



The History of Georgia Virtual School

The virtual school is a form of distance learning; teacher and students are separated by geographical distance and the class is conducted using different electronic communication methods. Virtual schools are considered the next wave in technology based K-12 education, joining proven distance learning delivery methods. It is estimated that over 5% of public elementary and secondary students are participating in online learning (Watson, Murin, Vashaw, Gemin, & Rapp, 2013). Over 50 million students were projected to be enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools by fall 2013 (Synder & Dillow, 2012). These two figures combined suggest that over 2.5 million K-12 students in the US participated in online learning in the 2010-2011 school year. Florida had the largest virtual school implementation, with over 200,000 students in the 2011-12

Currently there are 39 states with state-led online education programs (Watson, Murin, Vashaw, Gemin, & Rapp, 2010). In the K-12 arena, Florida has the largest virtual school implementation, with over 200,000 students in the 2011-12



Georgia Virtual School's instructors are all highly qualified teachers, specially trained to teach in the online learning environment. Each of its online instructors must successfully complete a virtual training course, addressing the pedagogy of online learning and instruction as well as the policies and procedures specific to Georgia Virtual School. Trainees who successfully complete the online learning program are then given the opportunity to mentor with an experienced online instructor before teaching their own courses. This helps insure the quality and consistency of online instruction. In addition, AP instructors are required to successfully complete AP training before teaching Georgia Virtual School program's AP courses. Currently Georgia Virtual School has 190 highly qualified teachers who have been trained to teach online.

In addition, Georgia Virtual School, Georgia Department of Education and Georgia Professional Standards commission convened a task force to develop standards for online instructors. In December 2006, these standards were passed by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission and are now the basis for Georgia teachers to earn an online teaching endorsement. Because of this, all teachers in Georgia are able to complete a series of online courses to obtain the ~~mi~~

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Many of Georgia's school systems are too small and too understaffed to be able to offer the kind of variety they'd like to their diverse student populations. Sixty-four (35 percent) of Georgia's 180 school systems have a total population of less than 2,500 students. More than a third of Georgia's school systems have only one high school. Thirty-seven (10 percent) of the high schools in the state have less than 500 students. Many of these schools are forced to limit their course titles since they do not have highly qualified teachers to put in their classrooms.

Students want to take courses for many reasons: to increase their content choices, relieve scheduling conflicts, get ahead in their course work, or retake a previously failed class, so they can graduate on time. Other students may be homebound or may have transferred in from other school system and are missing certain required courses.

G a V a S c & T

Georgia Virtual School offers tuition-funded seats to public, private, and home school students during the fall, spring, and summer semesters. These seats are not limited, but local schools must approve students' course selections before they are enrolled. Tuition costs \$250 per .5 Carnegie unit course (1 segment) or \$500 per 1Carnegie unit course (2 segments).

References

Watson, J., Murin, A., Vashaw, L., Gemin, L. *ee eÄ ismo , publcouru ent)AEngm*