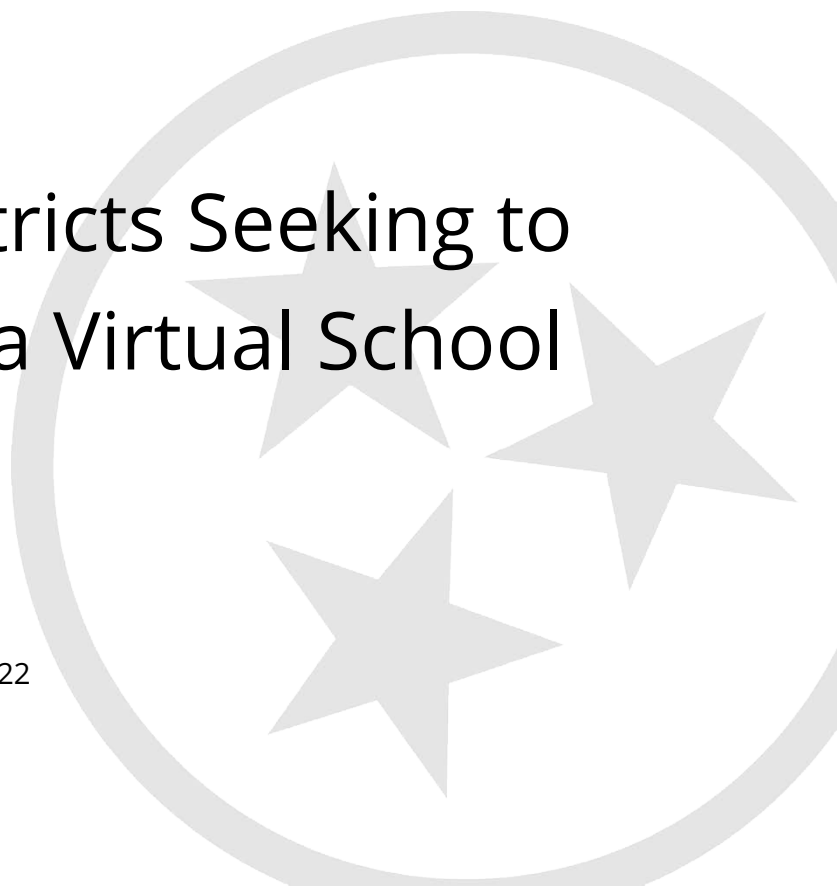




Department of
Education

Guidance for Districts Seeking to Open or Expand a Virtual School

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Introduction

This document will guide Local Education Agencies (LEAs) through the application process to open a new public virtual school or expand the grades of an existing virtual school. This form is to be used in tandem with the Program and School Authorization Form found here: [Program and School Authorization Form \(PSAF\)](#).

Before Completing the Program and School Authorization Form

- Review the statutes and rules that frame virtual schooling in Tennessee:
 - Virtual Public Schools Act: [Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 49-16-201 through 216](#)
 - Tennessee State Board of Education Rule: [0520-01-03-.05](#)
- Ensure that the local board of education has approved the opening of a new virtual school or expansion of an existing virtual school, and that its approval is documented in the meeting minutes.
- Ensure that the virtual school will be using textbooks and instructional materials that are identified on the state-approved list. The list of approved textbooks and instructional materials can be found here: [Approved Textbooks and Materials](#).
- Ensure that the virtual school will provide instructional materials and will ensure access to necessary technology, such as a computer, printer, and internet connection, to each family with a student who enrolls in the virtual school.
- Review the guidance materials posted to the [“Opening or Changing a Virtual School” section of the Virtual Schools website](#).

Overview of the PSAF Completion Process

- Navigate to and open the [Program and School Authorization form](#).
- Complete the following sections:
 - District Information
 - Assurances – Requires Signature of the Director of Schools
 - Request Type and Section(s)
 - Addendum C: Virtual School Request (only if opening a new virtual school)
- Complete the online [School Directory Change Request Form](#). During this process, upload the completed and signed Program and School Authorization Form and all

documents required by Addendum C. This step should be completed by either the Director of Schools or by the LEA's School Directory Contact.

- To upload the PSAF and all documents required by Addendum C, either combine all the required pdf files into a zip file **or** create one contiguous pdf file that includes all the required documentation.
- The Virtual Schools team will review your application and request any clarifications or additional information, if needed.
- Upon receipt of all required materials and any necessary clarification, the LEA's School Directory Contact will be notified that the new virtual school has been authorized. The School Directory team will assign the new virtual school a school number.

Overview of Required PSAF Sections

Request Type Guidance

- To add a new virtual school, check the "New School or Program Number" box and complete Section A.
- To add or remove up to three (3) grades to or from an existing virtual school, check the "Change a School or Program Name, Address, Grade Configuration, or Principal Name and/or Email Address" box and complete the applicable portion of Section C.

Section A – New School or Program Number Guidance

Complete Section A only if you are seeking to open a new virtual school.

Field Definitions and Notes

- **Is this request related to a school or program?** Check the box next to "School."
- **School or Program Type:** Check the box next to "Virtual School."
- **New School or Program Name:** Insert the name of the virtual school.
- **Date Opening:** Insert the date that students will begin taking classes at the virtual school.
- **Principal's or Program Director's Name:** Insert the name of the person who will serve as either the principal or program director for the virtual school. This person will be the main contact for the virtual school. Pursuant to T.C.A. §49-5-412, each

school having nine (9) or more teachers must have at least one (1) full-time supervising principal.

- **Lowest Grade Level:** Insert the lowest grade that will be served by the virtual school. Pre-Kindergarten students are not eligible for enrollment in a virtual school.
- **Highest Grade Level:** Insert the highest grade that will be served by the virtual school.
- **School or Program Phone Number:** Insert the phone number that will be listed as the main contact number for the virtual school.
- **School or Program Fax:** Insert the fax number for the virtual school.
- **School Email Address:** Insert the email address for the virtual school.
- **Web Address:** Insert the virtual school's website URL, including the "http://" or "https://."
- **School or Program Address, City and Zip Code:** Insert the address of the administrative office of the virtual school. This is considered the virtual school's principal place of business. The office may be located within another school in the LEA or outside the LEA, as long as it is located within Tennessee. Any post mail for the virtual school from the TDOE will be sent to this address.
- **Is this school or program replacing an existing one?** Check "yes" if this school will replace an existing school and insert the name of the school that is being closed. A separate closure form (Section D) must be submitted to report the school being closed. Check "no" if this school will not be replacing an existing school.
- **If yes, Implementation of a School Improvement Plan?** Check "yes" if this school will replace an existing school. All schools are required to have a yearly school improvement plan.
- **If yes, is this school designated with any federal designations (i.e.: Priority, ATSI, TSI, etc.)?** If the virtual school will replace an existing school, give the name of any federal designations assigned to the previous school.
- **If this request is for a pre-K site, please select funding source:** Do not complete this field; leave blank.
- **Nearest Elementary School (for Pre-K School/Program Requests Only):** Do not complete this field; leave blank.
- **School/Program Implementation Phase:** Check "Other."
- **Field related to Principal Type or Program Director:**
 - A ***Supervising Principal*** is a principal who is not actively teaching classes during the school day.
 - A ***Teaching Principal*** is a principal who teaches classes during the school day as well as serves in the role of school principal.

- A **Program Director** is a person who holds the same supervisory responsibilities as a principal but has the title of director.
- Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-5-412, each school having nine (9) or more teachers must have at least one (1) full-time supervising principal. Check “Full-Time Supervising Principal” if the school will have at least nine teachers and if not, check the appropriate alternative box.
- **Number of Teachers:** Insert the number of teachers, including both employed and contracted teachers, that will teach courses for the virtual school.
- **Length of Teacher Day:** Insert the number of hours and minutes the teacher is required to report for duty.
- **Estimated Student Enrollment:**
 - Total is the total number of students, both in-district and out-of-district, that the school expects to enroll during the school year.
 - In-District is the estimated number of students residing within the geographical boundaries of the LEA that the school expects to enroll during the school year.
 - Out-of-District is the estimated number of students residing outside of the geographical boundaries of the LEA that the school expects to enroll during the school year.
 - The sum of the In-District and Out-of-District numbers should equal the Total.
 - The district-provided numbers are estimates and not caps. Initially, the maximum number of students that a new virtual school may enroll is one thousand five hundred (1,500) students.
- **Length of Student Day:** Insert the number of hours and minutes for which the students will receive instruction. The minimum number of hours and minutes should be six (6) hours and thirty (30) minutes or six and one-half (6 ½) hours of instructional time.
- **Are students assigned on a permanent basis per school year?** Check “yes” if students must be enrolled at the virtual school for the entire school year and “no” if students are allowed to transfer from the virtual school into their geographically zoned school during the school year.
- **What tests will be administered?** Insert the specific state assessments that will be given to the students. The assessments do not have to be broken out by grade. Examples: TCAP, TCAP EOC, TCAP ALT, MSAA, ACT, SAT, NAEP, TIMSS, ICILS, PISA, IELTS, etc. Overview of testing in TN can be found here: [Testing Overview](#).

- **Do students receive official Tennessee High School Diplomas/Mastery Certificates from this facility?** Check “yes” if the school serves students in the twelfth (12th) grade.
- **Congressional District:** Insert the number of the congressional district that serves the city/county in which the school is geographically located. You can find a service list here: [Congressional Map](#).
- **Enrollment & Attendance Software Package:** Enter the student information system (SIS) or student management system (SMS) that the LEA will use to send virtual school data to the state via the state’s education information system (EIS).
- **Additional Comments:** This field is not required but can be used for any additional comments the LEA would like to add.

Section C – Change a School or Program Name, Address, Grade Configuration, or Principal Name and/or Email

Address Guidance

Complete Section C if you are changing the name or contact information for a virtual school or seeking to add or remove up to three (3) grades to or from an existing virtual school.

Field Definitions and Notes

- **Is this request related to a school or program?** Check the box next to “School.”
- **School or Program Number:** Insert the school number of the existing virtual school.
- **School or Program Type:** Check the box next to “Virtual School.”
- **Additional Comments:** This field is not required but can be used for any additional comments the district would like to add.

Name Change

- **Current School or Program Name:** Insert the name of the virtual school as reported in the current school directory.
- **New School or Program Name:** Insert the new name of the virtual school.
- **Effective Date of Change:** This is the official date of the school’s name change. This will trigger a name change within state data systems; it is recommended to set the effective date to July 1st of the following school year if the current school year has already started.

Address Change

- **Current Address, City, and Zip Code:** Insert the address of the virtual school as reported in the school directory.
- **New Address, City, and Zip Code:** Insert the new address of the virtual school.
- **Effective Date of Change:** Insert the official date of the school's address change. After the effective date, all mail that the TDOE sends to the virtual school via the U.S. postal service will be sent to the address provided in this field.

Grade Configuration Change

- **Current Grades Served:** Insert the grade span that the existing virtual school is currently serving, prior to consideration of this request (e.g., 9-12).
- **New Grades Served:** Insert the total grade span that the existing virtual school will serve if the request is approved (e.g., 6-12).
- **Current Student Enrollment Count:** Insert the number of students who are currently enrolled in the existing virtual school.
- **New Student Enrollment Count:** Insert the total number of students who you anticipate enrolling in the virtual school if the request is approved. This number should equal the sum of the number of students who are currently enrolled in the virtual school and the number of students who you anticipate enrolling in the additional grades if approved.
- **Effective Date of Change:** Insert the date on which you propose for the grade configuration change to take effect if the request is approved.

Principal Name and/or Email Address Change

- **Current Principal's Name:** Insert the name of the principal to be removed.
- **New Principal's Name:** Insert the name of the principal to be added to the school.
- **New Principal's Email:** Insert the email address of the principal to be added to the school.
- **Effective Date of Change:** Insert the date on which you propose this change should go into effect.

Addendum C: Virtual School Authorization Request

Guidance

Complete Addendum C only if you are seeking to open a new virtual school.

Documentation

Provide a **separate document for each of the nine (9) required documents in addendum C**. If responding with a district policy applicable to all district schools, explain how the implementation of the policy will differ in the virtual school setting. Use file nomenclature that clearly identifies the document, such as ***Excerpt from Board Minutes-<school name>-<date>***. Example: Excerpt from Board Minutes-ABC Virtual School-8_27_21.pdf. If the response requires more than one document, use numbering, such as Excerpt from Board Minutes-ABC Virtual School-8_27_21 - 1.pdf.

1. Recommended File Name: Excerpt from Board Minutes-<school name>-<date>. Attach the excerpt from the minutes of the Board meeting at which the Board approved the opening of a new virtual school and the submission of an application to the department. The excerpt should include the vote tally and the date of the meeting.
2. Recommended File Name: Access to Instructional Materials and Technology-<school name>-<date>. Attach a document describing how the district will provide instructional materials to virtual school students, as well as access to devices and connectivity. The document should also describe how the district will support troubleshooting and repairs for technology.
3. Recommended File Name: Proposed Sequential Curriculum-<school name>-<date>. Attach a document describing the curriculum that will be taught at the virtual school. The document should include the list of courses and state-approved textbooks, or instructional materials used for each grade level.
4. Recommended File Name: Schedules-<school name>-<date>. Attach the virtual school calendar, demonstrating that students will receive the minimum 180 days of instruction. In addition, provide the daily schedules by grade band served, demonstrating that students will receive the minimum required hours of instruction.
5. Recommended File Name: Monitoring Attendance-<school name>-<date>. Attach a document describing how the school will track and document attendance on a daily basis. The response should identify at least two (2) of the methods specified in State Board Rule 0520-01-03-.05(1)(c)(1). The document should explain how truancy intervention policies will be implemented in the virtual setting.

6. Recommended File Name: Enrollment-<school name>-<date>. Attach your enrollment policies and procedures for the virtual school. The document should explain how the district will ensure that class sizes do not exceed the maximum permitted by law and regulation.
7. Recommended File Name: SPED and ELL-<school name>-<date>. Attach a document explaining how the district will administer services for special education students and English Language Learners in its virtual school. The document should describe how these students are identified in a virtual setting and how the virtual school will comply with all federal and state laws, rules and regulations for special populations.
8. Recommended File Name: Teachers and Staff-<school name>-<date>. Attach a document describing the district's process for confirming the licensure and endorsements of each teacher. The document should describe the professional development in virtual instruction provided to teachers, how virtual school teachers are assigned to students and how virtual school teachers are annually evaluated.
9. Recommended File Name: Administering Assessments-<school name>-<date>. Attach a document describing the virtual school's procedures for administering TCAP tests in-person to virtual school students.

Additional Assurances

The Additional Assurances in Addendum C are incorporated into the Assurances set forth on page 2 of the Program and School Authorization Form for districts seeking authorization to open a new virtual school. By signing the Assurances on page 2, the LEA's Director of Schools is certifying that all of the Additional Assurances in Addendum C are true and complete.

Additional Resources

Applicable statutes and regulation can be found in T.C.A. § 49-16-201 through T.C.A. § 49-16-216 and State Board of Education Rule 0520-01-03-.05(1). If you have additional questions regarding the completion of the Program and School Authorization Form to open a new virtual school or expand the grades of an existing virtual school, please review resources on our website at <https://www.tn.gov/education/school-options/virtual-schools.html> or email Virtual.Schools@tn.gov.

Statute and Regulation Resources

- **Tennessee Code – Lexis Law Link:** <https://www.tncourts.gov/Tennessee%20Code>
- **Tennessee State Board of Education Rules, Policies, and Guidance:** <https://www.tn.gov/sbe/rules--policies-and-guidance.html>

TDOE & SBE Websites and Resources

- **TDOE Virtual School Website:** <https://www.tn.gov/education/school-options/virtual-schools.html>
- **TDOE Textbooks and Instructional Materials List:** <https://www.tn.gov/education/textbook-services/textbook-reviews.html>
- **SBE Guidance:** <https://www.tn.gov/sbe/rules--policies-and-guidance/guidance.html>
- **School Directory Webinar:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIL7PcnVAfA>