

624 ONLINE LEARNING OPTIONS

~~[Note: The provisions of this policy substantially reflect the statutory requirements of Minn. Stat. § 124D.095, the Online Learning Option Act.]~~

[NOTE: In 2023, the Minnesota Legislature repealed the Online Learning Option Act (Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.095) and replaced it with the Online Instruction Act (Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.094). This policy fully replaces the old Model Policy 624].

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to recognize and govern online learning options of students enrolled in the school district for purposes of compulsory attendance and address enrollment of students with an online learning provider for supplemental or full-time online learning.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

- A. The school district shall not prohibit an enrolled student from applying to enroll in online learning.
- B. The school district shall grant academic credit for completing the requirements of an online learning course or program.
- C. ~~The school district shall allow an online learning student to have the same access to the computer hardware and education software available in the school district as all other students in the school district. An online learning provider must assist an online learning student whose family qualifies for education tax credit to acquire computer hardware and educational software for online learning purposes.~~
- D. ~~The school district shall continue to provide non-academic services to online learning students.~~
- E. ~~Online learning students may participate in the extracurricular activities of the school district on the same basis as other enrolled students.~~

~~[Note: The school district may itself offer digital learning to its enrolled students. Such digital learning does not generate online learning funds. To the extent digital learning is offered by the school district only to its enrolled students, it is not subject to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) reporting or review requirements unless~~

~~the school district is a full-time online learning provider. See Minn. Stat. § 124D.095, Subd. 4(d) and (e).~~

~~To the extent the school district provides to resident students curriculum that has both physical and electronic components, the school district must make the electronic component accessible to a resident student in a home school at the request of the home-schooled student or student's parent or guardian, provided that the school district does not incur more than an incidental cost as a result of providing access electronically. See Minn. Stat. § 123B.42.]~~

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. “Blended **instruction**” learning” is **means** a form of digital **instruction** learning that occurs when a student learns part time in a supervised physical setting and part time through **online** digital delivery of instruction **under paragraph (E).** ~~or a student learns in a supervised physical setting where technology is used as a primary method to deliver instruction.~~
- B. “Digital **instruction** learning” is ~~learning~~ **means instruction** facilitated by technology that offers students an element of control over the time, place, path, or pace of their learning and includes blended and online **instruction** learning.
- C. “Enrolling district” means the school district ~~or charter school~~ in which a student is enrolled under Minnesota Statutes section 120A.22, Subd. 4. ~~for purposes of compulsory education.~~
- ~~D.~~ **D. E.** “Online learning course syllabus” is **means** a written document that **identifies the state academic standards taught and assessed in a supplemental online course under paragraph (I); course content outline; required course assessments; instructional methods; communication procedures with students, guardians, and the enrolling district under paragraph (C); and supports available to the student.** ~~an online learning provider transmits to the enrolling school district using a format prescribed by the Commissioner of MDE (Commissioner) to identify the state academic standards embedded in an online learning course, the course content outline, required course assessments, expectations for actual teacher contact time, and other student-to-teacher communications, and the academic support available to the online learning student.~~
- E. F.** “Online **instruction** learning” **means** is a form of digital **instruction** that occurs when a student learns **primarily through digital technology away from a supervised physical setting.** ~~learning delivered by an approved online learning provider under Paragraph III.H.~~

- F. G. “Online instructional site” means a site that offers courses using online instruction under paragraph (C) and may enroll students receiving online instruction under paragraph (E). “Online learning student” is a student enrolled in an online learning course or program delivered by an authorized online learning provider.
- G. H. “Online teacher” means an employee of the enrolling district under paragraph (C) or the supplemental online course provider under paragraph (J) who holds the appropriate licensure under Minnesota Rules, chapter 8710, and is trained to provide online instruction under paragraph (E).
“Online learning provider” is a school district, an intermediate school district, or an organization of two or more school districts operating under a joint powers agreement, or a charter school located in Minnesota that provides online learning to students and is approved by MDE to provide online learning courses.
- H. I. “Student” means is a Minnesota resident enrolled in a school defined under public school, a nonpublic school, church or religious organization, or home school in which a child is provided instruction in compliance with Minnesota Statute 120A.22, subdivision 4 and 120A.24 in kindergarten through grade 12 up to the age of 21.
- I. J. “Supplemental online course learning” means an online learning course taken in place of a course provided by the student’s enrolling district under paragraph (C). period at a local district school.
- J. “Supplemental online course provider” means a school district, an intermediate school district, an organization of two or more school districts operating under a joint powers agreement, or a charter school located in Minnesota that is authorized by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to provide online courses under paragraph (I).

IV. **DIGITAL INSTRUCTION PROCEDURES**

- A. An enrolling district may provide digital instruction, including blended instruction and online instruction, to the district's own enrolled students. Enrolling districts may establish agreements to provide digital instruction, including blended instruction and online instruction, to students enrolled in the cooperating schools.
- B. When online instruction is provided, an online teacher shall perform all duties of teacher of record under Minnesota Rules, part 8710.0310. Unless the Commissioner of MDE grants a waiver, a teacher providing online instruction shall not instruct more than 40 students in any one online learning course or section.
- C. Students receiving online instruction full time shall be reported as enrolled in an online instructional site.

- D. Curriculum used for digital instruction shall be aligned with Minnesota's current academic standards and benchmarks.
- E. Digital instruction shall be accessible to students under sections 504 and 508 of the federal Rehabilitation Act and Title II of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act.
- F. An enrolling district providing digital instruction and a supplemental online course provider shall assist an enrolled student whose family qualifies for the education tax credit under Minnesota Statutes, section 290.0674 to acquire computer hardware and educational software so they may participate in digital instruction. Funds provided to a family to support digital instruction or supplemental online courses may only be used for qualifying expenses as determined by the provider. Nonconsumable materials purchased with public education funds remain the property of the provider. Records for any funds provided must be available for review by the public or MDE.
- G. An enrolling district providing digital instruction shall establish and document procedures for determining attendance for membership and keep accurate records of daily attendance under Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.21.

V. SUPPLEMENTAL ONLINE COURSES

- A. Notwithstanding Minnesota Statutes, sections 124D.03 and 124D.08 and Minnesota Statutes, chapter 124E, procedures for applying to take supplemental online courses other than those offered by the student's enrolling district are as provided in this subdivision.
- B. Any kindergarten through grade 12 student may apply to take a supplemental online course. The student, or the student's parent or guardian for a student under age 17, must submit an application for the proposed supplemental online course or courses. A student may:
 - 1. apply to take an online course from a supplemental online course provider that meets or exceeds the academic standards of the course in the enrolling district they are replacing;
 - 2. apply to take supplemental online courses for up to 50 percent of the student's scheduled course load;
 - 3. apply to take supplemental online courses no later than 15 school days after the student's enrolling district's term has begun. An enrolling district may waive the 50 percent course enrollment limit or the 15-day time limit; and
 - 4. enroll in additional courses with the online learning provider under a

separate agreement that includes terms for paying any tuition or course fees.

[NOTE: The 2024 Minnesota legislature added this provision.]

- C. A student taking a supplemental online course must have the same access to the computer hardware and education software available in a school as all other students in the enrolling district.
- D. A supplemental online course provider must have a current, approved application to be listed by MDE as an approved provider. The supplemental online course provider must:
 - 1. use an application form specified by MDE;
 - 2. notify the student, the student's guardian if they are age 17 or younger, and enrolling district of the accepted application to take a supplemental online course within ten days of receiving a completed application;
 - 3. notify the enrolling district of the course title, credits to be awarded, and the start date of the online course. A supplemental online course provider must make the online course syllabus available to the enrolling district;
 - 4. request applicable academic support information for the student, including a copy of the IEP, EL support plan, or 504 plan; and
 - 5. track student attendance and monitor academic progress and communicate with the student, the student's guardian if they are age 17 or younger, and the enrolling district's designated online learning liaison.
- E. A supplemental online course provider may limit enrollment if the provider's school board or board of directors adopts by resolution specific standards for accepting and rejecting students' applications. The provisions may not discriminate against any protected class or students with disabilities.
- F. A supplemental online course provider may request that MDE review an enrolling district's written decision to not accept a student's supplemental online course application. The student may participate in the supplemental online course while the application is under review. Decisions shall be final and binding for both the enrolling district and the supplemental online course provider.
- G. A supplemental online course provider must participate in continuous improvement cycles with MDE.

VI. ENROLLING DISTRICT

- A. An enrolling district may not restrict or prevent a student from applying to take

supplemental online courses.

- B. An enrolling district may request an online course syllabus to review whether the academic standards in the online course meet or exceed the academic standards in the course it would replace at the enrolling district.
- C. Within 15 days after receiving notice of a student applying to take a supplemental online course, the enrolling district must notify the supplemental online course provider whether the student, the student's guardian, and the enrolling district agree that academic standards in the online course meet or exceed the academic standards in the course it would replace at the enrolling district. If the enrolling district does not agree that the academic standards in the online course meet or exceed the academic standards in the course it would replace at the enrolling district, then:
 - 1. the enrolling district must provide a written explanation of the district's decision to the student, the student's guardian, and the supplemental online course provider; and
 - 2. the online provider must provide a response to the enrolling district explaining how the course or program meets the graduation requirements of the enrolling district.
- D. An enrolling district may reduce the course schedule of a student taking supplemental online courses in proportion to the number of supplemental online learning courses the student takes.
- E. An enrolling district must appoint an online learning liaison who:
 - 1. provides information to students and families about supplemental online courses;
 - 2. provides academic support information including IEPs, EL support plans, and 504 plans to supplemental online providers; and
 - 3. monitors attendance and academic progress, and communicates with supplemental online learning providers, students, families, and enrolling district staff.
- F. An enrolling district must continue to provide support services to students taking supplemental online courses as they would for any other enrolled student including support for English learners, case management of an individualized education program, and meal and nutrition services for eligible students.
- G. An online learning student must receive academic credit for completing the requirements of a supplemental online learning course. If a student completes an online learning course that meets or exceeds a graduation standard or the grade

progression requirement at the enrolling district, that standard or requirement is met.

- H. Secondary credits granted to a supplemental online learning student count toward the graduation and credit requirements of the enrolling district. The enrolling district must apply the same graduation requirements to all students, including students taking supplemental online courses.
- I. An enrolling district must provide access to extracurricular activities for students taking supplemental online courses on the same basis as any other enrolled student.

VII. REPORTING

Courses that include blended instruction and online instruction must be reported in the manner determined by the Commissioner of MDE.

A. Dissemination and Receipt of Information

- 1. ~~The school district shall make available information about online learning to all interested people. The school district may utilize the list of approved online learning providers and online learning courses and programs developed, published, and maintained by MDE.~~
- 2. ~~The school district will receive and maintain information provided to it by online learning providers.~~
- 3. ~~The online learning provider must report or make available information on an individual student's progress and accumulated credit to the student, the student's parent, and the enrolling district in a manner specified by the Commissioner unless the enrolling district and the online learning provider agree to a different form of notice and notify the Commissioner.~~
- 4. ~~The enrolling district must designate a contact person to help facilitate and monitor the student's academic progress and accumulated credits toward graduation.~~

B. Student Enrollment

- 1. ~~A student may apply for full-time enrollment in an approved online learning program. The student must have the written consent of a parent or guardian to do so if the student is under eighteen (18) years of age.~~
- 2. ~~The student and the student's parents must submit an application to the online learning provider and identify the student's reason for enrolling. An~~

online learning provider that accepts a student under this section must notify the student and the enrolling district in writing within ten days if the enrolling district is not the online learning provider. The student and the student's parent must notify the online learning provider of the student's intent to enroll in online learning within ten days of being accepted, at which time the student and the student's parent must sign a statement indicating that they have reviewed the online course or program and understand the expectations of enrolling in online learning. The online

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- learning provider must use a form provided by MDE to notify the enrolling district of the student's application to enroll in online learning.
3. The supplemental online learning notice to the enrolling district when a student applies to the online learning provider will include the courses or program, credits to be awarded, and the start date of the online learning course or program. An online learning provider must make available the supplemental online learning course syllabus to the enrolling district. Within 15 days after the online learning provider makes information in this paragraph available to the enrolling district, the enrolling district must notify the online learning provider whether the student, the student's parent, and the enrolling district agree or disagree that the course meets the enrolling district's graduation requirements. A student may enroll in a supplemental online learning course up to the midpoint of the school district's term. The school district may waive this requirement for special circumstances with the agreement of the online learning provider.
 4. An online learning course or program that meets or exceeds a graduation standard or the grade progression requirement of the enrolling district as described in the provider's online learning course syllabus meets the corresponding graduation requirements applicable to the student in the enrolling district. If the enrolling district does not agree that the course or program meets its graduation requirements, then the enrolling district must make available an explanation of its decision to the student, the student's parent, and the online learning provider; and the online learning provider may make available a response to the enrolling district, showing how the course or program meets the graduation requirements of the enrolling district.
 5. An online learning student may enroll in supplemental online learning courses equal to a maximum of 50 percent of the student's full schedule of courses per term during a single school year, and the student may exceed the supplemental online learning registration limit if the enrolling district permits for supplemental online learning enrollment above the limit or if the enrolling district and the online learning provider agree to the instructional services. To enroll in more than 50 percent of the student's full schedule or

~~courses per term in online learning, the student must qualify to exceed the supplemental online learning registration limit or apply to enroll in an approved full-time online learning program consistent with Paragraph IV.B.2. above. Full-time online learning students may enroll in classes at a local school under a contract for instructional services between the online learning provider and the school district.~~

- ~~6. An online learning student may complete course work at a grade level that is different from the student's current grade level.~~
- ~~7. An online learning student may enroll in additional courses with the online learning provider under a separate agreement that includes terms for paying any tuition or course fees.~~

~~C. Classroom Membership and Teacher Contact Time~~

- ~~1. The enrolling district may reduce an online learning student's regular classroom instructional membership in proportion to the student's membership in online learning courses.~~
- ~~2. The school district may reduce the course schedule of an online learning student in proportion to the number of online learning courses the student takes from an online learning provider other than the school district.~~
- ~~3. A teacher with a Minnesota license must assemble and deliver instruction to enrolled students receiving online learning from an enrolling district. The delivery of instruction occurs when the student interacts with the computer or the teacher and receives ongoing assistance and assessment of learning. The instruction may include curriculum developed by persons other than a teacher holding a Minnesota license.~~
- ~~4. The online learning provider, other than a digital learning provider offering digital learning to its enrolled students only under Minn. Stat. § 124D.095, Subd. 4(d), must give the Commissioner written assurance that all courses meet state academic standards and the online learning curriculum, instruction, and assessment expectations for actual teacher contact time or other student-teacher communications and academic support meet nationally recognized standards and are described as such in an online learning course syllabus that meets the Commissioner's requirements.~~

~~D. Academic Credit; Graduation Standards or Requirements~~

- ~~1. The school district shall apply the same graduation requirements to all students, including online learning students.~~

2. ~~The school district shall use the same criteria for accepting online learning credits or courses as it does for accepting credits or courses for nonresident transfer students under Minnesota law.~~
3. ~~The school district may challenge the validity of a course offered by an online learning provider. Such a challenge will be filed with MDE.~~
4. ~~The school district shall count secondary credits granted to an online learning student toward its graduation and credit requirements.~~
5. ~~If a student completes an online learning course or program that meets or exceeds a graduation standard or grade progression requirement at the school district, that standard or requirement will be met.~~
6. ~~Weighted grades will also be applicable if the school district has adopted a policy to offer weighted grades.~~

Legal References:

Minn. Stat. § 120A.21 (Enrollment of a Student in Foster Care)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.22 (Compulsory Instruction)
Minn. Stat. § 120A.24 (Reporting)
Minn. Stat. § 123B.42, Subd. 1a (Curriculum; Electronic Components)
Minn. Stat. § 124D.03 (Enrollment Options Program)
Minn. Stat. § 124D.08 (School Board's Approval to Enroll in Nonresident District; Exceptions)
Minn. Stat. § 124D.094 (Online Instruction Act)
Minn. Rules Ch. 8710 (Teacher and Other School Professional Licensing)
Minn. Stat. § 124D.09 (Post-Secondary Enrollment Options Act)
Minn. Stat. § 124D.095 (Online Learning Option Act)

Cross References:

MSBA/MASA Model Policy 509 (Enrollment of Nonresident Students)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 605 (Alternative Programs)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 608 (Instructional Services—Special Education)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 613 (Graduation Requirements)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 620 (Credit for Learning)