



**NATIONAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE'S TOOLKIT 2005
CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT**

***Resources and Additional State Examples
[including eLearning Principles and Guidelines &
Judging eLearning Curriculum]***

As the use of internet based courses and digital content becomes more prevalent in today's K-12 learning environment, State Technology Directors have a greater responsibility to support those teachers and policymakers choosing eLearning curriculum and developing virtual instruction. In the 2000-2001 school year, the Southern Regional Education Board presented the "Essential Principles of Quality: Guidelines for Web-based Courses for Middle Grades and High School Students" as a guide to help teachers and technology directors navigate through the wide ranging levels of rigor, excellence, and quality in internet based courses. Since this publication, some state technology departments have taken the lead in creating more locally relevant eLearning quality guidelines and principles for their constituencies. Here are some of those leaders:

- Maryland: Checklist for Evaluating Online Courses for Middle and High School Students
- Massachusetts: Recommended Criteria for Online High School Courses
- Massachusetts: Recommended Criteria for Evaluating Instructional Technology Materials
- Texas: Investigating Quality of Internet Courses (IQ) Project
- Wisconsin: Guidelines for Giving Credit for Virtual Courses on the Internet

Maryland: Checklist for Evaluating Online Courses for Middle and High School Students

The Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities website provides a comprehensive list of resources so that local K-12 policymakers can make more informed decisions on eLearning for their students. As a part of this resource list for local school systems, the MVLO website offers a “Checklist for Evaluating Online Courses for Middle and High School Students.” This Checklist provides eLearning stakeholders with an essential tool to evaluate the quality of online courses. The MVLO checklist is divided into four sections:

- Section A: Curriculum, Instructional Design, and Student Assessment;
- Section B: Online Teacher Considerations;
- Section C: Legal Considerations; and
- Section D: Accessibility Requirements.

Maryland State Department of Education (2002-2006). Checklist for Evaluating Online Courses for Middle and High School Students. Retrieved January 7th, 2005 from <http://mdk12online.org/7Reso/Qual/QChkEvCrs.pdf>

Massachusetts: Recommended Criteria for Online High School Courses

The Massachusetts Virtual Education Space website offers school administrators, teachers, students, and parents access to standards and guidelines by which they can make more informed decisions about the quality of distance learning courses. In November, 2003, the Massachusetts Department of Education offered the “Recommended Criteria for Distance Learning Courses” to local distance learning policymakers. This resource offers guidance for selecting high quality high school education courses, teacher professional development courses, and online educator preparation courses. Within this document the “Recommended Criteria for Online High School Courses” is divided into five sections for more specific evaluation of high school level eLearning curriculum:

- Section I: Course Content and Implementation;
- Section II: Staffing;
- Section III: Online Learning Environment;
- Section IV: Program Management and Administration; and
- Section V: Evaluation.

Massachusetts Department of Education (2003). Recommended criteria for distance learning courses. Retrieved on January 5th, 2005 from http://www.doe.mass.edu/edtech/news03/distance_learning.pdf

Massachusetts: Recommended Criteria for Evaluating Instructional Technology Materials

The Massachusetts VES also offers an important resource for district policymakers, teachers, students, and parents when selecting digital material to integrate into classroom teaching and learning environments. In April, 2003, the Massachusetts Department of Education offered eLearning stakeholders the “Recommended Criteria for Evaluating Instructional Technology Materials.” This checklist is divided into five sections that incorporate important criteria for eLearning content and courses:

- Section I: Academic Content;
- Section II: Materials Development or Usage;
- Section III: Instructional Features;
- Section IV: Product Specifications, Qualities, and/or Costs; and
- Section V: Vendor Supplemental Services.

Massachusetts Department of Education (2002). Recommended criteria for evaluating instructional technology materials. Retrieved January 7th, 2005 from http://www.doe.mass.edu/edtech/standards/tech_mat.PDF

Texas: Investigating Quality of Internet Courses (IQ) Project

In the fall of 2001, the Texas Education Agency began an investigation into the quality of online courses. The Investigating Quality of Internet Courses (IQ) Project was created to identify guidelines for internet courses that meet Texas standards for teaching and learning as well as to create a repository of online courses that meet these high standards. According to the TEA these guidelines were intended for use by school administrators, teachers, parents, and course providers so that all Texas students receive only the “highest quality Internet-based courses as part of their educational experience” (TEA, 2003).

The IQ Standards are divided into three major sections that investigate the quality of Course Components, the level of the Academic Support provided within the course, and the course’s Financial Components. The Course Component section is divided into seven eLearning relevant subcategories:

- Section A: Course Design;
- Section B: Course Content;
- Section C: Instructional Strategies and Activities;
- Section D: Learning Communities;
- Section E: Student Assessments;
- Section F: Technology Integration; and
- Section G: Course Effectiveness.

The IQ Standards Academic Support section is divided into four subcategories for further evaluation of a proposed eLearning course:

- Section A: Technical Support;
- Section B: Student/Parent Services;
- Section C: Administrative Reports; and
- Section D: Professional Development.

Finally, the IQ Standards Financial Components section is divided into four subcategories for a proposed eLearning course:

- Section A: Economics;
- Section B: Company Background;
- Section C: Intellectual Property; and
- Section D: Marketing.

Texas Education Agency (2003). Quality of Service Guidelines for Online Courses Evaluation Matrix developed by the Texas Investigating Quality of Online Courses (IQ) Project. It can be accessed through <http://www.iqstandards.info>

Washington: First-Look: Evaluation Form for K-12 Online Products

The Washington Education Department has developed a webpage to help eLearning stakeholders choose quality online products for student use. In order to facilitate the decisions made at the district and classroom levels, the WEA created a webpage with “Resources for Evaluating Online Curriculum.” This webpage contains a draft list of questions school personnel should consider when “assessing potential online curriculum offerings” (WEA, n.d.). The WEA also offers an evaluation matrix developed by Debbie Tschirgi that can be used as a “first-look” tool for evaluating K-12 online products. The “First-Look: Evaluation Form for K-12 Online Products” matrix is divided into seven subsections for further evaluation of eLearning materials:

- Section A: Student Populations Being Served;
- Section B: Instructional Design;
- Section C: Curriculum Content;
- Section D: Course Delivery;
- Section E: Evaluation and Assessment;
- Section F: Course Management; and
- Section G: School Readiness and Implementation Compatibility.

Washington Education Department (n.d). First-Look: Evaluation Form for K-12 Online Products, developed by Debbie Tschirgi, ETSC Director at ESD 112. Retrieved January 7th, 2005 from http://www.k12.wa.us/EdTech/pubdocs/Eval_Form.doc

Wisconsin: Guidelines for Giving Credit for Virtual Courses on the Internet

In February, 2001, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction issued a policy brief “to raise and support important issues related to virtual schools and to provide guidance to school districts considering the use of virtual education” (WDPI, 2001). This policy brief included a checklist that eLearning decision makers could use to fairly, appropriately, and effectively choose quality online courses for their students. The “Guidelines for Giving Credit for Virtual Courses on the Internet” includes eight subcategories for consideration by a district or school level eLearning director or teacher:

- Section A: Appropriateness of Course for Student;
- Section B: Consistency with District Considerations;
- Section C: Access to Courses;
- Section D: Vendor’s Credibility;
- Section E: Quality of Course Content;
- Section F: Supervision;
- Section G: Student Protection; and
- Section H: District Policy for Virtual Education.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2001). Policy and Advisory 01.1: February, 2001 – Subject: Virtual Education – New Opportunities, New Challenges. Retrieved January 7th, 2005 from http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dfm/pb/pdf/advis1_1.pdf

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