



NATIONAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE'S TOOLKIT 2005 eLEARNING LEADERSHIP & POLICIES

Step One: Understanding the Models and Adopting a Common Language

One of the critical needs for any leader is to know and understand the range of options that are available for a particular program. This is especially true in eLearning. Before choosing a particular eLearning program for their states, it is critical that state leaders first know the range of possibilities for such programs. In thinking through these options, state leaders must understand the implications and efficacy of these different eLearning models and policies, and the potential challenges and solutions to those challenges. Recognizing this need, one subgroup focused on delineating the key attributes of the many different kinds of eLearning models. This subgroup developed an Attributes Matrix – a continuum of eLearning models that range from a much more limited use of technology within traditional school settings to cyber-schools in which students receive the majority of their instruction via online courses. The group intends for this continuum to serve as a reference point for discussions about eLearning policies and implications, providing a common language and understanding with which to have such discussions.

The group purposefully focused on eLearning models at the macro-level—these attributes characterize eLearning programs from the state-level perspective rather than drilling down to the details of specific eLearning courses. The descriptions are also intentionally generic so as to be useful to leaders and stakeholders in a variety of settings. The models within this matrix are highlighted to serve as a guide for leaders who are in the process of assessing their state's needs while also understanding the realities of their state policies that often dictate governance, staffing and funding. This tool can be used to inform policymakers and state leaders by representing the characteristics that currently exist in a wide variety of eLearning models and assessing whether these models might be appropriate given the particular state's context. With this stated purpose, the group also thought it important to include the policy implications of these different models, along with the descriptions of what these models entail. The different models on the continuum are broken down by issues such as governance, staffing and funding, and explanations for how these different issues take shape with different eLearning models (e.g. where the locus of control for eLearning programs resides when students from traditional schools take one or two virtual courses). Thus, the guide provides a reference point for stakeholders to begin the process of discussing, developing or incorporating differentiated e-learning policies into existing education infrastructures.

Matrix of Key Attributes and Characteristics of eLearning Models (next page)

Characteristics of eLearning Models and the Issues Involved in :	eLearning Models					
	Virtual Schools or Cyberschools					
			Delivered under the auspices of resident district		Not Delivered under the auspices of resident district	
Traditional Brick and Mortar (may include electronic instructional materials)	Online Courses (credit is awarded; delivery is external to district)	CyberSchool-Mediated (Parent Mediated Instruction: K-4 mentoring)	Cyberschool - Non-mediated (teachers and students communicate directly)	Cyberschool (Student enrolled in district other than resident district)	Non-District or Non-Public Cyber School	Consortiums
Governance and Locus of control: (i.e. construction of learning); public (e.g. state, local, district, intermediate units, multi-district, charter/non charter); private; home; local control; higher education, national and international	Remains in the building, with the local teacher and principal	Superintendent and local board of education		Department of Education, Board of Education and/or State legislature		
Student Characteristics, Engagement and Support: Including issues of assessment, special needs students, student learning style, engagement, prerequisites, readiness, motivation, technology literacy, class size, diversity of learners, English Language Learners (ELL), involvement of parents, time flexibility, pace of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student support structures (guidance, assessment, social) exist locally and, thus, are geographically/physically close to the student; • Increased time flexibility; • Accommodations for varying learning styles; • Lower risk to students due to face-to-face accountability with support staff; • Includes teacher-led motivation; • Provides parents with more physical access to the support personnel in their children's education; and • Provides activities for face-to-face socialization in extra curricular activities and sports. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased opportunities for content-specialization, which potentially increases the student as a pertinent use of his/her time and energy; • Requires new policies to accommodate basic student needs that have traditional face • Increased risk to students "falling through the cracks" as there is no face-to-face type of student support requires self-motivation on the part of the student; • Requires careful consideration regarding class-size to ensure enough capacity staff to keep tabs on students; • Requires technologically-adept parents; • Provides more real-time access for parents to information about their children's evaluation; 		
Staffing (teachers, facilitators, administrators, mentors, tech support staff): Includes issues of certification and licensure, professional development, online facilitation skills, technology literacy, content competence, curriculum and instructional design, class size, leadership, school years, extended hours and seat time.	Certified teacher in each classroom; Technology literacy skills are not a priority; Face-to-face instruction and assessment; Traditional class size; Traditional school year; Traditional requirements for seat time.	Teacher located externally, but local facilitator/mentor may be used; Certification requirements determined by state or local district; Professional development in areas of online facilitation skills, technology literacy, and curriculum and instructional design are a priority; Class size is determined externally: School	Parent acts as facilitator and mentor; Teacher provides instructional support to parent; Teacher is employed by district offering program; District certification requirements apply; Professional development in areas of online facilitation skills, technology literacy, and curriculum and instructional design are a priority; District determines class size, school term, hours, seat time and leadership requirements..	District employs a certified teacher to provide instruction; Certification requirements determined by state or local district; Professional development in areas of online facilitation skills, technology literacy, and curriculum and instructional design are a priority; District determines class size, school term, school hours, seat time and leadership requirements.	Teacher located externally, but local facilitator/mentor may be used; Certification determined by state, consortia and/or local district; Professional development in facilitation skills, technology literacy, and curriculum and instructional design is determined externally; School term, school hours, and seat time are flexible and completion; Leadership requirements are determined by state, consortia and/or	