



# Virtual Schools

## How to Open a New Public Virtual School

### 1. How can our school district open a virtual school?

To open a virtual school, a school district must complete and submit the Tennessee Department of Education's [Program and School Authorization Form](#), including in particular, Addendum C: Virtual School Authorization Request. All documentation requested in Addendum C must be submitted with the completed form. All materials should be submitted to [School.Directory@tn.gov](mailto:School.Directory@tn.gov) by the school district's School Directory Contact or Director of Schools. A school district wishing to open and operate a virtual school in partnership with another school district should contact the Tennessee Department of Education's Office of Choice for more information.

### 2. What is the deadline for submitting a request to open a virtual school?

Currently, the deadline for submitting a Program and School Authorization Form to create a virtual school is June 1.

### 3. What is the process for reviewing our school district's request to open a virtual school?

Upon receipt of the Program and School Authorization Form, the Office of Choice will review the submission to:

- ensure that all required materials have been provided;
- ensure that the proposed virtual school complies with applicable law and regulation; and
- seek any necessary clarification and/or modification.

After satisfactory completion of these steps, the virtual school will be authorized, and the school directory team will assign a new school number to the virtual school.

### 4. What is the expected turnaround time for authorizing a virtual school once our school district has submitted a Program and School Authorization Form?

The forms and accompanying materials will be reviewed on a rolling basis when received. The Office of Choice will conduct an initial review within 15 calendar days of receiving all materials from a school district. Because this is a collaborative process, the final authorization date will depend upon timely receipt of requested feedback.

**5. If our school district wants to continue to provide a remote learning option to our families, instead of creating a virtual school, can we just continue our Continuous Learning Plan in school year 2021-22?**

The State Board of Education has considered on first reading a rule that would extend the ability for school districts to use Continuous Learning Plans (CLPs) to provide remote instruction in response to COVID-19 through the 2021-22 school year. However, this rule is not yet in effect and even if it becomes effective in its current form with no revisions, there are two caveats:

- The CLPs would only be allowed to be used as long as the Governor-declared state of emergency, due to COVID-19, persisted. If it is no longer in effect at any point during school year 2021-22, the remote instruction provided through the CLP cannot continue.
- Also, if the Tennessee General Assembly passes any new laws related to virtual learning or in-person instruction for the 2021-22 school year, those new laws might affect whether the rule will be brought before the State Board of Education on final reading.

**6. Are there any requirements regarding the location of our virtual school office?**

A virtual school must maintain an administrative office within the State. That office will be considered its principal place of business. It is permissible to locate the virtual school office within a traditional school building.

**7. *Added 5/5/21:* Can districts partner to create a virtual school?**

Yes. The districts should specify in an agreement how funding, accountability, staffing and other matters will be allocated between them. It is recommended that partnering districts contact their respective attorneys as well as the department for guidance.

**TDOE Contact Information:**

For more information, please contact [Virtual.Schools@tn.gov](mailto:Virtual.Schools@tn.gov).