

---

## **ONLINE EDUCATION**

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Beaverton School District (BSD) is investigating ways to offer online coursework for initial and recovery credit to students. Parents and students that either cannot access or do not choose to use the current options offered by BSD have been finding alternative means to earn their credits. The need to address this issue and the desire to enhance the district's ability to prepare students for post-secondary education and career success forms the mandate for this project. The preliminary tasks that need to be accomplished are:

1. Determine how desirable, viable and achievable an online learning option is for BSD
2. Research, identify and evaluate the scope, costs and benefits of online learning products

In a subsequent meeting with Robin Kobrowski, Deputy Superintendent Mead and Superintendent Rose, motivations, constraints, quality expectations and stakeholders were discussed. The content of this meeting along with extensive research established the following principles:

- The online (virtual) offerings should enhance and not replace current (physical) offerings
- Online coursework should offer equivalence with classroom work in terms of quality, rigor and alignment to standards
- Cost should not be the *primary* consideration for BSD's online product offering
- The project should not be limited to credit recovery options
- The process will require key stakeholder involvement and cooperation
- BSD should not merely copy or 'piggyback' onto another district's implementation
- Any resulting outcome or products of the project should be aligned with and fit into the district's strategic vision
- The project will use lessons learned from past projects

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended the Board accept this report.



## Online Learning Project Report

### Background

Beaverton School District (BSD) is investigating ways to offer online coursework for initial and recovery credit to students. Parents and students that either can not access or do not choose to use the current options offered by BSD have been finding alternative means to earn their credits. The need to address this issue and the desire to enhance the district's ability to prepare students for post-secondary education and career success forms the mandate for this project.

The preliminary tasks required for the project were:

1. Determine how desirable, viable and achievable an online learning option is for BSD
2. Research, identify and evaluate the scope, costs and benefits of online learning products

In a subsequent meeting with Robin Kobrowski, Deputy Mead and Superintendent Rose, motivations, constraints, quality expectations and stakeholders were discussed. The content of this meeting along with a survey of current research about online learning established the following principles:

- The online (virtual) offerings should enhance and not replace current (physical) offerings
- Online coursework should offer equivalence with traditional classroom work in terms of quality, rigor and alignment to standards
- Cost should not be the *primary* consideration for BSD's online product offering
- The project should not be limited to credit recovery options
- BSD should not merely copy or 'piggyback' onto another district's implementation
- Any resulting outcome or products of the project should be aligned with and fit into the district's strategic vision
- The project will use lessons learned from past projects

### Summary of Research

Published research about the effectiveness of online learning for K-12 students is scarce. A meta-analysis and review of online learning done by the Department of Education in 2010 states:

*"the initial search of the literature published between 1996 and 2006 found no studies contrasting K-12 online learning with face-to-face instruction that met methodological quality criteria"*

- <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/tech/evidence-based-practices/finalreport.pdf>



Many of the business and association interests that refer to studies in their literature do so in general terms or 'cherry pick' items that serve their interests. The majority of available research involves post-secondary, professional or business populations.

There are, however, recurring themes in the available research and literature that appear to point to three key success factors for an online learning implementation:

1. Districts implementing online learning need to understand and be trained in best practices to be equipped to administer courses and create the necessary systems.
2. Teaching online is not the same as teaching face-to-face. Teachers need to understand their expectations and be prepared and trained to deal with the technological, pedagogical and social implications of teaching online.
3. The student 'customers' of online courses are a varied group. An online learning system must be designed with the needs of the different 'target markets' in mind.

## Project Goals

In order to provide a clear focus for the project, the goals have been framed into three basic concepts - Retain, Recover and Recruit. Each of these are outlined below:

### Retain

Online courses have the potential to prevent students from seeking options outside of BSD schools. A high-quality online learning option will provide students with more course options that may not be available at their site. Also, online courses provide needed college and workplace skills as outlined in the CCR Framework and the National Education Technology Standards ([NETS](#)) Also, online courses can reduce or eliminate scheduling issues and can be a viable alternative for students dealing with social barriers preventing them from being successful within traditional classrooms.

### Recover

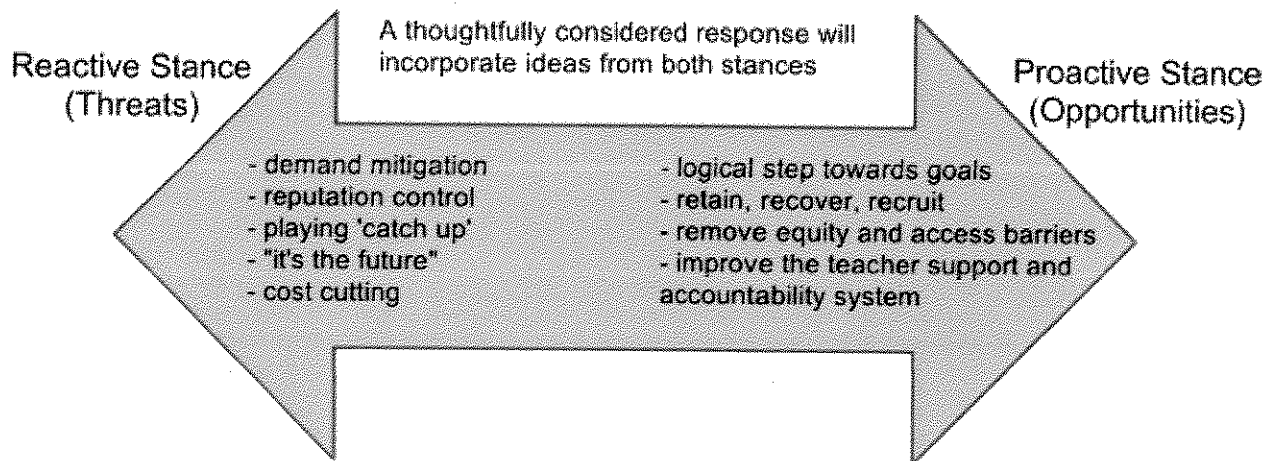
Students that are disenfranchised, home-schooled or using an alternative online option can be potentially 'recovered' back into BSD schools through online coursework. This also offers a potential for recovering ADM funding for students within BSD boundaries.

### Recruit

A well-executed online learning strategy enhances the existing quality education choices offered by BSD. This could increase the chance families moving into the area would choose a location within BSD boundaries.

## Approach

Implementing online learning on a district level requires integration into existing systems, teacher and administrative training, curriculum and Learning Management System (LMS) evaluation and a clear understanding of the student 'customers'. Choosing the correct stance and the first steps in implementation will be key to sustainability and success.



## Pilot Online Course

Borrowing from the concepts of a 'minimum viable product' and 'validated learning' in 'The Lean Startup' by Eric Reis an online test pilot course for Fall 2012 is currently being developed. The course will be AP Computer Science offered online through Aloha High School. It will use a combination of LMS products and both teacher-created and vendor-supplied curriculums.