

VIRTUAL EDUCATION

Virtual education or online instruction is a form of distance education – instruction offered from a distance using technology. Online instruction is viewed as a supplement to regular classroom instruction in order to permit the School District of Colby to enhance or expand course offerings or to provide an alternative better suited to the learning needs of some students. Virtual learning may be a credit-bearing course of study or a non-credit-bearing exploration or enrichment experience. Typically, credit-bearing courses of study will be applicable to assure a student's continuous progress in middle school and high school. In addition the District recognizes the value of challenging students to explore and enrich their learning beyond the scope of the school's curricular offerings. Virtual courses of study which have received prior approval and comply with student graduation requirements will be listed and credited on the student transcript.

The following guidelines are based upon a number of principles identified as relevant to the fair, appropriate and effective use of virtual courses. Educators in the district shall:

1. Make effective use of the potential that online instruction offers for children.
2. Ensure quality of content and professional educator involvement.
3. Safeguard equal educational opportunities.
4. Recognize that some essential skills and understandings are best learned in a face-to-face setting.

Guidelines

Participation in a virtual education opportunity will be voluntary.

Students must apply for permission to take online or virtual course work. The application and paperwork must be completed by October 1 of each school year for second semester consideration. The deadline for first semester is May 1 of the previous academic year. Students must complete prerequisites and provide teacher/counselor recommendations to confirm the student possesses the maturity level needed to function effectively in an online learning environment. In addition, approval by the building administrator (who may waive deadline) shall be obtained before a student enrolls in an online or virtual course. Virtual course work as part of an educational plan (special education, gifted/talented, 504, at risk, ESL) will have to be approved by the plan team.

Grading: Grades received for virtual/online course work will count the same as any other course grade. The school must receive an official record of the final grade before credit is determined. All grades received as a result of a student taking an approved virtual course will be recorded on the student's official transcript.

Credit/Course Enrollment: Credit for an online or virtual course may be earned only in the following circumstances:

1. The course is not offered by the district school.
2. Only if the student is unable to enroll in the same course in the district as determined by the principal.
3. The course may serve as a supplement to extend homebound instruction.
4. The student has been expelled from the regular school setting, but educational services are to be continued.
5. The building administrator/director of pupil services, with agreement from the student's teachers and parents/guardians, determines which student requires a differentiated or accelerated learning environment.
6. Only work from an authorized list of vendors will be granted approval for course credit.
7. The building administrator or his/her designee will determine the maximum number of credits a student can earn online.

8. The courses must be similar to those listed in the school academic handbooks in terms of curricular content and alignment to state and national standards. Those courses which do not meet that rigor, must include supplemental materials/activities to ensure content validity. Exceptions could be made for virtual courses used for credit recovery/remediation by the approval of the building administrator or director of pupil services.

Courses not included in the academic handbooks will need to be approved by the principal. Guidelines outlined by the DPI for virtual school courses should be considered during this review process.

Youth Options: Online courses offered for Youth Options will be treated in the same manner as those taken on the post secondary institution campus. All criteria pertaining to Youth Options will apply.

Venue:

1. Students must be enrolled in the district to take advantage of online/virtual course work.
2. Students may take virtual or online courses on or off campus (with the approval of the building administrator or director of pupil services).
3. Students working on course requirements at home will be in compliance with compulsory attendance.

Course Supervision: A certified staff member will be assigned to oversee student course work. Students will be able to access that supervisor in person, by phone, through the U.S. mail or e-mail.

Payment of Fees/Hardware: The School District of Colby will pay tuition fees for virtual/online courses. The school will provide the hardware and software needed for a student to take a virtual/online course on school premises.

If the student drops the class or chooses not to complete the course term or the required coursework, the financial obligation becomes that of the parent/student. The parent/student will reimburse the School District for all costs pertaining to the course.

LEGAL REFERENCES: Wisconsin Stats. 118.30, 118.33

CROSS REFERENCE: Policy #343.4