



Evaluating School Readiness for Online Learning

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Evaluating School Readiness for Online Learning

This evaluation tool is intended to assist in determining whether a district has the policy, technical, and staff infrastructure necessary to successfully implement a comprehensive online learning program. This is not intended for evaluation of online course materials or online instructors.

Name of School and School District _____

Name of evaluator _____ Phone/e-mail _____

Summative Evaluation Score from rubric item #11 _____

In order to implement an online learning program successfully, districts need the appropriate systemic support for their teachers and students. This includes more than technical infrastructure. It also includes appropriate policies, technical support, and professional development. The following rubric is intended to help schools and districts identify their areas of need as they work toward implementing an online learning program.

Assessing a school or district according to this multifaceted rubric requires a team of individuals with a variety of areas of expertise. A district might combine representatives from a professional development committee, a technology planning committee, the teachers union, administration, and school board—as well as parent and student groups—to assess their school’s situation, plan for future needs, and draft policies and procedures.

This rubric, like many others, is a starting point. The document “Local Policy Issues for Online Learning in Minnesota,” found elsewhere in this resource, provides additional detail. School personnel might also use the rubric in conjunction with their district’s teacher contract, policy manuals, technology plan, and school improvement plans to create an integrated and systemic approach to the online learning challenge. Schools should also draw on outside resources such as the National Standards for Staff Development or *enGauge* to enrich their evaluating and planning processes.

Evaluating School Readiness for Online Learning

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
1. Definition of need	The school/district has a sense that online learning may be a valuable opportunity for a variety of student populations. Students and/or parents have made some tentative inquiries.	The school/district has informally assessed its need for online programs and identified some possible academic value to online delivery for addressing some general student needs. A variety of students and/or parents have requested online programming.	The school/district has completed a needs-assessment process and through that has identified the target student population(s) and academic value of the intended online learning program(s). There is strong student and parent interest from some constituencies.	The school/district has completed a thorough needs assessment process and through that has clearly identified the target student population(s), student needs, and academic value of the intended online learning program(s). There is strong student and parent interest from clearly identifiable constituencies.
2. School/district-focused policy development, including funding methods	The school/district has begun discussions regarding the considerations mentioned in Level 3. Stakeholders and specific areas of concern and consideration have been identified.	The school/district has solid direction with respect to the areas outlined in Level 3 and is developing or has developed draft policies for the purpose of gathering feedback and guidance.	The school/district has policies that address equity of computer/Internet access, vendor selection criteria, course selection criteria, general safety and Internet liability, awarding of credit, and funding/payment.	The school/district has clearly communicated and cooperatively developed board-approved policies and procedures that constructively address the issues in Level 3 as well as any other significant local issues.
3. Teacher-focused policy development	The school/district has begun discussions regarding the considerations mentioned in Level 3. Stakeholders and specific areas of concern and consideration have been identified.	The school/district has solid direction with respect to the areas outlined in Level 3 and is developing or has developed draft policies for the purpose of gathering feedback and guidance.	The school/district has clearly communicated the approved policies and procedures that constructively address, at a minimum, teacher workload for supervision and student contact, teacher work day/year for those involved in anytime/anywhere learning, appropriate class size, and the intellectual property rights regarding teacher-produced curriculum materials. Where necessary, such definitions and policies are a negotiated	The school/district has clearly communicated and cooperatively developed board-approved policies and procedures that constructively address the issues in Level 3 as well as any other significant local issues. Where appropriate, the teacher contract effectively addresses online learning issues.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
			part of the teacher contract.	
4. Student-focused policy development	The school/district has begun discussions regarding the considerations mentioned in Level 3. Stakeholders and specific areas of concern and consideration have been identified.	The school/district has solid direction with respect to the areas outlined in Level 3 and is developing or has developed draft policies for the purpose of gathering feedback and guidance.	The school/district has clearly communicated the approved policies and procedures that constructively address, at a minimum, eligibility requirements for students, assessment of student readiness for online learning, appropriate supervision and contact time, assessment and scoring of student work, and academic integrity.	The school/district has clearly communicated and cooperatively developed board-approved policies and procedures that constructively address the issues in Level 3 as well as any other significant local issues.
5. Student support services^o	Full-time online students are expected to access support services only in face-to-face ways. No additional access methods or allowances are made.	Online students have access to some services electronically or through means other than face-to-face, but such methods function awkwardly or inefficiently.	The school has planned for and clearly communicated to parents and students how student support services such as counseling, course registration, library and media services, and technical support will be provided through traditional and electronic or other means.	Online students are seamlessly connected to support services through face-to-face, electronic, and other means. Online students expect and receive service that is timely and roughly equivalent to that received by traditional students.
6. Professional development for consumer districts/teachers	There is some understanding that online learning may require somewhat different skills than traditional classroom. School leaders understand that professional development may be necessary to increase skills	Skill and knowledge sets needed for the online learning model the district is implementing are being, or have been, identified. Professional development is being planned or considered a growing need.	Local teachers have received training regarding their role and developed many of the skills required to monitor and assess student progress, communicate with the remote teacher, and solve common technical problems as	Local teachers are engaged in well-planned ongoing professional development for their role. They are continuing to develop the skills required to monitor and assess student progress, communicate with the remote

^o The level of concern and complexity regarding student access to support services will vary considerably depending on the online learning model being implemented. For example, a full-time online learner accessing coursework from outside the school requires much greater special consideration than a student taking one online course accessed from in school.

Note that the professional development needs vary depending on the online learning model being implemented. The level of supervision and instruction, and therefore the skills necessary for teachers, may vary considerably.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
	related to online learning facilitation and supervision.		required.	teacher, and solve required common technical problems.
7. Professional development for producer districts/teachers* <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;">Not Applicable</div>	There is some understanding that curriculum development for online learning may require somewhat different skills than traditional classroom teaching or curriculum development. School leaders understand that professional development may be necessary to increase skills particular to online curriculum development.	Skill and knowledge sets needed for curriculum development for the online learning model the district is implementing are being, or have been, identified. Professional development is being planned or considered a growing need.	Teachers who will be creating Web-based courses have been trained in curriculum development in general and as it applies to Web-based course development specifically. A team for reviewing and finalizing the courses has been established and trained in content, curriculum development and differentiation, editorial and programming skills.	Local teachers have learned and are engaged in ongoing professional development for the skills and knowledge necessary for their role in curriculum development for online learning. The established team for reviewing and finalizing courses has become a learning community for developing content, curriculum development & differentiation, editorial and programming skills.
8. Technical infrastructure	Internet access is available in limited areas in the school. Limited technical support exists in the school. Budgeting for technical infrastructure is intermittent.	High-speed Internet access is available in a limited way. Technical support is available, but sometimes awkward or slow. A minimal but consistent budget for infrastructure is maintained.	The school/district has all the necessary technical infrastructure in place including high-speed Internet access, along with the technical support system necessary to maintain it reliably and efficiently. An adequate and consistent budget ensures continued growth and reliability.	The school/district has all the necessary technical infrastructure in place including high-speed Internet access. An active technical support system and staff regularly troubleshoots, maintains, and improves the infrastructure. A consistently sufficient budget ensures continued growth and reliability that keeps pace with advances.

* This is applicable only in schools/districts where staff is creating their own Web-based courses and therefore may not be included in the determination of the summative evaluation. If your district is not producing courses, put an "X" in the "Not Applicable" box.

9. Student-level hardware and software	Student-level Internet access is insufficient for effective online learning. Hardware and software are significantly outdated and cause problems when current materials are used or downloaded. Few resources are available for upgrades.	Student-level Internet access is passable for effective online learning. Hardware and software are dated, but cause few problems with usage or downloading. Some resources are available for periodic upgrades.	High-speed Internet access is available at the student level. All necessary hardware and software are up to date and function properly. The technical support and resources to maintain the systems and upgrade the hardware and software are available and planned for.	All of the most recent necessary hardware and software are available in a variety of locations for student use. Ongoing technical support and resource allocation ensure continued availability of the highest quality materials available to the student.
10. Teacher-level hardware and software	Teacher-level Internet access is insufficient for effective online learning at the site(s) where the teacher works. Hardware and software are significantly outdated and cause problems when current materials are used or downloaded. Few resources are available for upgrades.	Teacher-level Internet access is passable for effective online learning at the site(s) where the teacher works. Hardware and software is dated, but causes few problems with usage or downloading. Some resources are available for periodic upgrades.	High-speed Internet access is available at the teacher level at the site(s) where the teacher works. All necessary hardware and software is up to date and functions properly. The technical support and resources to maintain the systems and upgrade the hardware and software are available and planned for.	All of the most recent necessary hardware and software is available at the site(s) where the teacher works. Ongoing technical support and resource allocation ensure continued availability of the highest quality materials available to the teacher.

The responsibility for the student-level hardware and software may vary depending on the online learning model implemented. In determining the school/district role in supplying computer resources, student location, cost, and equity issues should be considered. To promote student success, end-to-end requirements for current technology should be considered.

11. Summative Evaluation	This school/district is not ready to implement an online learning program. The necessary policy, technical, and support structures have not yet been developed or thoroughly thought out. At this point, students may become frustrated with the lack of planning to support their success in the program.	This school/district may be ready to begin implementation of an online learning program. The necessary policy, technical, and support structures are being developed and nearing completion. The district is developing answers to the questions and problems likely to be faced by students.	This school/district appears ready to implement an online learning program. The necessary policy, technical, and support structures are in place to minimize student and teacher frustration and maximize the chances of student success in the program.	This school/district appears exceptionally ready to implement an online learning program. The necessary policy, technical, and support structures are thoroughly developed and formalized to maximize the chances of student success in the program.
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Additional Comments: