Parent Guide

to Online Learning

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MICHIGAN VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

This guide has been prepared for parents, guardians, counselors, and others who want to help students decide whether online courses are a good option for them.

In the pages that follow, you will find information about:

- ✔ Online learning opportunities,
- ✔ Characteristics of a successful online learner, and
- ✔ How to prepare for learning online.

In 2006, the Michigan legislature put into place a policy that Michigan students have an online learning experience as a high school graduation requirement. In 2013, the Michigan Legislature expanded student access to digital learning options through **Section 21f of the State School Aid Act**. As a result, students enrolled in a public local district or public school academy in grades 6-12 are eligible to enroll in up to two online courses during an academic term – or more if parents, students, and school leadership agree that more than two are in the best interest of the child. The act also requires schools to cover the costs of the online courses. See the FAQ in the Resources section for more information.

Why Online Learning

Students take online courses for a variety of reasons. They may be full time online students, taking all their courses over the Internet, or they may be part time online students, that is, supplementing the courses they take at their school with online courses – including during summer. Many students use online courses for credit recovery when they have failed a class that is required for their program or graduation. Others take courses that their schools cannot or do not offer. Many students take Advanced Placement (AP) courses because there are not enough students in their school to offer a face-to-face AP class. Some use online courses for elective credit and personal enrichment.

Today's learning environments are changing, and national experts have published the following 10 attributes to describe Next Generation Learning models. The State Virtual School Leadership Alliance has identified how online learning can be used to support the 10 attributes. From the student's point of view, online learning is attractive because it is:

1. **Personalized** to my needs and learning goals. *When students select their courses, they take greater ownership.*

2. **Flexible** so that I can try different ways to learn. *Online learning allows scheduling to accommodate health, athletic, job and family circumstances.*

3. **Interactive and engaging** to draw me in. *Students meet people outside their community in a safe environment, and multimedia used in online learning provides different ways of learning.*

4. **Relevant** to the life I'd like to lead. *Students gain more experience using the 21st century technology tools used in college and in the workplace.*

5. **Paced by my own progress** measured against goals I understand. *Students can move faster or slower through assignments and track their own progress toward their goals.*

6. **Constantly informed** by different ways of demonstrating and measuring my progress. *Educational technology can measure and share student progress quickly.*

7. **Collaborative** with faculty, peers, and others; unlimited by proximity. *Students can access learning materials and resources – including local, state, and national experts – using online communication tools.*

8. **Responsive and supportive** when I need extra help. *Communicating outside the typical school day is supported by the online learning culture. Many students – and teachers – report they spend more time interacting online than in the face-to-face classroom.*

9. **Challenging but achievable,** with opportunities to become an expert in an area of interest. *Online learning reinforces lifelong learning skills and promotes information literacy and communication skills as well as thinking and problem-solving skills.*

10. **Available** to me as much as it is to every other student. *Online learning can direct the talents of some of the most skilled educators to the most underserved populations. A zip code does not have to determine learning options any more.*

Now that you know why many students like learning online, you will find answers to some of your other questions in the sections that follow. This brief list of terms may be helpful as you investigate online learning.

Definitions

Online Course:
An online course is defined in the State School Aid Act as a course of study that can generate a credit or a grade and is provided in an interactive Internet-connected learning environment. The students are separated from their teachers by time or location or both. The teacher, who holds a valid Michigan teaching certificate, is responsible for determining appropriate instructional methods for each student, diagnosing learning needs, assessing student learning, prescribing intervention strategies, reporting outcomes, and evaluating the effects of instruction and support strategies.

Mentor:
An onsite mentor monitors and supports the students as they work through an online course. Mentors may also document some aspects of participation. Some mentors are paraprofessionals. In some cases, the mentor must have a Michigan teaching certificate and be employed by the school district. See Mentor Fundamentals: A Guide for Mentoring Online Learners for comprehensive descriptions of mentor roles and responsibilities as well as numerous resources to prepare mentors for working with online learners.

Learning Management System (LMS):
The LMS houses the online course. Through the LMS, students access courses and related documents and activities; assignments are exchanged between student, online instructor and often the mentor; and communication among students and instructor takes place.

Provider (also often referred to as a Vendor):
The provider is the source of the online course. The provider may be a school, a school district, or *Michigan Virtual School*® or another third party entity, including colleges, universities, and private companies.

Credit Recovery:
Credit recovery is the opportunity for a student to take a class online that he/she may have failed in a face-to-face setting.

First Things First

The most important question you have to answer is whether your student is well suited to an online learning environment.

Profile of a Successful Student

Instructors with years of online teaching experience agree that students who have a successful, satisfying experience learning online share several critical characteristics:

Good Time Management:
Can your student create and maintain a study schedule throughout the semester without the face-to-face interaction with a teacher?

Effective Communication:
Can your student ask for help, make contact with other students and the instructor online, and describe any problems she/he has with learning materials using email, texting, and/or the telephone?

Independent Study Habits:
Can your student study and complete assignments without direct supervision and maintain the self-discipline to stick to a schedule?

Self-Motivation:
Does your student have a strong desire to learn skills, acquire knowledge and fulfill assignments in online courses because of an educational goal? Can she/he maintain focus on that goal?

Academic Readiness:
Does your student have the basic reading, writing, math and computer literacy skills to succeed in the class?

Technologically Prepared:
Does your student know how to open, create and/or save a document; use various technology tools (e.g., dictionary, thesaurus, grammar checker, calculator); and identify various file formats (e.g., doc, xls, pdf, jpg)? (from Michigan Educational Technology Standards for Students 2009).

Counselors and teachers often use the *MVU Online Readiness Rubric* on page 11 to help students understand what is required of a successful online learner. If you identify areas in the rubric where your student is lacking, you can determine what needs to be addressed to best support them in those areas.

See Is Online Learning Right for Me? on page 12 for more guidance.

The Stanford Research Institute's publication *Supporting K-12 Students in Online Learning: A Review of Online Algebra 1 Courses* examined the accessibility of online learning for students, especially those who were at risk of failure. The report cautions that students who have failed a face-to-face class may have challenges that will affect their success in an online course, too. For example, many students do not realize that they will have to be even more accountable for their time, performance, and productivity in an online course.

Using data collected by the state since the 2010-11 school year, the *Michigan Virtual Learning Research Institute™* (*MVLRI™*) published **Michigan's K-12 Virtual Learning Effectiveness Report**. A few of its key findings included:

☐ Over 55,000 Michigan K-12 public school students took one or more virtual courses in the 2012-13 school year, accounting for more than 185,000 course enrollments and up from just under 90,000 in the 2010-2011 school year.

☐ The number of Michigan schools using virtual learning grew from 654 in 2010-11 to 906 in 2012-13.

Making the Decision

As a parent, your role in helping your student decide if this is the most effective way for him/her to learn is extremely important. According to the State School Aid Act, you must give your permission for your student to take online classes. Before you sign off, you need to have determined if your student is well suited to online learning. Using the rubric and the skills mentioned in the previous section as a starting point for the conversation is the first thing to do. Once you decide your student is likely to be successful, you have additional issues to consider.

Speak Up 2013, a national initiative of Project Tomorrow, reveals the responses of over 403,000 students, parents, educators, and community members in three reports found on their website (http://www.tomorrow.org/speakup/). The reports focus on virtual school students and those students who took online courses in addition to traditional face-to-face classes. The following key findings are taken from report summaries found on the **Speak Up website**:

☐ Nearly 50 percent of virtual high school students say they were interested in what they were learning in school, while only 32 percent of traditional high school students said the same.

☐ Only 17 percent of high schools are not offering online classes, according to school principals.

☐ Teachers who teach online classes, in particular, see a strong correlation between the use of technology and students' college and career ready skill development. More than half of these teachers say technology use helps students understand how to apply academic concepts to real world problems (58 percent), take ownership of their learning (57 percent) and develop problem solving and critical thinking skills (57 percent).

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Technology

✔ What are the technical requirements for the courses your student wants/needs to take?

✔ Can you provide the technology your student needs or will the school district?

✔ Are there well-defined steps for getting tech support?

Learning Environment

✔ Does the school or provider offer an orientation for parents, students, and mentor?

✔ What kind of feedback and support does the instructor provide?

✔ What kind of assistance does the mentor provide?

Considering the Course

✔ Does the course meet academic requirements?

✔ Has the course been approved for credit by the school of record?

✔ Are there prerequisites for online courses? Has your student met the prerequisites?

✔ Can students take courses without being enrolled in a local school?

✔ Does the course meet NCAA Eligibility Requirements for potential Division I and II student athletes?

✔ How rigid are the course assignment due dates?

✔ Are the test dates flexible or rigid?

✔ What is the time commitment (daily and length of term)?

✔ Does the course have e-texts or are textbooks required? If textbooks are required, who pays for them?

✔ How do students receive their final grades?

✔ When can a student drop the course if he/she finds it too difficult or encounters challenges?

Support

It is important to know what kind of support the student will receive from his or her resident district or the nonresident district or provider offering the online course. Mentors in particular are critical to student success in online learning. Be sure to know who the mentor assigned to your student's course is and how to contact him or her. It is also important to know what kind of support the parent or guardian is expected to provide. If your student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or is eligible for special needs support or special education services, contact the school of record for further information.

Questions to ask about the role your local or host school plays:

- What is the responsibility of the school?

- What is the responsibility of the parent?

- Does an instructor, a mentor, or a paraprofessional aide provide face-to-face support at your student's local resident district or does the provider?

- How do you get support for IEP compliance?

- What kinds of resources are available to students and parents?

- Does the local resident district or the nonresident district provide access to technology and Internet connectivity?

Other Considerations

- Accreditation – Has the online course provider earned accreditation from a recognized regional or national accrediting body?

- Credit – Will successful completion of the course generate credit?

- Teaching standards – What requirements, guidelines, or additional information does the provider share in the statewide catalog?

- Data – What kind of data does the provider have to share about course completion?

Covering the Cost of Online Learning

New legislation requires districts to use its foundation allowance or per pupil funds to pay for expenses associated with the online course or courses and to cover the cost of the online course.

Taking All Courses Online

Students in Michigan may attend a full-time online cyber school or may participate in a seat-time waiver program approved by the Michigan Department of Education to allow them to take all their coursework online. In these circumstances, the students' school is required to provide them with a computer and Internet access.

Before You Decide

- Ask questions.

- Consider the time factor.

- Participate in webinars offered by the provider.

- Let the student choose the specific online course whenever possible.

Before Enrolling

Once you decide your student is well prepared to take a course online, your student understands what will be required to be successful, and you find the appropriate course, review the following checklist to be sure you're ready.

Checklist

- ☐ The student has access to the technology needed on a regular basis to work on assignments.

- ☐ The student has a place to complete work.

- ☐ The student has the basic computer skills needed to navigate the course and complete and submit assignments.

- ☐ The student has support for her or his IEP.

- ☐ The course fits in the student's academic plan.

- ☐ The student knows the course grade will become part of the academic record.

- ☐ The student understands that online courses often take as much or more time than face-to-face courses.

- ☐ The student has sufficient time in his/her schedule to complete assignments.

- ☐ The school offers a mentor or another adult to support the student's online learning as needed.

- ☐ The student knows who the mentor is and how to contact him/her.

- ☐ The student needs the credits.

- ☐ The student knows the start and end dates of the course.

- ☐ The student is willing and able to ask for help from the online instructor via email, text, phone, or in person and respond to the instructor using the same methods.

- ☐ You and the student know how to contact the help desk to resolve technical issues.

Michigan's Catalog of Online Courses

In October 2013, Michigan's Catalog of Online Courses (https://micourses.org) was made available to the public. The catalog contains the syllabi for online courses offered by any Michigan district and the **Michigan Virtual School**. The catalog contains links to the sites for information about and access to enrollment and registration for the courses.

Each syllabus in the statewide catalog includes information that will help you decide which online courses are the best fit for your student. In the syllabus you will find how the course is structured – the state academic standards addressed, the prerequisites, the content outline, learning outcomes and objectives, and required assessments. You can see the expectations for how much instructor contact and student-instructor communication to expect as well as the academic support available to the student. The syllabus includes the name of the institution or organization providing the online content and the name of the institution or organization providing the online instructor, too. The price of the online course, along with enrollment periods and drop policies are clearly noted. The syllabus also contains the results of the online course quality review conducted using the guidelines and model review process published by the **Michigan Virtual University**. See the FAQ in the Resources section for more information.

Advice for Parents

Advice for parents once your student is enrolled, before class starts, and until the course is completed.

- ✔ Set up a study space, including the technology required

- ✔ Be prepared for technical issues that may come up

- ✔ Review the syllabus with your student

- ✔ Define expectations

- ✔ Agree on incentives and consequences

- ✔ See that your student establishes a routine

- ✔ Help your student maintain a regular study schedule

- ✔ Monitor your student's progress weekly using your access to the course LMS

Final Suggestions

If you decide your student is not quite ready for online learning, you can prepare him or her for a successful experience in a subsequent semester.

- ✔ Build online fluencies: Help your student become familiar with organizing Word documents (setting up files and folders), and saving documents in different formats.

- ✔ Investigate provider websites for webinars and resources directed at parents and students: When you discover those together, you can generate questions for your school and the provider. Talk about what your student is ready for and what areas might need some work.

- ✔ Use an online orientation tool available through some schools and providers: This is another way for you to discover what to expect and talk through opportunities and concerns before your student commits to an online course.

- ✔ Talk with the person at your student's school who is most familiar with online learning – your school's mentor, curriculum specialist, or counselor – and ask what materials or suggestions they have to help you make the decision.

In 2009, the Michigan Department of Education published the Michigan Educational Technology Standards for students and established the goal for all K-12 students to achieve technology literacy or "the ability to responsibly use appropriate technology to communicate, solve problems, and access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information to improve learning in all subject areas and to acquire lifelong knowledge and skills in the 21st century." Online learning is critical to students achieving that goal.

Resources

FAQ for Section 21f of the State School Aid Act

Section 21f expands access to digital learning options for students in Michigan. This FAQ document offers basic answers to frequently asked questions. The FAQ for Section 21f of the State School Aid Act are updated from time to time. Use this URL to find the most recent version: http://media.mivu.org/institute/pdf/21f_FAQs.pdf. Below are a few of the FAQ that directly affect parents and students.

Who is eligible to participate in the new digital learning initiative approved by the Legislature and the Governor in 2013?

Answer: Students enrolled in a public local district or public school academy in any of grades 6 to 12 are eligible to enroll in an online course. *(Updated September 2014)*

Under Section 21f, how many online courses may an eligible student enroll in at one time?

Answer: With the consent of the student's parent or legal guardian, a student may enroll in up to two online courses as requested by the pupil during an academic term, semester or trimester. If a pupil has demonstrated previous success with online courses and the school leadership and the pupil's parent or legal guardian determine that it is in the best interest of the pupil, a pupil may be enrolled in more than two online courses in a specific academic term, semester, or trimester. Consent of the parent or legal guardian is not required if the student is at least age 18 or is an emancipated minor. *(Updated September 2014)*

Under Section 21f, are school districts required to honor student/parent requests to enroll in online courses beyond a full student course load?

Answer: No. Under Section 21f, the enrollment of a student in one or more online courses cannot result in a pupil counting for more than 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) pupil. Districts are not obligated to provide a student with a course load that exceeds a full-time schedule.

Under Section 21f, are school districts required to honor student/parent requests to enroll in core and elective online courses when the enrollment does not cause the student's membership to exceed 1.0 FTE?

Answer: Yes. If the enrollment will not cause the student to exceed 1.0 FTE, and does not meet any of the reasons for denial of enrollment identified in the legislation, then the request for enrollment is allowed. When considering the type of courses that may be requested under Section 21f, the legislation does not make a distinction between core and elective courses. However, a student enrolled through a shared time program would be limited to nonessential electives only.

Is a district required to provide students with Section 21f options during the summer?

Answer: No. A district is only required to enroll students in courses under Section 21f during its regular school year. The regular school year may, however, extend into what is traditionally considered the summer break if the school operates on a year-round or extended school calendar.

Nonpublic students can currently take non-core courses (band, music, art, etc.) at their local public school in a face-to-face setting, and the district is able to claim a portion of the FTE count for each pupil. Can this arrangement continue for non-core courses in an online setting under Section 21f?

Answer: Yes.

What online courses may a student select from when making enrollment decisions?

Answer: Students may select courses from the online course catalog published by the primary district, or they may select courses from the statewide catalog of online courses (available at https://micourses.org) that contains the courses found in the primary district catalog in addition to courses published by other district course providers statewide, including *Michigan Virtual School* courses. *(Updated September 2014)*

Will districts be able to identify course titles in the statewide catalog that can be included in their local catalog as a strategy to recommend certain courses to students and parents?

Answer: Yes. The statewide catalog of courses (available at https://micourses.org) allows districts to select individual course titles that appear in the statewide catalog and have them show up in their local district catalog. Districts may want to use this feature to let students and parents know which offerings in the statewide catalog are recognized by the district as high quality or preferred based on previous experience. *(Updated September 2014)*

Are districts required to pay the costs of online course enrollments for their students?

Answer: Yes. Section 21f requires districts to use their foundation allowance or per pupil funds calculated in the State School Aid Act to pay for the expenses associated with the online course(s).

If the cost of an online course exceeds 8.33% of the state's minimum foundation allowance can the district pass the additional cost of the course on to the student's family?

Answer: Yes, if the parent or legal guardian is willing to pay the cost difference. *(Updated September 2014)*

What happens if the enrollment demand for an online course(s) in the statewide catalog exceeds the district's capacity to provide the online course(s)?

Answer: If the number of nonresident applicants exceeds the district's capacity to provide the online course(s), the district must use a random draw system, subject to the need to abide by state and national antidiscrimination laws and court orders. An open enrollment period will be identified for each online course syllabus that appears in the statewide catalog. This information will help districts make a determination in a timely fashion to accept/process enrollments or utilize a random draw system if demand for a particular course exceeds capacity.

What kind of access to technology does a district need to provide students enrolled in online courses?

Answer: A student enrolled in an online course must be provided the same rights and access to technology in his or her primary district's school facilities as all other pupils enrolled in the district. The primary district is the district that enrolls the pupil and reports the pupil as a full-time equated pupil for pupil membership purposes. *(Updated September 2014)*

Are districts required to provide supervision for online students?

Answer: Districts are responsible for determining a method for monitoring students enrolled in online courses under Section 21f. Some districts may already have established a policy if they previously offered courses in a self-scheduled format as allowed by pupil accounting rule 340.11. If a district is new to self-scheduled learning, the district should seek appropriate advice on what arrangement would best serve the educational interests of their students.

Can districts require students taking 21f courses to be offsite and/or to remain physically in their school building? Also, do parents have the right to demand that students be offsite to take their 21f courses?

Answer: Schools are encouraged to adopt local procedures that outline when and where students may access their 21f courses. Districts may want to seek legal counsel before making a decision to deny students access to school facilities during the normal school day while they are enrolled in one or more online courses. *(Updated September 2014)*

Can districts require students enrolled in online courses under Section 21f to take a local end-of-course exam as a condition for granting academic credit?

Answer: Successful completion of an online course is determined by the pupil's primary educating district. If a district elects to implement an end-of-course exam, it is recommended that they use the same procedures and weighting methods as they do for face-to-face courses. Caution should be exercised to ensure that additional requirements are free of bias that would unfairly impact online students. *(Updated September 2014)*

Can districts require students enrolled in online courses under Section 21f to take a local end-of-course exam as a condition for granting academic credit?

Answer: Yes. Districts must grant appropriate academic credit for successful online course completions and must count that credit toward completion of graduation and subject area requirements. In addition, a student's record and transcript must identify the online course title as it appears in the online course syllabus.

Can a district deny a student request to enroll in an online course?

Answer: Yes. Seven reasons are approved for denial, including: (1) The student has previously gained the credits provided from the completion of the online course; (2) The online course is not capable of generating academic credit; (3) The online course is inconsistent with the remaining graduation requirements or career interests of the student; (4) The student does not possess the prerequisite knowledge and skills to be

successful in the online course or has demonstrated failure in previous online coursework in the same subject; (5) The online course is of insufficient quality or rigor. If a district denies a student enrollment because the online course is of insufficient quality or rigor, the district shall make a reasonable effort to assist the student to find an alternative online course in the same or similar subject that is of acceptable rigor and quality; (6) The cost of the online course exceeds an amount of 8.33% of the minimum foundation allowance for the current fiscal year. Should a parent choose to pay the cost difference in this case, the student may still be enrolled in the course; and (7) The course enrollment request doesn't occur within the same timelines established by the district for enrollment and schedule changes for regular courses. Unless the pupil is newly enrolled in the district, 21f enrollment requests must be made prior to the academic term in which the student would be taking the online course. *(Updated September 2014)*

A local district is allowed to reject a request for an online course if it does not match the rigor required by that district. Does that mean, for example, a district can direct parents and their child to a locally developed online course, instead of the one offered in the state catalog by another district?

Answer: Districts may suggest, but not mandate, which courses students select from the titles that appear in a local district catalog or the statewide catalog. It's the district's responsibility to ensure whatever course is chosen is of sufficient quality and rigor.

Can a student be denied enrollment in an online course identified in the statewide catalog if the same course is available locally in a face-to-face or online format?

Answer: No, the legislation does not provide that scenario as a valid reason for denial of a request for enrollment under Section 21f.

If a district offers online learning options that fall outside of Section 21f requirements, can the district cite these options as a reason to deny student/parent requests to enroll in online course titles found in the Michigan online course catalog?

Answer: No, offering online learning options outside of Section 21f is not listed as a reason districts can use to deny a student from enrolling in an online course in the statewide catalog. Districts may not establish additional requirements that would prohibit a pupil from taking an online course.

If the primary district's academic term dates do not align to the academic term dates of a Section 21f course (for example: trimester format at the school and student wants to enroll in a semester-based online course) can the district deny enrollment in the course?

Answer: No, the legislation does not provide that scenario as a valid reason for denial of a request for enrollment under Section 21f; however, the enrollment request must be made prior to the start of the primary district's academic term in which it would be put on the student's schedule as well as during a time period in which the primary district has established for enrollment and schedule changes for regular courses. *(Updated September 2014)*

Is there an appeal process if a district denies a student's request to enroll in an online course?

Answer: Yes. A student and his or her parents may appeal the denial by submitting a letter to the superintendent of the intermediate school district (ISD) in which the student's primary district is located. A response to the appeal must be issued within five days after it is received.

What are districts required to tell parents about Section 21f?

Answer: Districts must receive parental consent before allowing a student to enroll in a course under Section 21f, which would require that the district and parents be involved in the decision to enroll the student in courses under Section 21f. The legislation (subsection 7(a)) also requires districts to "provide on its publicly accessible website a link to the course syllabi for all of the online courses offered by the district and a link to the statewide catalog of online courses maintained by the Michigan virtual university." Beyond these requirements, the legislation does not specifically address parental notification.

Section 22f of the State School Aid Act provides incentive payments to districts that meet best practices. One of the best practices relates to offering online courses or blended learning opportunities to all eligible pupils. In order to satisfy this requirement, "a district must make all eligible pupils and their parents or guardians aware of these opportunities and must publish an online course syllabus as described in Section 21f for each online course that the district offers."

If parents find a course in Michigan's Online Course Catalog that they want their child to take, can they enroll their child in the online course?

Answer: No. The enrollment process is coordinated by the student's primary educating district.

Online Learner Readiness Rubric

Name:

Developed by Michigan Virtual University

Student Readiness	Technology Skills	Work & Study Habits	Learning Style	Technology / Connectivity	Time Management	Interest/ Motivation	Reading/Writing Skills	Support Services
Less Ready	Student has little, if any, experience using a computer or the Internet and has minimal desire to develop more skills in this area.	Student often needs reminders to complete routine assignments, often turns homework in late and is not able to spend 5-10 hours per week on each online course.	Student is not a self-directed learner and often requires real-time feedback from teachers regarding basic directions and follow-up support.	Student does not have consistent access to a computer and a reliable connection to the Internet at home or at school.	Student does not manage his or her time effectively in doing research, basic studies and preparing for tests or quizzes.	Student has little or no interest in the content area of the online course offering and has a negative or unrealistic attitude toward online learning.	Student is reading below grade level and has experienced difficulty with routine writing assignments.	In general, parents and school personnel do not actively support online learning and are unable or unwilling to provide support assistance.
→	Student has limited experience using a computer and the Internet and has expressed a strong interest in developing more skills in this area.	Student sometimes needs reminders and assistance in completing routine assignments and has pledged to spend 5-10 hours per week on each online course enrollment.	Student beginning to demonstrate a behavior of self-directed learning and sometimes requires real-time feedback from teachers regarding basic directions and follow up support.	Student has limited access to a computer with low-speed Internet service at school or at home.	Student is beginning to demonstrate effective time management skills in doing research, basic studies and preparing for tests or quizzes.	Student has an interest in the content area of the online course offering but has expressed concerns about enrolling in an online course or has an unrealistic attitude toward online learning.	Student is reading at grade level and has demonstrated limited proficiency with writing assignments.	Student support system is limited and parents and school personnel are somewhat supportive of enrollment in online courses.
→	Student has strong computer skills and more than adequate experience using a word processor, email application and web browser.	Student rarely needs reminders or assistance in completing routine assignments and has demonstrated good independent study habits.	In general, the student is self-directed and does not require real-time feedback from teachers regarding basic directions and follow-up support.	Student has consistent access to a computer with moderate-speed Internet service at home or at school.	Student has demonstrated effective time management skills in doing research, basic studies and preparing for tests or quizzes.	Student has an interest in the content area of the online course offering and has a positive and realistic attitude toward online learning.	Student is reading at or above grade level and has demonstrated success with a variety of writing assignments.	Student has open access to school-based mentoring/counseling service and parental support.
More Ready	Student has excellent computer skills and significant experience using a word processor, email application and web browser, and is comfortable downloading information from the Internet and using other technology tools and applications.	Student does not need reminders or assistance in completing routine assignments, usually finishes homework ahead of time and has successfully completed an independent study experience or taken an online course.	Student is a self-directed learner and demonstrates a high level of comfort and skill in learning new material without requiring real-time feedback from teachers regarding basic directions and follow-up support, and deals well with ambiguity.	Student has daily access to a computer with high-speed Internet service at home and at a convenient location in the school building before, during and after regular school hours.	Student has demonstrated outstanding time management skills while participating in a variety of clubs, student organizations, sports and work activities.	Student has a strong interest in the content area of the online course offering, is highly motivated to enroll in an online course and has a positive and realistic attitude toward online learning.	Student is reading above grade level, has strong reading comprehension skills and has demonstrated success with complex writing assignments.	Student has regularly scheduled access to school-based mentoring/counseling services, parental support is strong and district has adopted policies and identified best practices to support students as online learners.

Note: This rubric was not designed to be used as a tool to determine eligibility for enrollment in online courses, but instead to be used as a resource to help identify specific areas where students may need additional support to better ensure success.

Is Online Learning Right for Me?

Is online learning right for me?

Online learning offers great flexibility for students of all skill sets, but it's important to know if it's the right learning style for you. These questions will help you make that determination.

Are you self-directed and motivated?

- ✔ Most of online learning happens on your schedule.
- ✔ You'll need to be self-directed and motivated to complete activities and initiate the communication required to be successful.
- ✔ You'll be responsible for creating the structure to finish each course.

Are your technical skills adequate?

- ✔ You need to be comfortable with Internet browsing and searching, email, sending and reading attachments, word processing, and occasionally downloading and installing software plug-ins (a normally simple, but sometimes intimidating task).

Do you have strong reading/writing skills?

- ✔ The ability to read and comprehend subject matter without it being a chore is critical to your success.
- ✔ In most cases writing is the primary method of communication in online classes, so you should be at ease expressing your thoughts, sharing ideas, and asking questions through writing.

Will you ask questions when you need to?

- ✔ If you typically don't hesitate to seek help you'll do fine.
- ✔ Since you'll be in an online environment it's important to let your instructor and classmates know when you need assistance.
- ✔ Remember they won't be able to see your expressions of doubt, confusion, or other body language to indicate when things aren't going well.

Will you miss the social interaction?

- ✔ Interaction with instructors and classmates in online learning is often an integral part of the learning experience.
- ✔ Absent is the in-person contact — being able to see facial expressions, hear reactions, and speak.
- ✔ Campus life may be different or non-existent.

Do you have the discipline to study regularly?

- ✔ Like a traditional school you'll need to set aside adequate time for study.
- ✔ You may discover you need to be online frequently to complete assignments or communicate with classmates and instructors.
- ✔ Plan to spend at least as much time working on assignments and studying as you would with a traditional course, and you'll be setting your own pace in many instances.

Notes

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