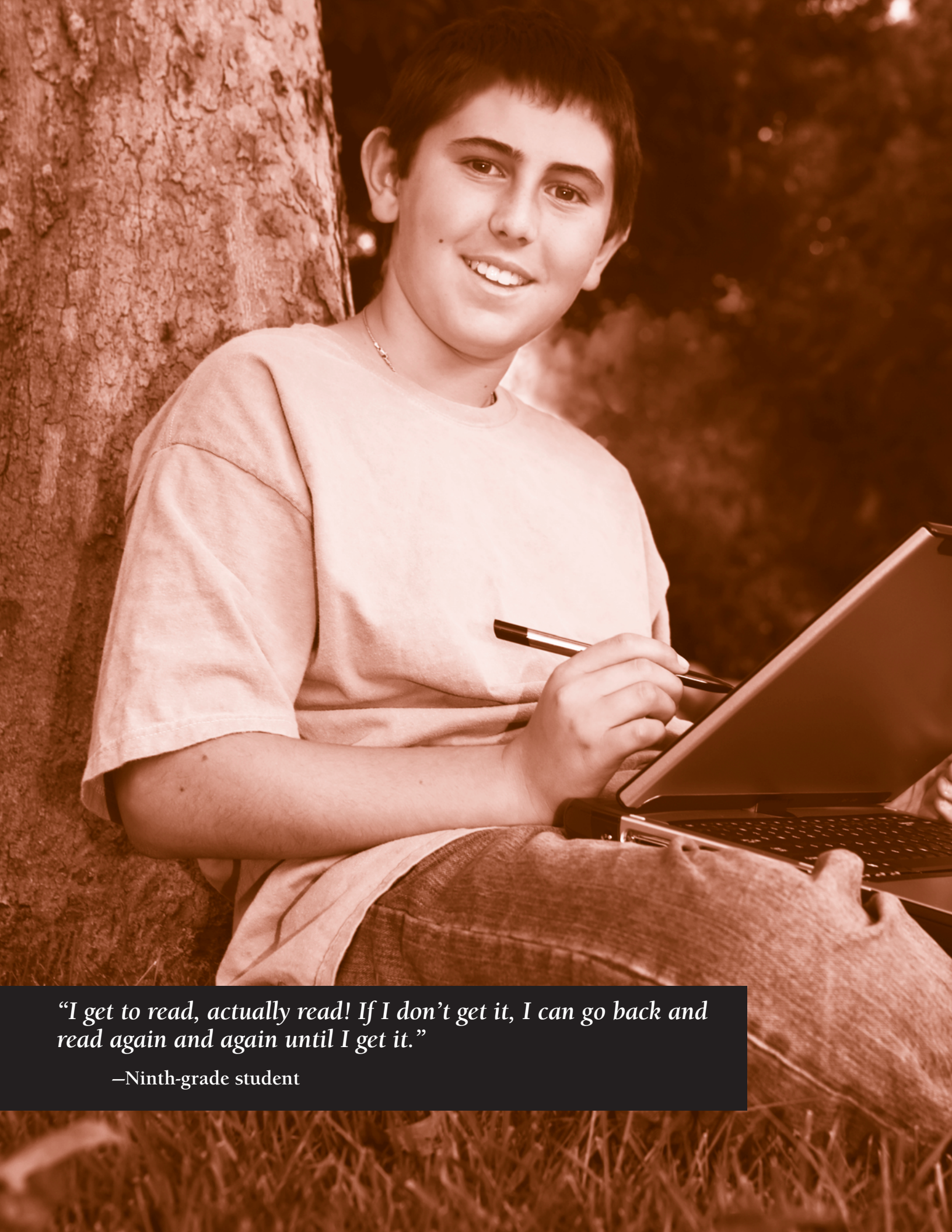# Delaware Virtual School

delaware virtual school

Right Opportunity.
Right Time.

"*I get to read, actually read! If I don't get it, I can go back and read again and again until I get it.*"

—Ninth-grade student

The Opportunity:
Moving Education into the Digital Age

Education has long been recognized as the gateway to opportunity and the foundation for a successful future. Yet, while understanding the importance of education to our children's future, our education systems are in many ways mired in the past. Although technology, computers, and the Internet have changed virtually everything we do, education is delivered in much the same way it has been for decades.

Delaware has begun important efforts to enhance educational opportunities for our students, both in academic curriculum and delivery methods. But we have not kept pace with opportunities offered by technology or with progress made by other states in implementing new technologies. Specifically, Delaware is behind in providing technology-based online learning, also known as a State Virtual School.

Online learning continues to grow rapidly across the country, and the world, as an increasing number of educators and policymakers recognize the benefits of learning unconstrained by time and place. As of September, 2006, 38 states have either state-led online learning programs, significant policies regulating online education, or both. In just the past year, numerous states have added new state-led programs or passed online learning laws. Growth in the number of students in many existing programs has been sustained, with Louisiana Virtual School growing by 18%, Ohio's eCommunity Schools growing collectively by 22%,

and Florida Virtual School and Idaho Digital Learning Academy each growing by over 50%.

Many analyses looking at the growth of online education have concluded that online learning is having a tremendous impact on the evolution of education. The proliferation of the Internet is challenging the limitations of education's traditional methods of teaching and learning.

Many online learning programs began in response to the need to transcend the limitations of time and place and to increase the availability of courses to students in rural and urban schools. With the growth of online learning across the country, Virtual Schools are expanding options for students in a way that no other delivery model can, allowing for a focus on students' needs and supporting school reform and redesign efforts.

In addition to these valuable benefits, practitioners are increasingly noting an additional advantage of online learning: promoting 21st century skills and global citizenship. Taking an online course requires that the student understands how to get online, communicate and collaborate via email and discussion boards, and access information via the Internet – all skills that are tremendously important throughout most professional careers. Also, many students taking online courses are required to interact with students from across the country or even beyond. Students not only gain the course content skills, but also learn about their online classmates, gaining online collaboration and global citizenship.

There is a growing consensus that providing online courses to middle and high school students works. Online courses provided by state-led Virtual Schools

are reaching many students who simply do not have access to courses in their local school. The importance of this access will only increase as more states raise their high school graduation requirements. Many schools – especially small and rural schools – do not have access to quality teachers in many subjects, particularly in mathematics and science. Providing students with a way to retake courses and graduate on time, take advanced courses not offered in their schools, and access to quality teachers are key benefits to Virtual Schools.

In viewing the status of online education across the country at the end of 2006, there are numerous reasons to be optimistic about the future of online learning. Most states have added state-led programs, and many have created new online education policies.

Now it's Delaware's time to rise to the challenge.

Delaware has the opportunity to provide its students with access to online learning, with a nationally recognized Virtual School model – based on an established leader in developing and providing virtual education solutions to students. The pathway into this exciting world has been paved by others, and is ready to be traveled by Delaware students.

The Timing:
Momentum is Building.

Right now, Delaware is part of an unprecedented effort to address the most urgent issue of our time: securing the best schools in the world for Delaware students by 2015. *Right now,* Delaware business, government and community leaders are working collaboratively to fundamentally change and enhance Delaware's education system. *Right now,* the focus is on trading in outdated, one-size-fits-all systems for a much more creative approach that capitalizes on the opportunities of today's world. *Right now,* the thought leaders – and funding sources – of our private and public sectors are lending enthusiastic support to proven solutions and the development of innovative ideas. *Right now* is the right time for Delaware to move forward in the development of a State Virtual School.

WHAT IS A STATE VIRTUAL SCHOOL?

A State Virtual School provides web-based academic courses to middle and high school students, using qualified online teachers. Registered students can take classes anytime, anywhere, progress at their own pace, using computers and the Internet.

A State Virtual School provides opportunities for students to take courses not available at their school, to take additional courses, or to retake a course needed to graduate. A State Virtual School also provides learning opportunities to students who may be unable to attend traditional schools due to a disability.

"Teachers were great at keeping both parents and students informed."
        —Parent

The Facts:
State Virtual Schools are Successful and Growing

The State of Delaware is a member of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), America's first interstate compact for education. This nonprofit, nonpartisan organization of government and education leaders works to advance education and improve the social and economic life of the region. The 16 member states of SREB are Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

INDIVIDUAL SREB STATE VIRTUAL SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS

	2005	2006	2007
Alabama	300	2,064	7,289
Arkansas	2,460	2,807	3,850
Delaware	54	0	0
Florida	33,767	67,675	114,090
Georgia	0	2,143	4,331
Kentucky	2,220	4,092	1,352
Louisiana	2,225	5,200	5,605
Maryland	302	727	782
Mississippi	234	1,185	3,483
North Carolina	1,889	3,627	7,251
Oklahoma	1,925	2,126	1,737
South Carolina	0	0	2,407
Tennessee	0	443	1,155
Texas	0	0	0
Virginia	1,400	1,890	3,198
West Virginia	1,355	1,323	1,559
Total	48,131	95,302	158,089

- Nearly all SREB states have a State Virtual School. Over the past 10 years, these schools have achieved significant success.
- SREB states lead the nation in the number of State Virtual Schools that have been implemented.
- 158,089 middle and high school students were enrolled in State Virtual Schools in SREB states in 2006-2007, and those numbers are climbing steadily each year.
- SREB states report that State Virtual Schools are a viable means of ensuring equity of access for students, and provide quality teaching and courses at a reasonable cost.
- Online courses fill students' academic needs, regardless of where they live.
- Overall student course completion rate for online courses is over 90 percent.
- An increasing number of students are retaking courses online to graduate on time and/or as an alternative to dropping out of school.
- Higher than average pass rates are reported for online Advanced Placement (AP) exams.
- Most students, teachers and parents report that online courses are more difficult than similar face-to-face courses. They are challenging courses – not a means to an easy grade.

STATE VIRTUAL SCHOOL COURSE TYPES OFFERED

	Advanced Placement	Academic Courses	Core Non-Core Electives	Technical	Retake or GED	Catch-Up	Other
Alabama	9	18	12	2	0	5	2
Arkansas	5	33	5	0	0	0	0
Delaware	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Florida	10	35	21	6	0	0	10
Georgia	20	45	4	11	0	17	0
Kentucky	23	15	25	0	1	15	0
Louisiana	2	21	13	0	0	0	0
Maryland	26	28	1	11	0	11	14
Mississippi	10	14	6	3	0	0	0
North Carolina	18	35	3	4	0	0	14
Oklahoma	8	54	30	7	0	0	0
South Carolina	3	13	6	0	0	0	0
Tennessee	0	22	8	3	0	12	0
Texas	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Virginia	20	0	4	0	0	0	8
West Virginia	29	20	129	28	0	0	0

The Academic Advantage:
State Virtual Schools Help Achieve State Educational and Economic Goals

While online schools offer many advantages to students, they also are important to achieving state educational and economic goals. Here's how:

State Virtual Schools provide courses that schools cannot or do not provide.

Many local schools are too small to offer all of the courses that students need today to prepare for college or careers. Cost is a major factor, especially if only a handful of students want or need a particular course. In addition, many schools are unable to attract qualified teachers because of where the schools are located.

State Virtual Schools can provide the courses that are needed, including multiple foreign languages, Advanced Placement (AP) courses and higher-level mathematics and science courses.

State Virtual Schools provide credit-recovery courses resulting in improved high school graduation rates.

Dropping out of school impacts the student's quality of life and affects state economic development. A survey of people who have dropped out indicates 35% dropped out because they were failing in school and 45% were not academically prepared for high school due to the low quality of earlier schooling.

Virtual Schools help improve graduation rates by providing credit-recovery courses and by providing supplemental courses for middle school students.

"State Virtual Schools are not about technology, but about using today's technology to meet the tremendous academic needs of middle and high school students in ways that have never before been available."

—Southern Regional Education Board, October 2007

State Virtual Schools give high school students access to many different Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

Due to size or location, many high schools do not offer any AP courses or offer only a limited number. Generally, schools that do offer a significant number of AP courses are suburban schools with larger student populations and access to qualified teachers to teach the courses. This results in a disparity of opportunity and what some call "education by zip code."

All SREB State Virtual Schools offer some AP courses. In total, 31 AP courses are provided by one or more SREB State Virtual Schools, out of a total of the 37 AP courses that the College Board makes available. Any high school, regardless of where it is located, has the possibility of providing many AP courses to its students – even if there is only one student who wants the course.

State Virtual Schools provide quality teachers to all middle and high schools, regardless of where the students reside.

It is often difficult to obtain highly qualified teachers in every classroom, especially in remote, rural or high-poverty areas. The result is that often the least-qualified educators are teaching the most needy students, leading to a growing achievement gap.

Virtual Schools operating within the SREB follow strict standards for hiring teachers, employing only fully certified, experienced and qualified teachers, including many with advanced degrees in their field and a growing number who are National Board Certified.

State Virtual Schools provide students with opportunities to improve academic success.

Today's middle school students have been familiar with the Internet from the time they were toddlers. Technology is the norm. This is one reason that national student surveys indicate that students are bored or "turned-off" by their traditional school experience.

In SREB surveys, students accessing State Virtual School courses report that they enjoy the level of interactivity with other students and their teacher, and find this to be helpful in mastering course content. Others cited the benefits of alternative pacing of the course that allows students to spend more time on what they don't understand and to move more quickly over what they do understand.

THE ECONOMICS OF STUDENT SUCCESS

On average, every additional student who graduates from high school—

- Generates an additional $600,000 in lifetime earnings and contributes $50,000 more in state and local taxes than a high school dropout.
- Saves society $41,000 in Medicaid costs and $25,000 in prison costs.

On average, every additional student who graduates from college—

- Generates an additional $1.4 million in lifetime earnings and contributes $120,000 more in state and local taxes than a high school dropout.
- Saves society $71,000 in Medicaid costs and $34,000 in prison costs.

Keeping all of our students engaged in and excited about their learning leads to productive citizens, a highly skilled work force, and a strong economy.

Vision 2015, October 2006

The Proposal:
Delaware's Virtual School Implementation Plan

Delaware Department of Education / Delaware Center for Educational Technology is ready to begin the implementation of Delaware Virtual School. The program will be administered by the Delaware Department of Education / Delaware Center for Educational Technology and funded by state appropriation and other sources.

Program Specifics:
Delaware Benefits

Delaware Virtual School will:

- Directly support the state's new graduation requirements of two years of a world language and a fourth year of mathematics.
- Help enhance high school graduation rates by providing an additional tool to help students keep pace with academic requirements beginning in middle school.
- Enable students to achieve college ambitions by providing advanced courses as well as AP courses that are not available in some school locations or courses that do not fit into the traditional school schedule.
- Enhance Delaware's ability to provide equal access to a quality education for all students regardless of economic background or geographic location.
- Help facilitate mastery of essential 21st century skills, including self-directed learning, time management, problem solving, information evaluation, and technology and information literacy.
- Contribute to Delaware's economic health by helping to increase high school and college graduation rates.

Implementation Recommendations

To ensure efficient and effective implementation, Delaware Virtual School will:

- Offer Web-based courses with funding provided by an annual legislative allotment and other sources.
- Provide adequate and appropriate staff.

- Develop appropriate rules and regulations adopted by the Delaware Department of Education / Delaware Center for Educational Technology.
- Identify appropriate performance measures and standards based on student achievement that reflect the school's mission and priorities. Implement an assessment system for the school that includes assessment of its effectiveness and efficiency in providing quality services that encourage high student achievement, seamless articulation, and maximum access.
- Be integrated into and use the state student information system.
- Adopt the Southern Regional Education (SREB) publications related to statewide virtual schools and online instruction. *(Appendix E)*
- Provide supplemental online services to all Delaware educators and students.

Timetable

A three-year implementation plan is recommended for Delaware Virtual School. Delaware Department of Education / Delaware Center for Educational Technology will begin implementation of Delaware Virtual School with high school students taking online courses in Year One (2008-2009). A Pilot Program will be conducted beginning in January 2008 to develop and implement the procedures for efficiently working with public high schools in selecting and enrolling students who wish to take online courses. There will be a limited course catalog in the Pilot Program, but all public high schools in the state will be eligible to participate.

High school students will continue to have the opportunity to take online courses and a Pilot Program will be implemented for public middle school students in Year Two (2009-2010). The full Delaware Virtual School program will be offered to all public middle and high school students by Year Three (2010-2011).

Year One
Evaluating courses and course content
Assessing course providers
Educating students, teachers, parents
Training teachers
Internal evaluation

Year Two
Purchase / lease courses
External evaluation
Educating students, teachers, parents
Training Teachers
Piloting in public middle schools

Year Three
Develop course content, if necessary
External evaluation
Educating businesses and the public
Training Teachers
Full Implementation statewide in public middle
   and high schools

For more details on Delaware Virtual School's Pilot Program, please see Appendix B.

"He has access to his teachers 7 days a week and many more hours than he would with traditional school. It is almost a one-on-one learning experience."–Parent

State Virtual School Model

Delaware will use a highly successful State Virtual School model recommended by the Southern Regional Education Board. This model has been used and refined by member states over the past 10 years, and provides an excellent, proven foundation for the establishment of Delaware Virtual School. In addition to the model, Delaware's association with SREB assures that other SREB states will work closely with Delaware to share information on important policy and finance issues and to ensure quality online teaching and online courses.There are several different State Virtual School models that have proven successful. The most common model, and the model that Delaware is adopting, is with the State Virtual School housed within the state Department of Education. This model offers the benefit of efficiencies and economies of scale, reduction of duplication of resources and expense across the state, and the ability to take advantage of agency offices and services, such as general counsel, public relations, and office space, often at reduced or no cost to the program.

For more details on SREB's model and supporting documents, please see Appendix E.

Students Served

Delaware Virtual School will serve students who need or want to complete courses outside of the traditional classroom environment. This can include students who:
- Need to re-take courses required for graduation.
- Want an alternative to traditional education.

- Do not have access to highly-qualified teachers.
- Deserve access to advanced core subjects or AP classes not offered in their local school.
- Have difficulty accessing the traditional school environment due to physical disabilities or health.

Based upon the proposed budget, Delaware Virtual School plans to implement the following:

In **Year One** (2008-2009), Delaware Virtual School will offer 1,000 one-credit online courses to Delaware's public high school students. In **Year Two** (2009-2010), Delaware Virtual School will offer 1,500 one-credit online courses to Delaware's public high school students and conduct a Pilot Program for 500 middle school students. In **Year Three** (2010-2011), Delaware Virtual School will offer 3,000 one-credit online courses to all Delaware public middle and high school students.

Instruction and Course Offerings

To ensure quality of teaching and courses offered, Delaware Virtual School will adopt the Southern Regional Education Board's *Standards for Quality Online Courses and Standards for Quality Online Teaching.* As state-sponsored online learning has expanded, SREB has worked closely with staff from all SREB State Virtual Schools to identify and develop specific standards for quality online teaching and courses.

The *Standards for Quality Online Courses* outlines what constitutes a quality online course and identifies specific standards for course content, instructional design, student assessment, technology, and course

evaluation and management. The *Standards for Quality Online Teaching* identifies qualifications needed to be a quality online teacher and outlines standards for academic preparation, content knowledge, online skills and delivery, and more.

Online education practitioners recognize that teaching online requires a unique set of skills in addition to the skills for teaching in a face-to-face classroom. The need for highly qualified teachers is one of the drivers of online education, since some schools, especially those in rural districts, are unable to provide highly qualified teachers in all subjects. Federal guidance on meeting these challenges has included the recommendation of using online learning. State-led online programs recognize the value of being able to provide highly qualified teachers, and all SREB State Virtual Schools have teachers who meet the definition of highly qualified in their states, including appropriate state certification. The same will be true for Delaware Virtual School. All online teachers will possess the academic credentials for the course being taught and will have additional training in online teaching methods.

All courses detailed in the SREB publications emphasize extensive interaction between students and the teacher and among the students. An important component of online learning success is the student's ability to exchange information and ideas with the teacher and other students by email, online chats, group discussion boards, and telephone. In Delaware Virtual School, only instructor-led courses that provide frequent interaction between the teacher and students, and students with other students, will be included in the course offerings. All courses offered by Delaware Virtual School will be aligned with Delaware Department of Education's content standards.

For more details on SREB's virtual school model and supporting documents, please see Appendix E.

Governance and Administration

Delaware Department of Education / Delaware Center for Educational Technology will establish and implement Delaware Virtual School. Delaware Virtual School will report to the Executive Director of the Delaware Center for Educational Technology. Delaware Virtual School will be responsible for the operation of the program in accordance with all applicable rules and regulations set forth in legislation and Delaware's Board of Education Policy. Delaware's Secretary of Education will monitor the school's progress and report its performance to the Delaware State Board of Education and the Delaware Legislature annually or as otherwise required.

"I spend a good part of my time communicating with students via e-mail. I have also connected with them by telephone but the bulk of the correspondence is written."

—Stacey Labbé, ApexLearning, AP microeconomics instructor

Delaware Virtual School will be managed and operated by a committee of administrative and support professionals, including a leader/director/manager, academic coordinator, and administrative assistant, as well as technical support, data management and instructional personnel.

For more details on Delaware Virtual School's system for regulations, policies and procedures, please see Appendix D.

Evaluation and Assessment

Delaware Department of Education / Delaware Center for Educational Technology will identify appropriate performance measures and standards based on student achievement that reflect the school's mission and priorities, and will implement an assessment system for Delaware Virtual School that includes assessment of its effectiveness and efficiency in providing quality services that encourage high student achievement, seamless articulation, and maximum access.

Based on the *SREB Standards for Quality Online Courses and SREB Standards for Quality Online Teaching*, rules and regulations pertaining to the operation of Delaware Virtual School will be established to ensure quality teaching and that courses are successfully provided to students. At a minimum, these rules and regulations will include the following procedures for students enrolling in Delaware Virtual School courses:

- A process for establishing uniform evaluation of student progress and awarding of the final grade.
- A process for maintaining student records and reporting and recording on the student's transcript.
- Procedures and requirements for supervision, monitoring, assessment, and evaluation of enrolled students.
- Procedures and requirements for employment, supervision, and evaluation of teachers, and instructional procedures.

Delaware Virtual School will establish quality indicators and evaluation criteria in collaboration with schools and other stakeholders. An internal evaluation of the program will be conducted on an annual basis and Delaware Virtual School will collect, analyze, and submit evaluation data to the Secretary of Education. An external evaluation will be conducted subsequent to the second full year following implementation. To ensure impartial analysis of key measures of success, Delaware Virtual School will contract with a third-party to conduct an independent evaluation of the success of the program. This project evaluator will survey students, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders, collect and analyze data, and report to Delaware Virtual School on the level of success of the program. This study will contain recommendations for further academic improvement and provide suggestions related to cost containment.

The purpose of these evaluations will be to determine if students enrolled in a course have been afforded the opportunity to learn in an environment that meets or exceeds the Delaware content and grade-specific standards and that Delaware Virtual School is being run in a responsible manner related to expenditures.

For more details on Delaware Virtual School's system for evaluation and assessment, please see Appendix C.

"Today a student told me that he wished we had this math all year. He went from a 78 percent average to a 92 percent average!"

—Henry Chandler, teacher, Virginia

Budget

How much online education should cost, and how to fund it, remains one of the top issues facing policymakers. Since the concept of virtual schools is still relatively new, budgeting for development and implementation has been a challenge. So SREB worked closely with State Virtual School leaders to identify cost elements and estimates to help other SREB states consider the potential costs involved in planning and supporting a State Virtual School, as it is initially implemented and as it grows over time. The results were published in the *SREB Cost Guidelines for State Virtual Schools*, which was used to guide Delaware Virtual School's proposed budget.

Based on reviews of other SREB member State Virtual Schools, *how* a state funds a State Virtual School and the *level of funding* are the key issues that determine success. Cost estimates outlined in *Cost Guidelines for State Virtual Schools* helps states determine a level of funding to ensure quality and success in meeting state student achievement goals. Regardless of funding level, there are some unique start-up costs that require greater funding during the first several years of any State Virtual School:

- Organize and establish procedures, policies, and regulations
- Obtain courses and teachers
- Secure the needed technology
- Train teachers and staff

- Generate support from local schools
- Educate students, parents, teachers, and the community

Unlike a brick-and-mortar school, Delaware Virtual School will not require a large physical plant to house students and teachers. However, Delaware Virtual School will need sufficient physical location for administration, staff training and meetings, and equipment and storage. Additional costs will include major expenditures for course acquisition from third-party providers during the initial years.

As Delaware Virtual School grows and matures, there will be the need to budget for course development or purchase so that Delaware Virtual School will own key or unique courses necessary to meet state academic course needs. This will also require funding for increased personnel and for additional technology, including software tools for the delivery of online courses to students.

Annual legislative allotments have been the primary way most SREB State Virtual Schools have been funded over the last seven years. Although the first several years require greater funding, as State Virtual Schools become fully established they will be able to generate even greater efficiencies and demonstrate significant economies of scale. Each time a State Virtual School acquires or develops an online course, copies of that course can be made, then used by multiple teachers.

This body of readily available courses will continue to build, at little to no additional cost. The costs to acquire courses, maximize efficiencies in technology use, and reduce per pupil costs are the longer-term factors to consider once a State Virtual School is well established.

The 2008-2009 school year budget is provided in Appendix A, along with subsequent budget figures for the following years. Second and third year budgets will be updated at the appropriate time.

For more details on Delaware Virtual School's proposed budget, please see Appendix A.

Your Support is Needed Now.

Delaware Virtual School will open new doors to academic success and related economic opportunity for students of all income levels, in all geographic areas, while accelerating our state's move out of the "middle of the pack" in national academic performance. The groundwork has been laid and Delaware is ready to move forward in implementing this critical opportunity.

The size, complexity and structure of a State Virtual School may vary, but its mission is clear – to address the increasing academic requirements of middle and high school students through the use of Web-based courses.

While there are many reasons why middle or high school students may need online access to courses, the following five academic reasons why State Virtual Schools are important to achieving state educational and economic goals are most often cited by leaders of existing State Virtual Schools:

1. State Virtual Schools provide courses that schools do not or cannot provide.

2. State Virtual schools provide credit-recovery courses resulting in improved high school graduation rates.

3. State Virtual Schools provide high school students access to many different Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

4. State Virtual Schools provide quality teachers to all middle and high schools regardless of where the students reside.

5. State Virtual Schools provide students with access to quality teachers and quality courses to improve their chances of academic success.

State Virtual Schools are not about technology, but rather about using today's technology to meet the tremendous academic needs of middle and high school students in ways that have never before been available. To meet student needs, successful development and implementation of Delaware Virtual School is achievable. Careful and systematic planning by key personnel, stakeholders, and organizations is extremely important. The support of state and local school policy- and decision-makers is critical. Moving from concept to significant impact on large numbers of students requires support, funding, attention to quality, and monitoring of growth and achievement.

With your support, Delaware Virtual School is ready to meet this challenge and deliver the benefits to Delaware and Delaware's students.

"I wouldn't have had the opportunity to take an AP class my senior year because my school doesn't offer AP courses."

—12th-grade student
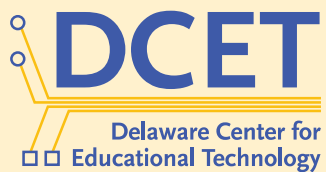
Dr. Wayne Hartschuh
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Appendix A: Proposed Budgets

The anticipated budget for the three-year implementation is as follows:

Year One (2008-2009)	**$1,200,000**
Year Two (2009-2010)	**$2,600,000**
Year Three (2010-2011)	**$3,600,000**

Delaware Virtual School - Budget Year One (2008-2009)

The proposed budget for the 2008-2009 school year will provide for the administration and operation of Delaware Virtual School to accommodate 1,000 one-credit enrollments for Delaware public high school students.

This scenario is a relatively small implementation with limited staff. The same policies, regulatory and managerial issues of a larger implementation need to be addressed and are reflected in the budget. For Year One, Delaware will contract with third-party course content providers and teachers. Each course will be evaluated to ensure that it conforms to state quality and content standards. A unique website will be developed to provide students with a centralized registration system and create an effective and efficient means of working with and communicating with students, their schools and parents. Student information system integration with the website will allow for data gathering, analysis and records management.

Personnel	
Education Associate, Delaware Virtual School Academic Coordinator – one full-time curriculum and instructional person responsible for course selection and evaluation and serve as liaison with students and their schools including on-site school coordinators and online instructors	**$117,600** **(1.0 FTE)**
Administration – although we are not requesting a full-time position, this position will be needed, so in Year One, this role will be assumed by the Executive Director of the Delaware Center for Educational Technology	**$57,400**
Administrative assistant – although we are not requesting a full-time position, this position will be needed so in Year One, we will use a casual seasonal employee(s) to manage student registrations, record keeping and other clerical tasks	
Purchase of Courses from Third Party Providers	**$750,000**
Seats purchased from established organizations that provide Web-based, instructor-led courses.	

Course Evaluations	**$50,000**
Teams of teachers and other educational professionals to evaluate courses from third-party providers	
Travel, lodging and meals associated with the teams' evaluation work	
External expert trainer to train evaluation teams	
Materials and other miscellaneous expenses	
Instructional Materials	**$25,000**
Online Teacher Training	**$15,000**
Delaware teachers trained in teaching online courses in preparation for Year Two delivery (up to 24).	
Supplemental Online Services	**$110,000**
Statewide license for services (NetTrekker in Year One with the intent of adding UnitedStreaming in Year Two)	
Program Evaluation	**$10,000**
An external evaluator employed to provide a brief assessment of the status and success of the first year of the program and prepare for a more comprehensive evaluation of the second year	
Public Information and Training	**$35,000**
Electronic and printed information created and distributed to schools, parents and others important to the successful implementation of the program	
Training for school coordinators and other school personnel including guidance counselors to support online students in local school	
Information Technology	**$20,000**
Website site development and management (A unique Web site will be developed to provide accurate and up-to-date information about the courses and services provided by the state virtual school.)	
Student information system integration that will allow for data gathering, analysis and records management	
Security issues related to students engaged in online courses	
Equipment, Software, Materials, and Supplies	**$10,000**
Includes computers, printers, related equipment, software, printed materials, and supplies for staff use	
TOTAL	**$1,200,000**

Budget Year Two (2009-2010)

The proposed budget for the 2009-2010 school year will provide for the administration and operation of Delaware Virtual School to accommodate 1,500 one-credit enrollments for Delaware public high school students and a pilot program of 300 one-credit enrollments for middle school students.

Year Two will focus more on assessments and modifications of Year One implementation regarding policies, regulatory and managerial issues, rather than development. Personnel will need to be added to assist with increased number of students served, courses added, and further implementation of the program. As Delaware Virtual School grows, ownership of its courses and employment of teachers will help ensure quality and lead to cost savings. Course development is expensive and time-consuming in this initial phase of implementation, but economies of scale will be realized beginning in Year Three. Extensive monitoring will continue in Year Two to remediate problems, and assess progress and success of students.

	High School Continue	Middle School Pilot
Personnel	$575,000	
Administration – one full-time leader/director/manager of the state virtual school		
Academic coordinator – one full-time curriculum and instructional person responsible for course selection and evaluation and serve as liaison with students and their schools including on-site school coordinators and online instructors		
Administrative assistant – one full-time person to manage student registrations, record keeping and other clerical tasks		
Technology specialist – one full-time person to manage the eLMS and help-desk support		
Online teachers – equivalent of five full-time online teachers to provide courses owned by the state virtual school		
Purchase of Courses from Third-party Providers	$750,000	$225,000
Seats purchased from established organizations that provide Web-based, instructor-led courses		
Course Evaluations	$75,000	$50,000
Teams of teachers and other educational professionals to evaluate courses from third-party providers		
Travel, lodging and meals associated with the teams' evaluation work		
External expert trainer to train evaluation teams		
Materials and other miscellaneous expenses		

	High School Continue	Middle School Pilot
Course Development	$50,000	
Content and course design development and integration into the eLMS		
A team of specialists to ensure that the course will be of high quality and effective in meeting the academic and learning needs of students. (related to Course Evaluations)		
Instructional Materials	$25,000	$15,000
Online Teacher Training	$5,000	$10,000
Delaware teachers trained in teaching online courses		
Supplemental Online Services	$580,000	
Statewide licenses for services: UnitedStreaming and NetTrekker		
Program Evaluation	$10,000	$5,000
An external evaluator to provide an assessment of the status and success of the program and provide direction for further improvement.		
Public Information and Training	$25,000	$50,000
Electronic and printed information created and distributed to schools, parents and others important to the successful implementation of the program		
Training for school coordinators and other school personnel including guidance counselors to support online students in local school		
Information Technology	$120,000	$15,000
Website site development and management (A unique Web site will be developed to provide accurate and up-to-date information about the courses and services provided by the state virtual school.)		
Student information system integration that will allow for data gathering, analysis and records management; Security issues related to students engaged in online courses; eLMS implemented to house and develop coursework		
Equipment, Software, Materials, and Supplies	$15,000	
Includes computers, printers, related equipment, software, printed materials, and supplies for staff use		
TOTAL	$2,230,000	$370,000
GRAND TOTAL	$2,600,000	

Budget Year Three (2010-2011)

The proposed budget for the third out year is dependent upon continued growth. Optimally, Delaware Virtual School will be providing courses for both high school and middle school students with an anticipated 3,000 one-credit enrollments. The limitation on additional enrollments is funding.

Personnel **Administration –** one full-time leader/director/manager of the state virtual school **Academic coordinator –** one full-time curriculum and instructional person responsible for course selection and evaluation and serve as liaison with students and their schools including on-site school coordinators and online instructors **Administrative assistant –** one full-time person to manage student registrations, record keeping and other clerical tasks **Technology specialist –** one full-time person to manage the eLMS and help-desk support **Online teachers –** equivalent of five full-time online teachers to provide courses owned by the state virtual school	**$575,000**
Purchase of Courses from Third-party Providers Seats purchased from established organizations that provide Web-based, instructor-led courses	**$1,225,000**
Course Evaluations Teams of teachers and other educational professionals to evaluate courses from third-party providers Travel, lodging and meals associated with the teams' evaluation work External expert trainer to train evaluation teams Materials and other miscellaneous expenses	**$200,000**
Course Development Content and course design development and integration into the eLMS A team of specialists to ensure that the course will be of high quality and effective in meeting the academic and learning needs of students. (directly related to Course Evaluations)	**$250,000**
Instructional Materials	**$100,000**

Online Teacher Training Delaware teachers trained in teaching online courses	$25,000
Supplemental Online Services Statewide license for services, such as, UnitedStreaming and NetTrekker	$750,000
Program Evaluation An external evaluator to provide an assessment of the status and success of the program and provide direction for further improvement.	$25,000
Public Information and Training Electronic and printed information created and distributed to schools, parents and others important to the successful implementation of the program Training provided for school coordinators and other school personnel including guidance counselors to support online students in local school	$100,000
Information Technology Website site development and management (A unique Web site will be developed to provide accurate and up-to-date information about the courses and services provided by the state virtual school.) Student information system integration that will allow for data gathering, analysis and records management Security issues related to students engaged in online courses eLMS implemented to house and develop coursework	$300,000
Equipment, Software, Materials, and Supplies Includes computers, printers, related equipment, software, printed materials, and supplies for staff use	$50,000
TOTAL	**$3,600,000**

Appendix B: Pilot Program

Delaware Virtual School Pilot Program
January 2008

Delaware Department of Education / Delaware Center for Educational Technology will conduct a Pilot Program for Delaware Virtual School with high school students beginning to take online courses in January 2008. The Pilot Program is supported with funding from the Delaware Center for Educational Technology and Vision 2015 through the Delaware Business Roundtable Education Committee. The intent of the Pilot Program is to develop and implement the procedures for efficiently working with the high schools in selecting and enrolling students who wish to take online courses.

There will be a limited course catalog in the Pilot Program, but all public high schools in the state will be eligible to participate. The courses, more specifically seats in courses, will be purchased from Florida Virtual School and Apex Learning. This will provide the opportunity to compare efficiencies among vendors.

Implementing the Pilot Program will involve identifying course providers, identifying courses for a limited course catalog, creating teams of content experts to evaluate the selected courses to ensure they meet Delaware Content Standards, developing a Memorandum of Understanding between Delaware Center for Educational Technology / Delaware Virtual School and public high schools, identifying the coordinator in each school, working with principals and guidance counselors to ensure selecting students that will be successful in the online environment, developing the Acceptable Use Policy and Academic Honesty Agreement, enrolling students in courses with the selected providers, and developing the reporting mechanism from the third party provider on student status in courses.

Tentative Course Catalog for the Pilot Program
Algebra I (1 credit)
Pre-Calculus (1 credit)
Spanish I (1 credit)
Spanish II (1 credit)
Physical Education (1/2 credit)
American Government (1/2 credit)

Appendix C: Evaluation and Assessment

Evaluation

Rules and regulations pertaining to the operation of Delaware Virtual School should be established to ensure quality teaching and that courses are successfully provided to students. At a minimum, these rules and regulations will include these procedures for students to enroll in Delaware Virtual School courses:

- a process for establishing uniform evaluation of student progress and awarding of the final grade;
- a process for maintaining student records and reporting and recording grades on the student's transcript;
- procedures and requirements for supervision, monitoring, assessment, and evaluation of enrolled students; and
- procedures and requirements for employment, supervision, and evaluation of teachers, and instructional procedures.

Delaware Virtual School will establish quality indicators and evaluation criteria in collaboration with schools and other stakeholders. An internal evaluation of the program will be conducted on an annual basis and Delaware Virtual School will collect, analyze, and submit evaluation data to the Secretary of Education.

An annual report will be provided to the legislature by Delaware Virtual School to include the following:

- A list of courses offered through Delaware Virtual School with number of enrollments per course;
- Names of the participating local school districts and the number of district students enrolled in Delaware Virtual School;
- Success rates by courses for students enrolled in Delaware Virtual School;
- Feedback report from schools, students and parents regarding Delaware Virtual School;
- Number of students who dropped a course and the reason for dropping;
- Summary of marketing and public relations efforts for dissemination of information;
- Expenditures made for Delaware Virtual School;
- Number of students unable to enroll because of space/funding limitation; and
- Identification of the critical academic course needs projected for the next academic year.

An external evaluation will be conducted subsequent to the second full year following implementation. To ensure impartial analysis of key measures of success, the program will contract for a third-party to conduct an independent evaluation of the success of the program. This project evaluator will survey students, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders, collect and analyze data, and report to Delaware Virtual School on the level of success of the program. This study will contain recommendations for further academic improvement and provide suggestions related to cost containment.

The purpose of these evaluations will be to determine if students enrolled in a course or courses have been afforded the opportunity to learn in an environment that meets or exceeds the Delaware content and grade-specific standards and that the program is being run in a responsible method related to expenditures.

Assessment

Assessment policies and practices for both the student and the teacher will be developed by Delaware Virtual School. The assessment of the Virtual School's effectiveness and efficiency in providing quality courses and services that encourage high student achievement, seamless articulation and maximum access will be included in the accountability system.

Benchmark statistics will be collected and analyzed to assist in verifying quality assurance for the program. These include, but are not limited to, reports on students receiving services and how the students performed in the course and on state assessments, completion/drop rates, Advanced Placement (AP) exam results and satisfaction surveys, etc.

A teacher professional growth process will be utilized that will include professional development and teacher training documentation, how instructional expectations are met, satisfaction surveys and other criteria that will assist Delaware Virtual School in determining instructor quality. This process will serve in developing and aligning professional development opportunities.

A quality satisfaction process will be put in place between Delaware Virtual School and the school districts. This process will be developed in collaboration with the stakeholders and will include, at a minimum, a survey instrument administered annually as part of the accountability cycle. Opinions will be gathered from students, parents and school staff to provide a source of information to identify and celebrate current strengths, as well as to determine where Delaware Virtual School may need to focus improvement.

Appendix D: Delaware Virtual School Regulations, Policies and Procedure

The following rules, policies and procedures are recommended to ensure successful implementation of Delaware Virtual School.

- Delaware Department of Education will establish rules and procedures for the efficient and effective operation of Delaware Virtual School.
- All employees of Delaware Virtual School will be state employees and compensation, including salary and fringe benefits, will be aligned with conditions of employment for like or similar personnel.
- As Delaware Virtual School grows, administrative and support staff positions will be required, including leader/director/manager, academic coordinator, administrative assistant, technical support, data management, and instructional personnel. The department will develop appropriate position descriptions for each of these positions.
- Delaware Virtual School will adopt the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) publications related to statewide virtual schools and online instruction. (See Appendix E for a summary of each document and a URL to download the entire document.)
    - *Cost Guidelines for State Virtual Schools*
    - *Standards for Quality Online Teaching*
    - *Online Teaching Evaluation for State Virtual Schools*
    - *Standards for Quality Online Courses*
    - *Checklist for Evaluating Online Courses*
- The Southern Regional Education Board's SREB *Standards for Quality Online Courses* and SREB *Standards for Quality Online Teaching* will be adopted and used by Delaware Virtual School to ensure quality courses and teaching.
- Only instructor-led courses as described in the SREB *Standards for Quality Online Teaching* that provide frequent interaction between teacher and students and students with other students will be provided by the Delaware Virtual School.
- Delaware Department of Education / Delaware Center for Educational Technology will establish procurement procedures that Delaware Virtual School will use to obtain quality online courses from third-party providers.
- Delaware Virtual School will have the authority under State of Delaware rules and procedures to contract for online learning courses from third-party providers, develop online courses, or obtain online courses through exchange with others or through purchase.
- All courses provided by Delaware Virtual School will be aligned with the Delaware content standards. A thorough process will be established to ensure the alignment of all approved courses with applicable standards.
- Course review and course development procedures will follow the SREB *Standards for Quality Online Courses* and the SREB *Checklist for Evaluating Online Courses.*

- All online teachers employed by Delaware Virtual School will possess the academic credentials for the course being taught and will be prepared to teach online courses. All teachers will be certified for the course they will be teaching and the virtual school will provide the training to teach online.

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will be developed to detail expectations, requirements and responsibilities of the school and Delaware Virtual School.

- The local school should adopt a policy that provides guidance about identifying who will be eligible for online courses from Delaware Virtual School. The Delaware Department of Education, working with local schools, will develop a suggested policy.

- Enrollment in courses provided by Delaware Virtual School is limited to students enrolled in a Delaware public middle or high school.

- Online courses offered by Delaware Virtual School will be provided to Delaware public school students at no cost to the students.

- Delaware Virtual School is not a diploma-granting entity of the state. Credits earned by students taking courses from Delaware Virtual School will be provided to the school the student attends and the school will enter the credit on the student's transcript.

- Student academic performance in a Delaware Virtual School course will be measured by completion of course objectives and mastery of course content. Grades assigned by the online teacher, with supporting information, will be provided electronically to the student's school.

- A signed (by student and parent/guardian) Acceptable Use Policy and Academic Honesty Agreement will be required for each student enrolled in a Delaware Virtual School course.

- Student enrollment priority will be for: a) students who need a course for credit recovery or to graduate on time, b) an essential course is unavailable in their local school, or c) schedule conflicts prevent enrollment in the local school. If other reasons occur, the school or the student's parent/guardian may request an exemption from Delaware Virtual School. If Delaware Virtual School discontinues offering courses during any academic year due to lack of funds, the school where the student attends may pay the tuition to the Delaware Virtual School for the student to enroll in the course.

- Initially, there will not be any direct costs to local schools for their students to take online courses from Delaware Virtual School. There will be several required costs, however, including: a) a school-based coordinator, b) appropriate technology including a computer, printer and Internet access, c) textbooks and other necessary instructional materials, and d) an appropriate physical location to access and take the online course.

- Delaware Virtual School will provide supplemental online services that can benefit not only Delaware Virtual School, but also the educational community as a whole.

Appendix E: Southern Regional Education Board Documents

The following is a summary of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) documents related to statewide Virtual Schools and online instruction that Delaware Virtual School will adopt. Included with each summary is a URL where the entire document can be found and downloaded.

Cost Guidelines for State Virtual Schools

An increasing number of states are creating state Virtual Schools to provide Web-based academic courses to middle grades and high school students. This publication, produced by SREB's Educational Technology Cooperative, identifies the costs associated with the creation of a State Virtual School at three different levels of implementation. It is designed to help states consider the potential cost elements involved in planning and supporting a State Virtual School as it is implemented initially and as it grows over time. Goal that this publication reflects: Every student is taught by qualified teachers.

http://www.sreb.org/programs/EdTech/pubs/PDF/CostGuidelinesSVS.asp

Standards for Quality Online Teaching

This publication examines what qualifications are needed to be a quality online teacher and outlines specific standards for academic preparation, content knowledge, online skills and delivery, and more. Goal that this publication reflects: Every student is taught by qualified teachers

http://www.sreb.org/programs/EdTech/pubs/PDF/StandardsQualityOnlineTeaching.asp

Online Teaching Evaluation for State Virtual Schools

This document is based on the SREB publication Standards for Quality Online Teaching and provides state Virtual Schools in SREB states with an instrument to evaluate the quality of online teachers of middle grades and high school students. Including a checklist and a year-end evaluation, it is designed to gauge whether an online teacher meets each standard, recognize achievements and enable the teacher to understand what needs to be accomplished to ensure high-quality teaching.

http://www.sreb.org/programs/EdTech/pubs/2006Pubs/OnlineTeachingEvaluationSVS.asp

Standards for Quality Online Courses

The rapid growth of online learning has deepened the understanding of how to design effective online courses. This publication, funded by the BellSouth Foundation, examines what constitutes a quality online course and outlines specific standards for course content, instructional design, student assessment, technology, and course evaluation and management.

http://www.sreb.org/programs/EdTech/pubs/2006Pubs/StandardsQualityOnlineCourses.asp

Checklist for Evaluating Online Courses

Evaluation is key to ensuring that online courses provide students with access to quality instruction and resources. With sections on content, instructional design, student assessment and technology, this checklist is based on the SREB report Standards for Quality Online Courses and is designed to assist states and schools in determining the quality and effectiveness of online courses.

http://www.sreb.org/programs/EdTech/pubs/2006Pubs/ChecklistEvaluateOnlieCourses.asp

Appendix F: Delaware Virtual School Planning Committee

Member/Position	Organization
Ted Ammann, Technology Manager	Red Clay Consolidated School District
Vicky Cairns, Director Instructional Advocacy	Delaware State Education Association (DSEA)
Bruce Friend, Vice President	North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL)
Dr. Gregory Fulkerson, Education Associate World Languages and International Education	Delaware Department of Education
Shari Galgano, Instructional Technology Specialist	Caesar Rodney School District
Jerry Gallagher, Director Finance	Delaware Department of Education
Ray Gravuer, Principal	Glasgow High School, Christina School District
Dr. Wayne Hartschuh, Executive Director Committee Chair	Delaware Center for Educational Technology (DCET)
Donna Miller, Retired	West Virginia Department of Education
Anne Norman, Director	Delaware Division of Libraries
Dr. Michael Owens, Associate Secretary, Adult Education and Work Force Development	Delaware Department of Education
Randy Reynolds, Customer Relationship Specialist	Delaware Department of Technology and Information
Dennis Rozumalski, Education Associate Student Services and Special Populations	Delaware Department of Education
Pat Sine, Director Educational Technology	University of Delaware
Dr. Michael Stetter, Director Curriculum Development	Delaware Department of Education
Dr. George Stone, Superintendent	Cape Henlopen School District
William (Bill) Thomas, Director Educational Technology	Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)
Dr. Julia Webster, Education Associate Advanced Placement Incentive	Delaware Department of Education