



NATIONAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE'S TOOLKIT 2005 eLEARNING LEADERSHIP & POLICIES

Summary & Tools

Chapter Summary

Objectives

- To identify the range of possible eLearning models and current policies in place in different states as well as the implications associated with these different options and models; and
- To provide information and strategies to assist state leaders in effectively choosing, creating and/or implementing eLearning policies and programs.

Key Questions

- What are the key characteristics of different eLearning models and the policy implications associated with these different models?
- What are the key criteria or guidelines for evaluating whether to adopt an eLearning Program and for selecting which specific eLearning option to put in place?
- What are some examples of legislation and policies in place to guide eLearning efforts across and within different states and what implications does each of these kinds of policies have for implementing eLearning?
- What are the strategies for overcoming the challenges associated with implementing eLearning opportunities?

Work Group Process

During the 2004 National Leadership Institute (NLI), the eLearning Leadership and Policies Work Group worked from the shared premise that the term “eLearning” has an array of different purposes and meanings and encompasses many things—that *eLearning* can look very different when put into practice in different states and locales. Another shared premise in this work group is that effective leadership is imperative to effective eLearning programs. An important component of effective leadership is drawing upon the successes and collective knowledge of programs at different stages of development. Members of the eLearning Leadership and Policies work group recognized that having leaders from so many states gathered to collectively discuss a common topic and build upon one another’s individual experiences and expertise, was an opportunity that could not be missed. Thus, as one of its primary charges, the Leadership and Policies Work Group sought to identify the range of possible and actual eLearning models and policies in place in different states and the implications of those programs and policies. To make this a more workable task, Work Group participants began by identifying key aspects of the process a state leader must pursue when creating eLearning legislation as well as for selecting and implementing eLearning models within states. The Work Group formed subgroups around pivotal parts of this process.

One group focused on creating a matrix of key attributes associated with a range of different kinds of eLearning models, as well as potential policy implications associated with the different types of programs and options. This matrix is intended to give state leaders a common understanding of the potential eLearning models that exist. A second group focused on creating a guide to assist state leaders in identifying key issues and decision points for determining the state’s role regarding eLearning. This chart provides specific issues to consider at these various decision points and lists the potential benefits associated with different choices. The third subgroup harnessed the potential of gathering representatives from so many states by creating a detailed list of the different kinds of eLearning policies and legislation currently in place in different states. This included breaking down the language and nature of these policies by the issues involved so as to provide state leaders with an easy reference guide of tangible examples when working to create legislation in their respective states. A fourth group created a step-by-step action plan to help state leaders overcome unforeseen challenges, along a wide variety of specific issues, while implementing eLearning programs within their states.

Another critical role for an eLearning leader is to be able to effectively communicate the importance of eLearning to policy-makers and the community. The work group, both as a whole and within these subgroups, also spent a great deal of time considering how to effectively “make the case” for eLearning to various audiences. Rather than creating an entire subgroup on this issue, ideas and strategies for reaching this goal are embedded within each of these tools—both explicitly with a step-by-step action plan to overcome the challenges of doing so with specific audiences and implicitly with benefits listed alongside different eLearning models throughout that provide compelling reasons for adopting such programs.

SETDA Tools Developed to Assist States

The tools developed by the Leadership and Policies Work Group are intended to provide state leaders with a guide to assist them in four key steps of the process of considering, selecting and ultimately implementing eLearning policies and programs within their states. These tools are meant to address the key issues that arise and the essential leadership skills needed for individuals leading the efforts to create and implement eLearning opportunities for students within states.

- *Step One: Understanding the Models and Adopting a Common Language* – The Matrix of Key Attributes and Characteristics of eLearning Models outlines some of the key characteristics of different eLearning models that states either have developed or are in the process of developing and the advantages or disadvantages associated with these different models.
- *Step Two: Beginning the Conversation* – The List of Key Issues and Decision Points Involved in the Selection of eLearning Options will serve to alert state leaders and other stakeholders to the important issues that must be examined before selecting an eLearning option.
- *Step Three: Identifying Existing Legislative Options* – The Checklist of Key Legislative Issues will assist states in developing virtual learning legislation.
- *Step Four: Overcoming Barriers* – The Barrier Identification Matrix: The Building Blocks of a State eLearning Action Plan provides a set of questions to help guide state leaders to identify and overcome challenges associated with implementing eLearning programs.

Next Steps

The Leadership and Policies Work Group recommends that some next steps be taken to supplement these tools and increase their utility for state leaders.

- As more state leaders develop and implement eLearning policies within their states, an important next step would be to fill in the Barrier Identification Action Plan with tangible examples of how different states have overcome the specific challenges.
- The group recommends the development of an action plan specifically targeted at helping state leaders deal with the challenges of making the case to stakeholders within their states.
- The group recommends the further development of the Key eLearning Legislative Issues Matrix to include current state examples and models for each of the policy options identified.

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	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	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	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	

Step Two: Beginning the Conversation

As the eLearning Attributes Matrix makes clear, eLearning programs can include a wide range of characteristics and draw from different models that can look and function very differently from one another – there is no absolute when determining what an eLearning program must look like. Whether starting a brand new eLearning program within a state or refining a program that has existed for several years, state leaders constantly have to assess the eLearning issues with which the state is grappling and make informed decisions about how to proceed. Another subgroup of the eLearning Leadership and Policies work group wanted to provide leaders with a starting point for discussion when making these decisions and recommendations. Their work is intended as that – a beginning review of the issues a state leader must consider and some of the key decision points in the process – to assess a state’s capacity and need for eLearning programs. In sum, this is meant to help state leaders begin the process of identifying which eLearning programs might be appropriate for his/her respective state.

In choosing *which* type of eLearning model to adopt and implement, a state leader must make many key decisions about which of these different attributes and characteristics to include or exclude or which models to use. A subgroup of the eLearning Leadership and Policies Work Group created the Decision Points for State Leaders chart to further assist state leaders in identifying these key issues and decision points for determining the nature and scope of the particular state’s role regarding eLearning. This chart provides specific issues to consider at these various decision points and lists the potential benefits and policy implications associated with different choices. It can be used by state leaders to remind them of the issues they should consider before selecting an e-Learning approach. The group acknowledged that the particular context of the state—e.g. current policies regarding both traditional schools and eLearning, established funding formulas, historically accepted roles for particular levels of government—plays a large role in making these decisions. The information in the chart is, therefore, purposefully general and makes no recommendation regarding preference for one choice over another. This Decision Points tool, rather than being a comprehensive checklist, should serve as a starting point for discussion about important aspects to consider when choosing and implementing an eLearning model.

**Guide for Determining the role of the state in elearning:
Decision points for state leaders**

Beginning the Conversation	Current Reality:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess need • Determine ad hoc implementation across the state • Identify state resources • Assess political will and other influencing factors across state
Decision Points:	Issues and Options:
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation stipulating funding source • Student eligibility for funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. On-site only B. Any time, anywhere <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Methods • Full-Time Equivalent Model • Successful course completion • Charge back to LEAs (Local Educational Agencies) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create new model for eLearning
Quality Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses evaluated and approved by state • Accountability for quality is provided through student results from a statewide assessment or a state recognized course assessment • Quality assurance is predetermined locally by applying the state’s criteria for online courses • Course meets a state accepted standard of quality • Courses not evaluated

Governance structure	A. Centralized approach; or B. Decentralized approach
A. Centralized Approach	
<p>Definition: State-directed through legislation and policy</p> <p>Models:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Developed Courses • State Brokers Courses • Hybrid - State Developed/Brokered Courses • State as Clearing House <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Courses Evaluated ○ Courses not evaluated 	<p>B. Decentralized Approach</p> <p>Definition: Locally-directed by school district/local school board</p>
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control of quality and administration rests with one entity, the state • Consistency of program • More centralized accountability for student performance • Facilitates Data Collection • Easier assurance of equitable access for all students throughout state • Interoperability • Allows student mobility 	<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State funding not required • Local buy-in to program • Ability to respond to and address local needs • Supports innovative programs

Considerations

- Single Funding Source
- Need for Legislation
- Development of Policies and Rules
- Need for Resources
 - Staffing
 - Infrastructure
- Need for Policies Regarding Issuing Credits

Considerations:

- Potentially inconsistent programs and offerings across state
- Differentiated data collection across districts
- Multiple management systems within the state
- Need for policies determining portability of both course work and credits across districts within states
- Local funding
- Variations in professional development for online faculty across districts within the state
- Differentiated online learning opportunities for students across districts within the state

Step Three: Identifying the Existing Legislative Options Legislative Issues for eLearning

The eLearning Leadership and Policies work group collectively agreed that “eLearning” encompasses many things and can look very different when put into practice in different states and locales. As a state leader, how do you take an eLearning idea and see it into the reality of a program? Some of the biggest challenges often exist in the legislative process that an eLearning program must endure as it seeks to come to fruition. Thus, one subgroup sought to identify the various forms eLearning legislation and policies can take within these different locations. This group focused on identifying a detailed list of the different kinds of eLearning policies and legislation currently in place in different states. Participants broke down the language and nature of these policies by the issues involved so as to provide state leaders with an easy reference guide of tangible examples when working to create legislation in their respective states.

Group participants deemed the areas of legislative issues listed as essential for consideration when states initiate online learning programs. Acknowledging that a wide array of idiosyncratic factors and specific needs affect the legislative choices of each state, the group purposefully did not make recommendations for preference of particular policies. Rather, a range of policies are listed within each legislative issue.

The range includes policies with very limiting language, that apply tight controls on different aspects of virtual learning programs, to more flexible policy language that allows for a great deal more leverage in eLearning course provision, with some policies removing restrictions and requirements of traditional instruction. This tool will serve to provide a framework for state directors as they address online learning legislation. One of the next steps that is critical for this framework is to identify current state examples and models for each of these policy options.

Key eLearning Legislative Issues With a Range of Different Potential Policy Options	State Legislative Model, where included
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I Logistical Issues

- **Demographics of Students Served**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public schools students only 	Maryland [Please link to word document attached]
1. Grade levels	
2. Types of diploma	
3. Subject areas/Curriculum	
4. Credit recovery	
1. Home school students	Michigan (http://www.legislature.mi.gov/mileg.asp?page=getObject&objName=mcl-380-1481&queryid=7419997&highlight=virtual%20high%20school)
2. Private schools within the state	Michigan (http://www.legislature.mi.gov/mileg.asp?page=getObject&objName=mcl-380-1481&queryid=7419997&highlight=virtual%20high%20school)
3. Out-of-state	

- **Priorities for Student Enrollment**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses needed for credit recovery 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural schools that do not have teachers available for specific courses 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Education students 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students at-risk of dropping out of school 	Nevada (www.doe.nv.gov/admin/super/distance_ed/distance_ed_page.htm)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advanced courses that are not available at the school 	Nevada (www.doe.nv.gov/admin/super/distance_ed/distance_ed_page.htm)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical or mental condition that would prevent student from attending traditional school 	Nevada (www.doe.nv.gov/admin/super/distance_ed/distance_ed_page.htm)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students prohibited from attending traditional school 	Nevada (www.doe.nv.gov/admin/super/distance_ed/distance_ed_page.htm)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students who need expanded access to courses in order to meet their educational goals, such as home education students and students in inner-city and rural high schools who do not have access to higher-level courses 	Florida (2002->Ch1002->Section%2037#1002.37">http://www.flsenate.gov/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=Ch1002/SEC37.HTM&Title=->2002->Ch1002->Section%2037#1002.37)

- Class size**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class definitions limited to a stipulated maximum of students. 	Minnesota ¹ (http://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/stats/124D/095.html)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher should have no more than a stipulated maximum number of students in an on-line course than a teacher in a traditional setting can have per day under state policy 	Arkansas

¹ The maximum student-teacher ratio in Minnesota is 40:1.

- **Seat time**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same seat time requirements for online and traditional courses 	Texas (http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/tlo/77R/billtext/SB00975F.HTM), Nebraska
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release of seat time for on-line courses; rather, state requires other policies for quality assurance 	Utah (www.ehs.uen.org)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full time equivalent (FTE) defined as successful course completion rather than seat time 	Florida (2002->Ch1002->Section%2037#1002.37">http://www.flsenate.gov/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=Ch1002/SEC37.HTM&Title=->2002->Ch1002->Section%2037#1002.37)

- **Teacher Qualifications/Certification/Support**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State requires that anyone delivering on-line instruction has to be certified in the resident state. 	Alabama, Colorado (www.col.k12.co.us), Florida (2002->Ch1002->Section%2037#1002.37">http://www.flsenate.gov/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=Ch1002/SEC37.HTM&Title=->2002->Ch1002->Section%2037#1002.37), Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State requires that anyone delivering on-line instruction must be deemed “highly qualified” according resident state stipulations. 	Utah (www.ehs.uen.org)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State has reciprocal agreements with other states in which they recognize the other’s certification requirements 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State can approve the program/provider with appropriate credentials in place of approving the specific teacher 	Arkansas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State makes available additional endorsement/certification for instructional delivery 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State requires training of on-line teachers for instructional delivery 	Alabama, Kansas
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II Quality Assurance Issues

- **Content and Instructional Design Approval**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No approval process by the state for on-line courses 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual courses follow the same procedures of approval as traditional courses 	Arkansas, North Dakota
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts approve courses 	Alaska ²
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State approval required for courses necessary for graduation. 	Alabama
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State approval required for all on-line courses 	Arizona (www.ade.az.gov/stateboard/tapbi.asp ; www.ade.az.gov/technology/StateStatuteondl.pdf), Nevada (www.doe.nv.gov/admin/super/distance_ed/distance_ed_page.htm)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance of national and international standards (i.e. Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB)) 	

- **Student Support**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology Infrastructure - Student has access to needed technology and connectivity 	
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² Legislation in Alaska for e-Learning efforts falls under Correspondence Schools. Any district wishing to operate a statewide program must complete an application each year.

1. Definition or standards for required technology capacity	
2. Agreement required of schools that they provide minimum equipment, software, and connectivity	Ohio (www.legislature.state.oh.us/bills.cfm?ID=125_HB_3 , www.legislature.state.oh.us/BillText125/125_HB_95_EN_N.html , www.legislature.state.oh.us/bills.cfm?ID=125_HB_364)
3. Funding model includes the needed equipment and connectivity	Arizona ³ (www.ade.az.gov/stateboard/tapbi.asp ; www.ade.az.gov/technology/StateStatuteondl.pdf)
4. The responsibility of the student and parent to provide technology and connectivity	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement required of schools using online courses that they provide technical support 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement required of schools using online courses that they provide an on-site facilitator 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training required for facilitator 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No separate policies for technology and connectivity provision 	

• **Accountability for Student Achievement**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students participating in the program have to meet state academic achievement standards 	Arizona (www.ade.az.gov/stateboard/tapbi.asp ; www.ade.az.gov/technology/StateStatuteondl.pdf)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of outcome measurers 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivational 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No separate policies 	

³ As a result of Student FIRST legislation, schools received both additional computers to bring the student-computer ratio to 8:1 and online learning opportunities.

- **Funding**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the virtual school as a school with the ability to earn Full time equivalent (FTE) dollars 	Florida (2002->Ch1002->Section%2037#1002.37">http://www.flsenate.gov/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=Ch1002/SEC37.HTM&Title=->2002->Ch1002->Section%2037#1002.37)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Per-pupil public revenue follows the student 	Arizona (www.ade.az.gov/stateboard/tapbi.asp ; www.ade.az.gov/technology/StateStatuteondl.pdf)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition agreement between school and provider. 	North Dakota
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written agreement established between districts or charter schools before inter-district or charter enrollment of students when funding follows the student 	Nevada (www.doe.nv.gov/admin/super/distance_ed/distance_ed_page.htm)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full time equivalent (FTE) and funds received upon successful course completion instead of enrollment 	Florida (2002->Ch1002->Section%2037#1002.37">http://www.flsenate.gov/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=Ch1002/SEC37.HTM&Title=->2002->Ch1002->Section%2037#1002.37)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General fund line item for the additional cost of on-line delivery. Traditionally smaller amount than the FTE total cost with the school still receiving the full FTE for the student. (Arkansas) (The North Carolina General Assembly appropriates funds for distance learning to guide the eLearning efforts.) 	Arkansas, North Carolina ⁴

- **Cyber Charter Schools**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyber charter schools are funded at a more favorable rate than other public schools, based on average daily attendance and a specific formula. 	Idaho
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State allows cyber charter schools 	Colorado (www.col.k12.co.us), Kansas, Pennsylvania

⁴ The General Assembly appropriates funds for distance learning to guide the eLearning efforts.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State is responsible for accreditation of cyber charter schools 	Colorado (www.col.k12.co.us)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State prohibits cyber charter schools 	Illinois, North Dakota

- **Equity and Access**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can take on-line courses <i>only if</i> they are not available through their school (or district or state) in the traditional manner. 	Alabama, Nevada (www.doe.nv.gov/admin/super/distance_ed/distance_ed_page.htm)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A limited number of courses per student can be taken on-line. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every student including students with disabilities (ADA and 508 compliance) has the opportunity to take an on-line course. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School districts may not limit student access to courses offered through a state virtual school program 	Florida (2002->Ch1002->Section%2037#1002.37">http://www.flsenate.gov/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=Ch1002/SEC37.HTM&Title=->2002->Ch1002->Section%2037#1002.37)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No school district or charter school may prohibit a student from applying to enroll in on-line learning 	Minnesota (http://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/stats/124D/095.html)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual school listed as an option for parents under school choice 	Florida (2002->Ch1002->Section%2037#1002.37">http://www.flsenate.gov/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=Ch1002/SEC37.HTM&Title=->2002->Ch1002->Section%2037#1002.37)

Step Four: Overcoming the Barriers

As state leaders begin to initiate and implement eLearning programs within states and districts, new and often unforeseen challenges arise. One subgroup focused their time on identifying these potential challenges and thinking through possible ways for state leaders to overcome such obstacles. These potential barriers fall into an array of different areas including, but not limited to: funding, leadership, effectively making the case, quality and legal issues surrounding eLearning programs and models.

Barrier Identification Matrix: The Building Blocks of a State E-Learning Action Plan

These conditions affecting eLearning programs vary from state to state, as do the state governing structures and entities with authority over education, generally, and eLearning issues specifically. Therefore, with an awareness of this, the group developed this interactive action planning tool to be used by state leaders across states to apply issues specific to their own situation and, through a four-step process, identify the potential options that exist within their respective states to overcome these challenges.

This interactive tool has been developed to assist state leaders as well as a variety of stakeholders identifying the challenges in implementing eLearning by leading the stakeholder to:

- Determine whether specific conditions are favorable or unfavorable for implementing eLearning;
- If the conditions are judged unfavorable, to precisely define *why* the conditions are unfavorable;
- Specifically articulate one or more solutions to the unfavorable existing practice; and
- Identify the authority able to enact the desired solution.

The user-entered text then serves as an action plan as it identifies specific problems, desirable solutions, and authorities that must be involved in implementing the solution. Examples of unfavorable conditions with accompanying possible solutions and authorities are included within the matrix.

Directions: In using this action plan matrix, if you answer “yes” to a question, simply move on; if you answer “no,” fill in the subsequent cells with information specific to your state.

Policy	Yes	No	If “no,” clearly explain the problem	Outline a solution	Identify the authority	Examples
EXAMPLE: Does state eLearning policy comply with Federal policy regarding issues such as choice, safe schools, supplementary services, or access to highly qualified faculty?		X	Out-of-state eLearning providers have not passed our state’s teacher assessment and therefore are not “highly qualified” by our state’s definition.	Recognize teaching credentials earned in other jurisdictions.	The State Board of Education could recognize certification earned by eLearning providers under other jurisdictions.	35 states have approved processes to recognize National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification.
Does state eLearning policy comply with Federal policy regarding issues such as choice, safe schools, supplementary services, or access to highly qualified faculty?						
Are the state’s existing practices for defining school districts supportive of eLearning?						
Do current policies and regulations facilitate the growth and development of eLearning programs?						
Is the state requirement for seat time still appropriate?						
Is the student/teacher ratio appropriate for and supportive of effective teaching and learning?						
Is there appropriate administrative oversight of teaching and learning activities?						
Does the existing state data system and authority support eLearning demand for data driven decision-making?						

Policy	Yes	No	If “no,” clearly explain the problem	Outline a solution	Identify the authority	Examples
Is the existing policy and development of new policies broad enough to accommodate different models of eLearning?						
Do state eLearning policies comply with Federal policies such as choice, safe schools, supplementary services, or access to highly qualified faculty?						

Quality	Yes	No	If “no,” clearly explain the problem	Outline a solution	Identify the authority	Examples
EXAMPLE: Are the existing licensure and certification requirements appropriate for eLearning teachers?		X	Current regulations do not require the completion of technology courses for licensure.	Identify content and number of courses and how they could be delivered.	The State Board of Education establishes licensure requirements; the legislature may require the State Board to take specific actions	Idaho requires a technology certificate for all certified teachers.
Are the existing licensure and certification requirements appropriate for eLearning teachers?						
Does the eLearning model meet the needs of different learners, including those with special needs?						
Are the existing licensure and certification requirements appropriate for eLearning teachers?						
Does professional development adequately prepare faculty and staff for their eLearning responsibilities?						
Is the accreditation of schools affected by eLearning?						
Is there adequate technical support with qualified staff and appropriate materials?						
Is the authentic presentation of student work verifiable?						
Is there an adequate monitoring system for the supervision of student work?						

Quality	Yes	No	If “no,” clearly explain the problem	Outline a solution	Identify the authority	Examples
Is there effective monitoring of the quality of instruction?						

Making the Case	Yes	No	If “no,” clearly explain the problem	Outline a solution	Identify the authority	Examples
EXAMPLE: Is there community acceptance that eLearning options assist students in learning information technology and distance learning skills?		X	Information about the proven relationships between eLearning and IT skills has not been provided to the general public.	Data about the progress demonstrated by our eLearning students with regard to information technology knowledge needs to be shared with the general public in an appropriate and effective format.	The public relations office or team should lead this effort in finding ways to demonstrate the benefits and utility of eLearning to the general public.	In one Virginia county, the school district loaned computers to parents of children participating in eLearning courses so that could witness for themselves the ways in which eLearning participation improves general technology skills.
Is there community acceptance that eLearning options assist students in learning information technology and distance learning skills?						
Is there resistance to a new system of delivering instruction?						
Are there social repercussions associated with eLearning opportunities?						
Do eLearning options assist students in acquiring information technology (IT) and distance learning skills?						
Is eLearning a cost effective benefit to the community?						
Have key political figures who are likely to support sustainable eLearning programs been adequately partnered with?						

Leadership	Yes	No	If “no,” clearly explain the problem	Outline a solution	Identify the authority	Examples
EXAMPLE: Have education and policy leaders taken the necessary steps to ensure access to eLearning programs?		X	Education and policy leaders have accepted that without additional funding, some children will not be provided with the technology tools needed to participate in eLearning opportunities.	The State Legislature could fully fund the school technology initiative.	State Legislature	Minnesota law allows cyberstudents access to hardware and software in the school districts where they reside.
Have education and policy leaders taken the necessary steps to ensure access to eLearning programs?						
Is it evident that the current leadership is knowledgeable about eLearning?						
Have education and policy leaders taken the necessary steps to ensure access to eLearning programs?						
Is the leadership committed to using NCLB as an incentive to increasing the eLearning options?						

Funding	Yes	No	If “no,” clearly explain the problem	Outline a solution	Identify the authority	Examples
EXAMPLE: Do federal, state, and private grant procedures enable eLearning schools to participate equitably?		X	Some state and federal grant programs require data that are not accessible to all eLearning providers within our state.	Grant criteria need to reflect and accommodate the needs and circumstances of the eLearning community.	State grant program offices can be directly approached about this issue; federal and private grant programs can be asked to consider this need.	The State Departments of Education who administers state grants are flexible in defining the nature of “school.”
Do federal, state, and private grant procedures enable eLearning schools to participate equitably?						
Are current funding opportunities suited to support eLearning?						
Is there adequate funding available at the state level to support eLearning?						
Do federal, state, and private granting agencies support equitable eLearning opportunities?						

Legal	Yes	No	If “no,” clearly explain the problem	Outline a solution	Identify the authority	Examples
EXAMPLE: Is your eLearning program compliant with 504 and IDEA education laws?		X	Special needs students who do not physically attend a school in a school district require services that are non-academic.	Mobile therapists or local special education specialists provide in-home support to special needs students.	A cyber charter school or local school district may be the entity responsible to provide services.	The Idaho Virtual Academy, a K12 cyber charter school, provides special education services to special needs students who “attend” their charter school.
Is your eLearning program compliant with 504 and IDEA education laws?						
Is there freedom to implement public/private partnerships in eLearning?						
Is copyright law adhered to when implementing eLearning solutions?						
Does content and delivery of educational services meet 508 compliancy?						
Is your program compliant with 504 and IDEA laws?						
Do state labor practices facilitate the employment of highly qualified faculty and staff?						
Are applicable Internet safety issues and policies, such as Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA), met when implementing programs?						

State Examples

Maryland:

The **Maryland Quality Assurance**: An Instructional Design Checklist for Online Courses from Maryland Virtual Learning Opportunities Program has been designed to review web-based courses for secondary students in Maryland. The four-part checklist includes: 1. Determining the quality and effectiveness of the course; 2. Determining the quality and effectiveness of the online teaching; 3. Determining adherence to state legal requirements for course provision; and 4. an Overall review of the efficacy and design of the course. This checklist has been extensively adapted for use by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) from the Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB)

(http://www.sreb.org/programs/edtech/pubs/pdf/Principals_of_Quality_Checklist.pdf)

<http://mdk12online.org/7Reso/Qual/index.htm>

Wisconsin:

This paper, **Virtual Schools and Online Programs in Wisconsin**, put out by the State of Wisconsin Department of Education examines the various "online education programs" and "virtual schools" currently available to K - 12 students within the state. Within a particular section entitled "Challenges," the paper specifically talks about the dilemma of ensuring quality virtual educational opportunities when other issues, such as teacher credentialing or qualification, have not been resolved.

<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsis/onlinevir.html>

Next Steps

The Leadership and Policies Work Group recommends that some next steps be taken to supplement these tools and increase their utility for state leaders.

- As more state leaders develop and implement eLearning policies within their states, an important next step would be to fill in the Barrier Identification Action Plan with tangible examples of how different states have overcome the specific challenges.
- The group recommends the development of an action plan specifically targeted at helping state leaders deal with the challenges of making the case to stakeholders within their states.
- The group recommends the further development of the Key eLearning Legislative Issues Matrix to include current state examples and models for each of the policy options identified.