

# The Value of Your State Virtual School

*Providing access, equity, and quality through innovation and experience in virtual education*

State virtual schools have been online learning pioneers for the past decade, improving learning opportunities for students while supporting the pressing needs of local school districts and other education stakeholders. Across the country, twenty-seven state virtual schools provided roughly 320,000 course enrollments in for-credit courses in school year 2008-09.

## State virtual schools increase student opportunities and outcomes by

**Offering specialized curriculum to address changes in state graduation requirements** (e.g., increased math requirements, online experience) and meet state-specific educational goals

**Providing access to Advanced Placement, summer school and other “hard to find” courses** that local school districts are not always able to offer

**Providing at-risk students and dropouts access to credit-recovery courses** to improve high school graduation rates

**Providing state-certified, highly qualified teachers** for districts that do not have them in specific subjects

## State virtual schools support teachers, schools, and other stakeholders by

**Providing “no-cost” or “low-cost” educational curriculum to students and educators statewide**, including tutorials for state test preparation, self-paced courses, and professional development for classroom teachers

**Building a growing level of expertise in online learning** within a state that becomes a continuous asset to districts, state agencies, and legislatures

**Working with districts to provide access to blended learning curriculum, technology infrastructure** (e.g., learning management systems), **and teacher training** to expand learning opportunities in the classroom and promote 21<sup>st</sup> century skills

**Reducing costs by providing online services**, such as web conferencing, to replace face-to-face meetings, reducing travel expenses and increasing productivity for districts and state agencies

## KEY ROLES FOR A STATE VIRTUAL SCHOOL



source: Michigan Virtual University

*These values demonstrated by state virtual schools have been developed and endorsed by the State Virtual School Leadership Alliance, a collaborative association that includes ACCESS Distance Learning, CT Virtual Learning, Idaho Digital Learning Academy, IDEAL-New Mexico, Michigan Virtual School, Montana Digital Academy, North Carolina Virtual Public School, and Wisconsin Virtual School.*



## Ensuring quality control through evaluation and standards development

State virtual schools not only provide value to students and educational stakeholders, but also ensure an increasing level of quality by

- **Providing professional development** to ensure teachers have the pedagogical and technological expertise to teach online
- **Implementing continuous improvement and regular program evaluations** to ensure quality student support, teacher training, and course development
- **Creating highly interactive, media-rich curriculum** specifically designed to facilitate quality online learning and engage students
- **Working with local schools to provide on-site coordinators** who support students and establish a direct relationship between the virtual school and local school district

## Innovative online solutions to statewide challenges



**IDEAL-NM** has been chosen to spearhead “Graduate New Mexico,” a statewide effort initiated by New Mexico governor Bill Richardson to provide online options for at-risk students and to recruit and educate dropouts.



**Michigan Virtual School** enables students to meet new state graduation requirements for an “online experience” and increased math requirements by providing online curriculum, highly qualified teachers and learning tools to support district efforts to address the Michigan Merit Curriculum standards.



**North Carolina Virtual Public School** had over 70,000 course enrollments in 2009-10, while managing a dual-enrollment program with over 11,500 students taking online college credit courses free of charge at 45 participating community colleges and UNC-G iSchool.



**Idaho Digital Learning Academy** has implemented Idaho Live, a free online service to facilitate instruction, teacher and staff training, and conduct meetings, saving districts and education agencies significant travel costs.



**Wisconsin Virtual School** has established prerequisites for online learners through several online readiness tools to ensure students have the personal skills and aptitudes for success in the online environment. Wisconsin Virtual School has developed a three-year case study on the role of the school district online learning coordinator (known as the Local Education Guide in Wisconsin), the importance of resident mentoring and support for all students, pre- to post-online learning.



**ACCESS Distance Learning** has established far-reaching public-private partnerships, like the one with Alabama Supercomputer Authority, to build a statewide network infrastructure that includes every local education agency (LEA) in the state. ACCESS also has a Web-based statewide registration and enrollment system to manage student enrollment and class and staff scheduling for ACCESS that integrates with the existing statewide student information system as well as ACCESS' learning management system.



**Montana Digital Academy** will offer 47 high school online courses in its inaugural year. All MTDA classes will be taught exclusively by Montana teachers employed by their local districts and trained in online instructional techniques by MTDA. MTDA reimburses each district for the cost of teachers while also providing districts with teacher professional development to improve local understanding of and skills in online learning.



**Connecticut Virtual Learning** offers courses for credit recovery, advanced placement, and world languages, as well as a statewide online adult education program with over 2,500 course enrollments supporting the unique needs of older students striving for a high school diploma.