

Virtual Learning:

Exploring the Options for Expanded
Student Opportunity



A How-To Guide from Edmentum

What Is a Virtual School?

The evolution of education within our school system has been nothing short of substantial. Ten or twenty years from now, we will talk with our youth and try to explain to them, “Yes, there was a time you actually HAD to go to a classroom EVERY DAY!” They will simply look at us in disbelief.

Virtual school refers to an institution that is not bound by brick and mortar. The virtual school differs from the traditional school through the physical media that links administrators, teachers, and students. All student services and courses are conducted through Internet technology.

Virtual learning has enabled not only blended learning but fully online learning environments as well. Virtual schools provide students with the flexibility to retrieve lost credits and participate in out-of-school activities that they would not be able to engage in if confined to a traditional school day.

What Is a Virtual School?.....2

Virtual School Programs: Identifying the Need3

Teacher Role in a Virtual Environment.....4

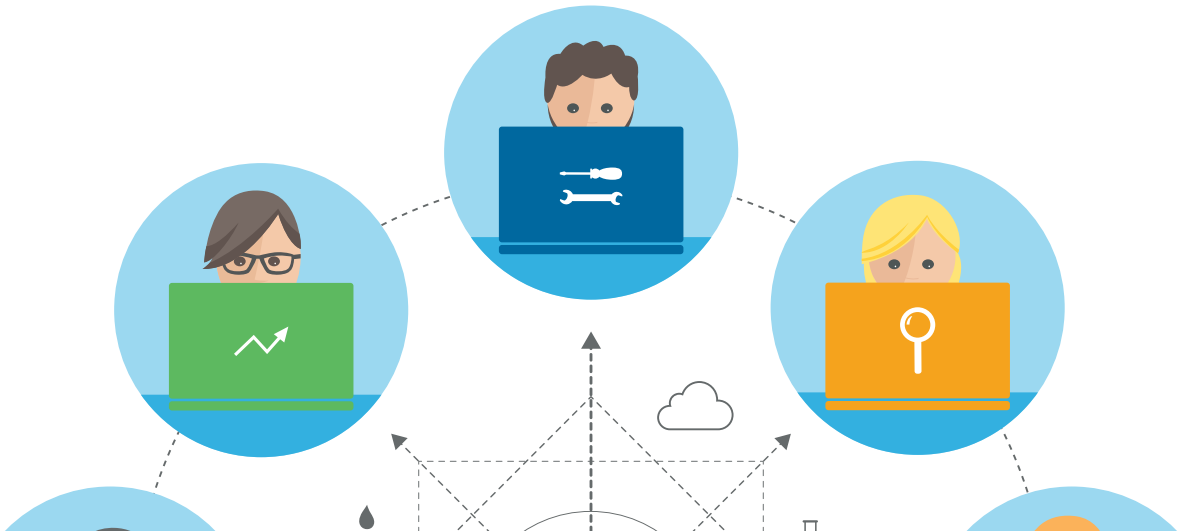
Student Experience in a Virtual Environment5

Virtual School Spotlight.....6

Preparing for Implementation Success.....7–9

Reflections 10

Your Virtual School Partner 11



Virtual School Programs: Identifying the Need

Technology has changed the face of education in several ways, including introducing the availability of online, fully virtual courses. Rolling out virtual course options in your school or district can be intimidating; like any significant change, success requires planning and buy-in from everyone involved. But, a well-implemented virtual school program can bring many benefits to your school, district, and students.

Let's review the 11 most common scenarios in which a virtual school supports student achievement.

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> | 1 Provide a districtwide virtual school program | 7 Offer an alternative education solution |
| <input type="radio"/> | | |
| <input type="radio"/> | 2 Offer a virtual school credit recovery option | 8 Support teacher shortages in any subject area |
| <input type="radio"/> | | |
| <input type="radio"/> | 3 Organize a virtual school for original credit | 9 Fulfill an accredited program for state mandate/law for virtual education |
| <input type="radio"/> | | |
| <input type="radio"/> | 4 Provide virtual courses based on student interests if a school cannot fulfill a need | 10 Prepare students for future college and career readiness with virtual school solutions |
| <input type="radio"/> | | |
| <input type="radio"/> | 5 Solve a scheduling conflict by providing required course offerings virtually | 11 Recapture students lost to other virtual school programs, homeschool, etc. |
| <input type="radio"/> | | |
| <input type="radio"/> | 6 Provide virtual school options for a hospital or homebound situation or any student on a temporary leave from school | |
| <input type="radio"/> | | |
| <input type="radio"/> | | |



Stop and think!

Do you have any student populations that fit into these categories? If so, circle them.

Teacher Role in a Virtual Environment

An important consideration when thinking of a virtual school is how your faculty and staff will be affected. Moreover, if you choose a curriculum versus a program partner, consider how the teacher role will be impacted.

CURRICULUM PARTNER

■ Teacher Interaction

While state or federal standards often dictate the topics covered by the curriculum, a teacher can provide insight into the types of materials, activities, and specific competencies that need to be included.

■ Grade & Monitor

A teacher can gauge whether an activity will fit into a specified timeframe and whether it will engage students. If multiple teachers will use the curriculum, allow as many of them as possible to provide input during the creation stage.

■ Implementation Support

A strong curriculum is designed to allow a teacher to be flexible and insert personalized components or choose from among a selection of activities.

VIRTUAL SCHOOL PARTNER

■ Teacher Interaction

Connect with student needs via phone calls, text messages, email, or other forms of communications to provide direct instruction and any additional clarification.

■ Grade & Monitor

Generate weekly progress report data that includes current grade, end date reminders, and recommendations concerning student pace, progress, performance, and remediation as needed.

■ Implementation Support

Provide newly enrolled students with an overview of help resources and communicate with students who haven't logged into the program recently.



Stop and think!

From the perspective of teacher involvement, which route better suits your needs, and why?

Student Experience in a Virtual Environment

Virtual programs give schools and districts opportunities to enhance, expand, and extend their offerings. Explore the challenges of six different student types below, and find out how virtual programs can help solve their challenges.



Course-Expansion Student

Meet Joyce! Constraints, like budgets and limited numbers of interested students, make offering the full breadth of courses that students want a challenge, especially in small districts. Expanding your offerings beyond the typical courses can help students stay engaged and enter postsecondary education or the workforce with an advantage.



At-Risk Student

Meet Stephanie! In her third year of high school, Stephanie only earned enough credits to be considered a sophomore. She struggles with family issues, causing her to fail courses and fall behind. Stephanie must find a path to get back on track. Virtual school is a flexible solution that also allows Stephanie to stay in her home district.



Homeschool Student

Meet Jessie! Since beginning his education, Jessie's parents had decided to homeschool him. However, now that Jessie is reaching middle school, his parents are considering different options. They have come to realize that the required recordkeeping, knowledge level, and cost are no longer creating the best benefit.



Advanced Student

Meet Ellie! An active sports enthusiast, band member, and honor student, Ellie dreams of one day becoming a doctor. She advanced a full year ahead of her classmates and wants to continue to feel challenged and prepared for the future as she balances her busy schedule. Ellie is able to take advantage of AP® courses by developing advanced subject skills on her own time.



Homebound Student

Meet Greg! Greg was recently injured during football playoffs and broke both of his legs. He is unable to commute to school at this time but wants to make sure that he stays on track while he is homebound. By accessing courses online, Greg can work on his assignments at times and locations most convenient for him. This type of flexible online learning environment keeps students like Greg engaged and accountable for their learning progress and achievement.



Scheduling-Issue Student

Meet Stan! He has many different areas of interest and has various subjects he would like to explore, including Spanish. However, attempting to schedule extra courses into his day is difficult, and he is finding that he can't fit all of the courses he would like to take into a school day. Through virtual schooling, Stan is able to take a Spanish class to continue exploring his interests. ¡Olé!

Onslow County Schools

District Details

Onslow County Schools (OCS) is located adjacent to Camp Lejeune, one of the U.S.' largest military bases, and the district serves many students from the base. Due to the demands of military life, these students are a very transient population; in fact, 48% of OCS students transfer either within or outside of the district each year.



District Challenges

- Transcript matching issues are a challenge created by this large transient population because many come in from or leave for districts that use a significantly different schedule and credit system than OCS.
- The district wanted a means of giving these learners access to public education, while allowing them to retain the flexibility and parental supervision that is a key appeal of homeschooling.

Benefits for Students

- OCS students are taking advantage of unique course options that the district cannot offer on its own, including Photography and Forensic Science.
- One student who deals with a rare sleeping disorder is now able to complete school work on his terms, working around his health challenges.
- Another student who has been working as an actress, regularly out of state filming for several weeks at a time, has been able to stay caught up by completing classwork virtually.



One of the most consistent positive feedback we receive from parents is the amount of communication that is sent out from EdOptions Academy in addition to face to face meetings to check in on student progress.



—Vikki Childress,
Director of Virtual Programs



Personalization is one of the biggest draws to a virtual learning environment. Be sure to carefully consider your student population and what environment will best suit their needs.

Preparing for Implementation Success

Once you have decided that a virtual implementation is something you want to move forward with, you also need to consider what elements are needed for success within the school or district, as well as a successful partnership.

Use the check boxes below to start evaluating your readiness.

What school-based elements are already present within your school or district?

- ☐ School or district support
- ☐ Professional development
- ☐ Virtual school program vision and model
- ☐ Technology hardware
- ☐ Infrastructure and space
- ☐ Certified teachers

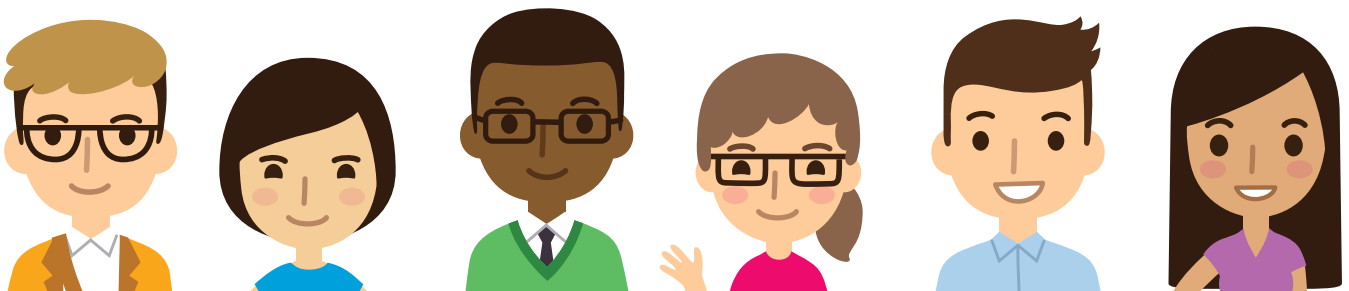
What type of partner is right for you?

CURRICULUM

- ☐ **Customization and Flexibility**
Provide the ability to customize content by adding external resources to assignments aligned to local objectives.
- ☐ **Course Variety**
Present students with a variety of expanded course offerings that meet a range of academic needs, including core, elective, Career and Technical Education, Advanced Placement®.
- ☐ **Quality Standards-Aligned Content**
Ensure that you are providing quality academic content aligned to state and national standards that has been proven to be effective.

VIRTUAL SCHOOL PARTNER

- ☐ **Highly-Qualified, State-Certified Teachers**
Ensure that your students are taught by high-quality, certified teachers who provide continuous progress monitoring and personalized learning.
- ☐ **Flexible Program Options**
Provide your students with the flexibility to complete coursework at times and locations most convenient for them and still allow them to stay in their home district.
- ☐ **Accreditation**
An accredited school adheres to high-quality standards based on the latest research and successful professional practices.



Curriculum Partners

Ask your online curriculum partner these important questions to ensure that the virtual school program partner you choose will support all facets of learning in your environment.

Is the curriculum built to my state standards?

YES ☐ NO ☐

Does my curriculum partner make information available regarding the instructional design of the curriculum?

YES ☐ NO ☐

Is it clear who develops the curriculum?

YES ☐ NO ☐

Is it clear that my curriculum partner updates

standards as standards change?

YES ☐ NO ☐

Is the curriculum reviewed by third-party entities who provide standards guidance?

YES ☐ NO ☐



Stop and think!

Use the space below to evaluate a program partner. Does the partner meet your requirements? Are you satisfied with the boxes you have marked?

Program Partners

Ask your program partner these important questions to ensure that the program you choose will support all facets of learning in your environment.

Program provides high-quality, state-certified teachers.

YES ☐ NO ☐

Content can be customized to individual education plans for students with diverse abilities and needs.

YES ☐ NO ☐

Remediation and enrichment activities are available.

YES ☐ NO ☐

Classroom reports are detailed and easy to access, and they help teachers focus on the students and topics requiring additional instruction.

YES ☐ NO ☐

System functionality aligns with the goals of your unique program, whether they are test preparation, credit recovery, or other objectives.

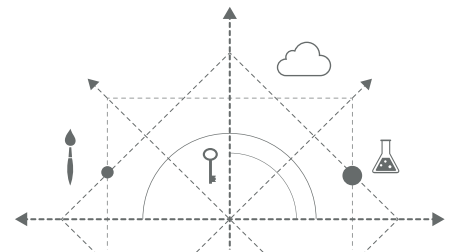
YES ☐ NO ☐

Additional resources and support are available for system users in order to optimize use.

YES ☐ NO ☐

The system provides actionable data to inform decisions and monitor overall program success.

YES ☐ NO ☐



Stop and think!

Use the space below to evaluate a virtual school partner. Does the partner meet your requirements? Are you satisfied with the boxes you have marked?

Reflections

Let's do a quick recap of your responses from the previous sections of this workbook.

From page 3: list student scenarios that are most applicable to your student population.

From page 5: from the perspective of teacher involvement, which route (curriculum or program partner) better suits your needs.

From page 7: from an implementation perspective, which route (curriculum or program) is a better fit?

From page 8 or 9: evaluate the reflection boxes at the end of each page, which option (curriculum or program partner) best meets your desired needs?

Your Virtual School Partner

Edmentum is founded in innovation and committed to being a trusted partner to create successful student outcomes everywhere learning occurs. We can give you the resources—and the expertise— to leverage the power of effective learning solutions.

Edmentum's EdOptions Academy provides extensive and effective online solutions for all K-12 learners, paired with highly qualified, state-certified online teachers, allowing schools and districts to enhance, expand, and extend their virtual school program offerings. Together, we'll work with you to identify an implementation plan tailored just for you and provide opportunities to help you establish the best learning environment for your school or district.

Together, we will identify:

1. Program Needs Analysis

Review virtual learning strategies and best practices.

2. Implementation & Onboarding

Tailor onboarding process to meet the specific needs of your educators.

3. Professional Development

Continuous support focused on preparing and sustaining an effective virtual learning environment.



Success Stories

Discover the success that schools and districts achieve in partnering with Edmentum.



Blog

Explore how technology is changing education.



Videos

Visit our video library, and view clips of industry thought leaders, customer testimonials, and product overviews.



Whitepapers and Efficacy

Dig through the data behind why our products work, and determine how to use them more effectively.



Webinars

Find out how online education is redefining the 21st century classroom.



Workshops

Take advantage of these free customer resources to learn how to get started and better utilize our products to implement a world-class program.

Contact us today for more information.
www.edmentum.com – 800.447.5286