong supervision and evaluation are performed and the provider seeks and incorporates feedback from users on staff.
- The student/teacher ratios are well within manageable range for course content. Ratios are provided for each course and by class size and total caseload.
- Course content is systematically designed, clearly written, research-based, and current.

- The material adapts to the student's background and appropriate learning and language levels.
- A complete and thorough course syllabus is available for review. Objectives and expectations are well defined.
- Flexibility in accommodating various learning styles is evident. Activities are appropriately designed for individual and group involvement.
- The content and course objectives clearly are based on national academic or PA standards and exhibit a logical hierarchy and sequence.
- Provider/instructor can verify student and class participation and performance.
- Flexible reporting mechanisms allow districts to configure, retrieve, and display data to meet local needs and requirements.
- Multiple and varied resources are provided that are current and accurate. Reading levels of all resources/materials are appropriate for the targeted student population.
- The course or program is developed using professional quality design work. Highly innovative and unique design contributes to visual appeal and usability of the material.
- A combination of methods for data security, virus protection, and back up is used. Guaranteed time frames for restoration of data are established.
- Access to the course content, materials, and resources of the piloted courses or programs was sufficiently free of technical difficulties. The provider resolved any difficulties within a reasonable timeframe.
- Both electronic and print resources are provided on how to use the course and materials. Phone assistance is also available to students.

### **III. Financial Responsibility:**

Local policy will govern the payment of fees. The party contracting for eLearning services will be responsible for incurring the cost of the service. If the district contracts for eCourses or develops eCourses, the district will be responsible for all costs incurred. However, if a student and/or his parent or guardian independently contracts for eLearning services, they will be responsible for all costs, including the cost of the eCourse and any necessary items to implement the eCourse, including textbooks, materials, and additional staffing. The student and/or his parent will also be responsible for any penalties, financial or otherwise, that may be assessed by the vendor for failure to follow the requirements of the contract.

### **IV. Prerequisites and Expectations**

The district has established certain prerequisites, recommendations, and expectations to ensure that students possess the skills and aptitude necessary for a successful eLearning experience.

**Prerequisites**

- Parental permission
- Recommendations:
  - Students will submit two recommendations prior to enrolling in an eLearning course. The first recommendation will be from a guidance counselor; the second recommendation will come from a teacher or principal.
- Completion of an eLearning self-assessment survey (see Appendix B)
- All prerequisite skills required by the course (strong reading comprehension skills are highly recommended)
- Compliance with Acceptable Use and eLearning policies
- Computer skills
  - Basic word processor abilities (typing, deleting, editing, cut/copy/paste, saving, retrieving files)
  - Basic proficiency in using the computer to access the Internet
  - Basic proficiency in using electronic communications (email, chat room, threaded discussions, listservs)
- Possesses a computer or has ability to access a computer with Internet access

**Expectations:**

- Active, regular participation in accordance to the requirements of the e-course
- State and federal copyright guidelines are adhered to at all times.
- Student completes his/her own work
- All school policies regarding conduct and ethics are followed.

**V. Accreditation****Credited courses**

eCourses may be taken in lieu of or in addition to traditional instruction, and students will receive full credit for these courses as long as they are pre-approved by the superintendent or his designee and meet the standards of quality set forth in this policy. Online courses will factor into a student's overall grade point average (GPA), will appear on a student's transcript, and will affect a student's class ranking.

Students must abide by the district's current course withdrawal policy for courses developed by the district. Students should follow the withdrawal policy of the vendor for commercially developed courses. For either district or commercially developed courses, a guidance counselor's authorization is necessary for course withdrawal. Grading is at the discretion of the course provider, and students should be aware of the course's grading policy and requirements prior to entering the course. The district will not intervene or counter any grades received, although the district does reserve the right to review student work and examine how it is being assessed at any time.

**Non-credit courses**

eCourses may be taken in lieu of traditional instruction to extend and enrich the curriculum and to expose students to alternative forms of learning. The coursework will appear on a students' transcript, but it will not factor into a students' overall grade point average (GPA), nor will it affect a student's class ranking.

Students may be eligible, however, to receive college credit for certain electronic learning programs that offer Advance Placement (AP) credit as long as they are pre-approved and meet the standards of quality set forth in this policy.

Students must abide by the district's current course withdrawal policy for courses developed by the district. Students should follow the withdrawal policy of the vendor for commercially developed courses. For either district or commercially developed courses, a guidance counselor's authorization is necessary for course withdrawal. Grading is at the discretion of the course vendor, and students should be aware of the course's grading policy and requirements prior to entering the course. The district will not intervene or counter any grades received, although the district does reserve the right to review student work and examine how it is being assessed at any time.

**VI. Assessment**

Each eCourse will have a clearly defined set of assessment tools, including formative and summative assessments. All of the tools or some subset of the tools may be used to demonstrate mastery of the standards for the eCourse. A clear definition of the level of mastery of standards needed to receive credit or move on to the next level will be defined.

There will be a variety of assessment tools for each eCourse. Assessment tools may include tests, quizzes, papers, projects, portfolios and/or any other tools that may be appropriate for the particular eCourse. Each tool must be defined with a level of detail that will allow the student and instructor to know its purpose and how it will be used. The assessment tools may be traditional in nature or they may be developed specifically for the e-course. Students may be required to complete specified assessment tools under direct supervision of a proctor. The student and the eCourse instructor will work together to determine which set of assessment tools will be used by the student to demonstrate their accomplishments in the eCourse. Examples of assessment forms that could be used during an eCourse can be found in Appendix A.

## **Appendix A – eLearning Assessment Examples**

Following are examples of assessment tool descriptions:

- **Final exam** - A final exam will be given for this eCourse. The items on the final exam will be designed to measure the student's achievement on the eCourse standards. The final exam will consist of 20 true/false questions (1 point each), 80 multiple choice questions (2 points each), 25 short answer questions (5 points each) and 5 open-ended questions (10 points each). The student must receive 70% of the points possible to pass the final exam. The final exam will be given on a specified date at the high school and will be proctored.
- **Paper** - A paper will be required for this e-course. The topic for the paper will demonstrate the ability to synthesize information from the e-course to answer a specified question. Failure to hand in a paper meeting the minimum standards described by the rubric will result in failing this e-course. The paper will be graded based on the rubric supplied. (The rubric will be included.)
- **Portfolio** - The purpose of this portfolio will be to demonstrate how the individual has accomplished the objectives of this course. The objectives are stated elsewhere. The portfolio will contain the following:
  - Sheet showing compilation of what is in the portfolio – you might think of this a table of contents but it could be more than a simple listing of the content
  - 2-3 samples of your (that demonstrate knowledge on the topic) work before the class began - include an explanation of (why each item is included and what it illustrates)
  - Include 1-3 items demonstrating mastery of 2 or more of the course objectives – for each item include a written explanation pointing out which objective(s) the item address and how you feel it represents mastery of the objective(s).
    - 2-4 items of your own choosing – include a written explanation of why the item is for and why you included it.
    - Comments from at least 2 individuals that have reviewed your portfolio. These should be comments explaining what they liked about the portfolio and comments about what could be improved on the portfolio.
- **Project** - A project will be required for this eCourse. The project will demonstrate knowledge of (list objectives here). The student and teacher will define the project (ideas for projects: diorama, PowerPoint program, photo-journal, newspaper, magazine) at the beginning of the course. The student must complete the project by (one week before the e-course concludes.) The project will be graded based on the rubric supplied. (The rubric will be included.)

## **Appendix B – eLearning Resources**

An great deal of research has been completed on the e-learning and its affects on K-12 education. Below are some links to useful resources on eLearning:

1. PAIU (Pennsylvania Intermediate Units) homepage - <http://www.paiu.org>
2. PA Digital School Districts - <http://www.padigitalschooldistricts.com>
3. Distance Learning Exchange - <http://dle.org>
4. Florida Virtual High School - <http://www.flvs.net>
5. Distance Learning Resource Network - <http://www.dlrn.org>
6. Apex - <http://www.apexlearning.com>
7. Class.com - <http://www.class.com>
8. Riverdeep - <http://www.riverdeep.com>
9. Jones Knowledge - <http://www.jonesknowledge.com>
10. Plato - <http://www.plato.com>
11. NASBE (National Association of State Boards of Education Report - <http://www.nasbe.org>
12. NEA (National Education Association) Report: Quality on the Line - <http://www.nea.org>
14. AASA (American Association of School Administrators) Report: Standards for Web-Based Education - <http://www.aasa.org>
15. CIU 20 Distance Learning Links - <http://www.ciu20.org/resources/distancelearning/>
16. Microsoft e-learning strategies - <http://www.microsoft.com/Education/?ID=eLearning>
17. National Staff Development Council article - <http://www.nsdc.org/educatorindex.htm>

## **Student Readiness Self-Assessments**

1. Michigan Virtual High School Self-Assessment Tool - <http://www.mivhs.org/Orientation/orientation.htm>
2. Online.net Readiness Quiz - <http://www.onlinelearning.net/OLE/howselfassess.html?s=128.x020m121s.067k126v20>
3. Illinois Online Network Self-Evaluation for Potential Online Students <http://www.ion.illinois.edu/IONresources/onlineLearning/selfEval.html>

### **Appendix C - Scheduling and Facilitation Examples**

There are a variety of options for scheduling and completing eCourses. Below are the possible student options and how they could be facilitated (courtesy IU 13):

*1. Full virtual model, no scheduled study hall*

Student never sees the online instructor; no period in schedule to work on online course; teacher is at a "distance"; local person supports to monitor student progress.

*2. Full virtual model with scheduled study hall*

Student never sees the online instructor because teacher is not in own school, but at a "distance," student has a study hall in his/her schedule to work on online course; local support person to monitor student progress.

*3. Local virtual model, no study hall, access of the school day*

Student may see the online instructor (to hand in work, ask questions), because he/she is a teacher in the school, but no scheduled period for the online course.

*4. Local virtual model with study hall*

Student may see the online instructor (to hand in work, ask questions) because the teacher is in the school and the student has an available study hall to work on the course but the online instructor is not present during this time.

*5. "Virditional" model, with scheduled study hall*

Student is in a scheduled class with all of the online students and the online instructor in a face-to-face situation in a computer lab; students work on the online course during the class period with assistance and support from the instructor.

*6. Classroom tools model with scheduled period*

Student is in a scheduled class with all of the students and the classroom instructor in a face-to-face situation, not in a computer lab; students work on the online components outside of class, at home, during study halls, etc.--the online course is used to selectively enhance, supplement and differentiate classroom instruction.

#### *Additional Scheduling Issues/Concerns*

1. Students need to have a schedule that is consistent and part of their regular routine.
2. Staff will need to be scheduled regularly to assist and monitor students.
3. If the teacher and/or the student are not comfortable with the technology associated with the eLearning course, then a technical assistant needs to be scheduled to assist until the teacher and/or student become familiar and comfortable with the technology.



4. It is often a challenge to schedule a college class during the regular high school day since the time schedule, duration and frequency of the courses often do not align.
5. An agreement between the school district and the technology-training site for the eLearning class should be established regarding holidays and snow days.
6. Block and regular 45-minute schedules may create a conflict.
7. Many college classes do not meet each day, but rather two or three days a week. There may also be a conflict between a courses offered for one semester instead of all year.
8. Not all courses are offered each year.