

Virtual Learning Across the Nation

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Overview

Online and blended learning models are growing across the United States. Many states and school districts are starting to see the potential of online learning, understanding it as a powerful teaching tool that allows courses to reach a wider base of students, and in many cases one that can increase a student's receptivity to the given subject matter.

Not every state has taken the same approach to expanding their virtual learning networks. Several models exist, ranging widely in size and design.

Quick Facts

- 39 states offer some form of state-led virtual program.
- 27 states, plus Washington DC, have at least one operational full-time virtual school.

Major State Virtual School Networks

Florida

Florida is generally thought of as the pace-setter in virtual education. As of 2010, the Florida Virtual School offered courses to supplement traditional courses, rather than run a full time virtual school. They are funded through a combination of state appropriation, course fees, and the state's public education formula funding model. The program is well funded and widely used.

Similar Programs:

Michigan Virtual School, Idaho Digital Learning Academy

Texas is most similar to this model, although it is not as comprehensive, and does not currently incorporate virtual funding into the Foundation School Program. Doing so would bring our model more in line with the states listed above.

Large Multi-District Virtual Programs

Oregon

Oregon allows charter and district networks, rather than operate a full scale state network. Students can enroll full time in these programs, and they have a statewide reach. They are funded within the state's public education formula funding.

Similar Programs:

Insight School of Washington, Georgia Virtual Academy, Minnesota Virtual High School

Single District Programs

California

These programs are much smaller scale. As they are run at the district level and under district rules, there tends to be a great deal of flexibility for the students; they can enroll full or part time in virtual programs. They are funded at the district level.

Similar Programs:

Broward School District (Florida), Plano School District (Texas), JeffCo (Colorado), WOLF (Nevada)

Consortium Schools

Wisconsin

These are privately funded entities that generate their funds through payments from consortium members or course fees. Their reach varies; they can be statewide, national, or even global, and they generally only offer supplemental education.

Similar Programs:

Virtual High School Global Consortium

University Based Programs

Nebraska

These are largely self-explanatory. They offer full and part time education opportunities, and, much like college courses, are funded by course fees. There are several programs like this nationwide.

Similar Programs:

Brigham Young University Independent Study

Conclusion

A broader understanding of the many different virtual learning options across the country will help Texas determine how best to expand its own programs in the future. While the Texas Virtual School Network continues to expand, incorporating a wide range of other approaches, such as the ones discussed above, could allow virtual education to reach a much broader cross section of Texas schools. ★

