

**RULES OF
THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**CHAPTER 0520-01-03
ACADEMIC AND INSTRUCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

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0520-01-03-.05 VIRTUAL EDUCATION.

(1) Public Virtual Schools

- (a) A “public virtual school” is a public school that uses technology to deliver a significant portion of instruction to its students via the internet in a virtual or remote setting. Public virtual schools may be established in accordance with T.C.A. §§ 49-16-201 – 49-16-216 and the rules and regulations of the State Board. The LEA establishing the public virtual school is directly responsible for the performance of the public virtual school and ensuring the school remains in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws and rules and regulations of the State Board, regardless of whether the LEA directly operates the school or contracts with an entity for the management or operation of the school.
- (b) Public virtual schools shall:
1. Be established and approved by an LEA.
 2. Use technology to deliver a significant portion of instruction to its students via the internet in a virtual or remote setting.
 3. Review and provide access to a sequential curriculum that meets or exceeds the academic standards adopted by the State Board utilizing state-approved textbooks and instructional materials, unless a waiver has been granted to the LEA in accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-2206 and State Board Rules Chapter 0520-01-18.
 4. Meet the equivalent of the one hundred and eighty (180) days of instruction per academic year and six and one-half (6½) hours of instructional time per day pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-3004, provided, however, that a student, at the student's own pace, may demonstrate mastery or completion of a course or subject area and be given credit for the course or subject area.
 5. Administer all state tests required of public school students to students enrolled in a virtual school in a proctored environment consistent with state test administration guidelines.
 6. Be evaluated annually by the LEA.

(Rule 0520-01-03-.05, continued)

- (i) The evaluation must assess the following utilizing a standardized template provided by the Department of Education:
 - (I) Academic, fiscal, and operational performance; and
 - (II) The extent to which the school demonstrates increases in student achievement.
 - (ii) The results of such evaluation shall be publicly reported through the following methods:
 - (I) Posting of the results of the evaluation, utilizing a standardized template provided by the Department of Education on both the virtual school's and the LEA's website;
 - (II) Direct distribution of the evaluation, utilizing a standardized template provided by the Department of Education, to all enrolled families. Such distribution may be accomplished via e-mail, U.S. mail, or other method determined by the LEA.
- 7. Ensure that students with special needs, including students with disabilities and limited English proficiency, are not excluded from enrolling and participating in virtual schools, and receive all services required by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), Section 504 Plan, or Individual Learning Plan (ILP).
- 8. Ensure that each virtual school course has an assigned teacher of record who is properly endorsed and licensed to teach in Tennessee in compliance with state law, State Board Rules Chapter 0520-02-03, and State Board Policy 5.502. For purposes of virtual schools, teacher of record means the teacher who:
 - (i) Provides instruction for the course based on the Tennessee Academic Standards;
 - (ii) Ensures student progress toward the Tennessee Academic Standards;
 - (iii) Monitors the physical safety and well-being of students;
 - (iv) Verifies attendance and reports course grades for students; and
 - (v) If the teacher is employed by the LEA, claims instructional time for instructionally available students.
- 9. Ensure that all teachers employed by the LEA serving as teacher of record within the virtual school are evaluated annually pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-1-302 and State Board Rules Chapter 0520-02-01.
- 10. Ensure students have access to instructional materials, technology such as a computer and printer that may be necessary for participation in the virtual school, and an internet connection used for school work.
- 11. Meet class size standards established by T.C.A. § 49-1-104. A public virtual school may increase the enrollment in virtual classes by up to twenty-five percent (25%) over the class size maximum established by T.C.A. § 49-1-104 if the school demonstrates student achievement growth at a level of "at expectations"

(Rule 0520-01-03-.05, continued)

or greater, as represented by the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) in the prior year where TVAAS data is available.

- (i) Public virtual schools shall continue to comply with class size and case load requirements for special education as defined in State Board Policy 3.206. Public virtual schools shall review individual teacher's student caseloads, and shall consult with the teacher when determining class size and student caseloads, to ensure that teachers can meet the needs of students, including students with disabilities, as determined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. §§ 1400 et seq.), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. §§ 701 et seq.), and any student's IEP.
 - (ii) Public virtual schools shall maintain accurate records and monitor compliance with class size requirements.
- (c) Public virtual schools shall comply with all compulsory attendance requirements and shall monitor and report daily attendance as required in T.C.A. § 49-6-3007, including:
 - 1. Monitoring and taking daily student attendance, which shall include seeking and receiving daily visual, verbal, and/or written confirmation of student participation in six and one-half (6½) hours of instructional time per day using multiple methods of confirming student attendance. Multiple methods of confirming student attendance include two (2) or more of the following:
 - (i) Students participating in a phone call with a teacher, with parent or legal guardian support as appropriate for the age of the student;
 - (ii) Students participating in synchronous virtual instruction;
 - (iii) Students completing work in a learning management system;
 - (iv) Students submitting work via hard-copy or virtual formats; or
 - (v) Other method the LEA identifies as appropriate to track individual student participation in instructional activities.
 - 2. Each LEA shall develop and implement procedures for determining an excused versus unexcused absence, the internal attendance tracking system to be used, and how the LEA will communicate attendance policies and/or procedures to parents and/or legal guardians and students.
 - 3. The reporting of attendance to the Department must be via the LEA's student information system, utilizing the attendance code set by the Department of Education.
 - 4. The LEA establishing the public virtual school is required to implement the LEA's progressive truancy intervention plan, as required by T.C.A. § 49-6-3009 and State Board Rule 0520-01-02-.17, for students enrolled in the virtual school and report truancy to the juvenile court having jurisdiction over that student in compliance with state law.
- (d) On or before August 1 of each year, the public virtual school shall notify all LEAs of the enrollment of students residing within another LEA's jurisdiction. LEAs shall be notified within two (2) weeks when changes occur relative to students residing within the LEA's jurisdiction.

(Rule 0520-01-03-.05, continued)

- (e) Once a student has been accepted by and enrolled in a public virtual school, it shall be the responsibility of the LEA that has established the public virtual school to maintain enrollment of that student until such a time as the student is withdrawn by the parent or guardian or withdrawn from the virtual school in accordance with the LEA's policy. If the student is withdrawn, the public virtual school shall send transcripts and other student records to the receiving school in a timely manner.
- (f) Public virtual schools and the LEA establishing a public virtual school shall maintain accurate records regarding the operation and compliance of the public virtual school and shall be subject to periodic inspection by the Department of Education as specified in Rule 0520-01-02-.01 and T.C.A. § 49-1-201. The LEA and the public virtual school shall comply with requests for information from the Department in a timely manner.
- (g) Public virtual schools and LEAs establishing a public virtual school shall comply with the enrollment requirements and limitations established in T.C.A. § 49-16-211.
- (h) An LEA shall close a virtual school if the school meets either of the criteria at T.C.A. § 49-16-213(b)(1).
- (i) The LEA of a virtual school identified for closure pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-16-213(b)(1) shall:
 - 1. Notify the virtual school in writing of the possibility of closure thirty (30) days prior to seeking a resolution for closure.
 - (i) The LEA may send the written notice by email, U.S. mail, or another written method adopted by the LEA.
 - (ii) The notification must include information on the following:
 - (I) The reason(s) for the possible closure;
 - (II) The process by which the virtual school may request a review by the department to verify the accuracy of the data used to make the closure determination; and
 - (III) The inability to enroll additional students in the virtual school after the date of the notification.
 - 2. Notify the virtual school no later than ten (10) days after the LEA adopts a resolution to close the virtual school.
 - 3. Provide written notice to the parents or legal guardians of all students enrolled in the virtual schools of the closure within one (1) calendar week from the date of the resolution adopted pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-16-213(b)(1). The LEA may send the written notice by email, U.S. mail, or another written method adopted by the LEA, provided the notice is sent to the parent or guardian directly. The notices should not be sent home with students.
 - 4. Provide written notice to the parents or legal guardians of all students enrolled in the virtual school of other options for enrollment within thirty (30) calendar days from the date on which the LEA determines that the school meets a closure criterion. The LEA may send the written notice by email, U.S. mail, or another written method adopted by the LEA, provided the notice is sent to the parent or guardian directly. The notices should not be sent home with students.

(Rule 0520-01-03-.05, continued)

5. If applicable, ensure that the contracted nonprofit or for-profit virtual school provider transfers student records to the LEA or to the school to which the virtual student transfers according to T.C.A. § 49-6-3001(c)(1)(B)(i). Student records shall not be withheld by the contracted provider.

(j) If an LEA is required to close a public virtual school pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-16-213(b), the LEA shall notify the Department on a form and manner determined by the Department.

(k) Information shall include, at a minimum, the following:

1. The name of the public virtual school that was closed; and

2. The legal name of each nonprofit or for-profit vendor that operated or managed the public virtual school;

3. Any name under which each vendor does business; and

4. The school year in which the public virtual school will close.

(2) Virtual Education Programs

(a) Virtual education programs may be established in accordance with T.C.A. §§ 49-16-101 – 49-16-105 and this Rule. A “virtual education program” means a course or series of courses offered through the use of technology by an LEA or public charter school to provide students a broader range of educational opportunities through effective use of technology. Providing students with a broader range of educational opportunities includes any of the following:

1. Academic remediation or enrichment, or providing students access to a wider range of courses.
2. Continuity of educational service for students who are homebound pursuant to State Board Rule 0520-01-02-.10 or State Board Rule 0520-01-09-.07.
3. Continuity of educational service for students who are quarantined pursuant to State Board Rule 0520-01-13-.01.
4. Continuity of educational service for students enrolled in an alternative school pursuant to State Board Rule 0520-01-02-.09.

(b) Virtual education programs must be comprised of individual courses accessed by students in an entirely virtual setting; however, teachers of virtual education program courses may meet with students in-person for non-instructional time, such as office hours.

(c) Remote instruction via a virtual education program shall not constitute the majority of a student's total instructional time per school semester unless the student meets one of the following criteria:

(Rule 0520-01-03-.05, continued)

1. The student is temporarily receiving all ~~of~~ the student's instruction via a virtual education program pursuant to paragraph (2)(a)2. or (2)(a)4. of this Rule;
 2. The student is taking coursework virtually, so the student may participate in a work-based learning program or internship that takes place during regular school hours;
 3. The student is accessing Advanced Placement (AP) courses or similar advanced coursework virtually; or
 4. The student is taking virtual coursework for purposes of credit recovery.
- (d) A student may participate in a virtual education program without enrolling in a virtual school; provided, however, that the student must be enrolled at the school where the student receives the majority of the student's instruction each school year.
- (e) The criteria for student participation in a virtual education program shall be at the discretion of the LEA or public charter school where the student is enrolled or zoned to attend; provided that a student may participate in a virtual education program within another LEA if permitted by the out-of-district enrollment policy of the receiving LEA.
- (f) Each LEA and public charter school offering a virtual education program shall maintain attendance policies and procedures for determining when a student is present in a course offered via the virtual education program, including plans for seeking and receiving daily periodic visual, verbal, and/or written confirmation of student participation in the courses offered within a virtual education program using multiple methods of confirming student attendance. Multiple methods of confirming attendance include two (2) or more of the following:
1. Students participating in a phone call with a teacher, with parent or legal guardian support as appropriate for the age of the student;
 2. Students participating in synchronous virtual instruction;
 3. Students completing work in a learning management system;
 4. Students submitting work via hard-copy or virtual formats; or
 5. Other method the LEA or public charter school identifies as appropriate.
- (g) Each LEA and public charter school shall develop procedures for determining an excused versus unexcused absence, the internal attendance tracking system to be used, and how the LEA or public charter school will communicate attendance policies and/or procedures to parents and/or legal guardians and students.
- (h) The reporting of attendance to the Department must be via the LEA or public charter school's student information system, utilizing the attendance code set by the Department.
- (i) Classes offered via a virtual education program shall comply with the class size requirements set forth in T.C.A. § 49-1-104(h) and class size and case load requirements for special education as defined in State Board Policy 3.206. Instruction provided virtually by a non-virtual public school, including a public charter school, pursuant to the LEA's or public charter school's approved continuous learning plan in

(Rule 0520-01-03-.05, continued)

accordance with State Board Rules Chapter 0520-01-17 shall be considered a virtual education program for purposes of compliance with T.C.A. § 49-1-104(h).

(j) Accountability

1. The results of student assessments for courses taken as part of a virtual education program and other accountability measures will be attributed to the school where the student is enrolled.
2. Promotion, certificates, and diplomas for a student taking courses as part of a virtual education program shall be determined and issued by the school where the student is currently enrolled.

(k) Each LEA or public charter school offering a virtual education program shall:

1. Ensure there is a teacher of record for each virtual education program course who is properly endorsed and licensed to teach in Tennessee in compliance with state law, State Board Rules Chapter 0520-02-03, and State Board Policy 5.502. For purposes of virtual education programs, teacher of record means the teacher who:
 - (i) Provides instruction for the course based on the Tennessee Academic Standards;
 - (ii) Ensures student progress toward the Tennessee Academic Standards;
 - (iii) Monitors the physical safety and well-being of students enrolled in the course;
 - (iv) Verifies attendance and reports student course grades to the school where the student receives the majority of instruction; and
 - (v) If the teacher is employed by the LEA or public charter school, claims instructional time for instructionally available students.
2. Ensure that all teachers employed by the LEA -or public charter school serving as teacher of record for coursework within the virtual education program are evaluated annually pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-1-302 and State Board Rules Chapter 0520-02-01.
3. Ensure teachers provide instruction utilizing state-approved textbooks and instructional materials in alignment with state law, unless a waiver has been granted pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-2206 or § 49-13-111.
4. Ensure participating students have access to instructional materials, technology such as a computer and printer that may be necessary for participation in the virtual program, and an internet connection.
5. Ensure that students with special needs, including students with disabilities and limited English proficiency, are not excluded from enrolling and participating in virtual education programs and receive all services required by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), Section 504 Plan, or Individual Learning Plan (ILP).
6. Establish a virtual education program policy that contains the following:

(Rule 0520-01-03-.05, continued)

- (i) Student eligibility and participation requirements, including interventions for students struggling to maintain eligibility requirements, and a process for removing students from virtual education program courses who fail to maintain eligibility requirements and placing them into a comparable in-person course.
- (ii) An articulated enrollment agreement for students from another LEA or public charter school to access virtual education program courses, if the LEA or public charter school chooses to allow such arrangements.

Authority: T.C.A. §§ 49-1-104, 49-1-201, 49-16-101, et seq., and 49-16-201, et seq.; ~~and Public Chapter 652 of 2020;~~ and Public Chapter 905 of 2026. Administrative History: Original rule certified June 10, 1974. Amendment filed June 30, 1975; effective July 30, 1975. Amendment filed July 15, 1976; effective August 16, 1976. Amendment filed October 3, 1985; effective January 14, 1986. Amendment filed January 17, 1986; effective April 15, 1986. Amendment filed May 28, 1986; effective June 27, 1986. Amendment filed August 26, 1986; effective November 29, 1986. Repeal and new rule filed March 16, 1992; effective June 29, 1992. Amendment filed April 28, 1992; effective July 29, 1992. Amendment filed September 1, 1992; effective December 29, 1992. Amendment filed January 21, 1994; effective May 31, 1994. Amendment filed April 29, 1996; effective August 28, 1996. Amendment filed January 14, 1997; effective May 30, 1997. Amendment filed April 27, 1998; effective August 28, 1998. Amendment filed July 13, 1998; effective November 27, 1998. Amendment filed November 18, 1998; effective March 30, 1999. Amendment filed April 28, 2000; effective August 28, 2000. Amendment filed October 31, 2002; effective February 28, 2003. Amendment filed March 31, 2003; effective July 29, 2003. Amendment filed June 30, 2003; effective October 28, 2003. Amendment filed June 30, 2005; effective October 28, 2005. Amendments filed December 28, 2005; effective April 28, 2006. Amendments filed September 6, 2013; effective February 28, 2014. Amendment filed April 6, 2015; effective July 5, 2015. Amendments filed October 25, 2017; effective January 23, 2018. Amendments filed March 20, 2018; to have been effective June 18, 2018. However, on May 24, 2018, the Government Operations Committee filed a 5-day stay; new effective date June 23, 2018. Amendments filed January 11, 2019; effective April 11, 2019. Amendments filed August 20, 2020; effective November 18, 2020. Amendments filed November 30, 2020; effective February 28, 2021. Emergency rule filed July 9, 2021; effective through January 5, 2022. Emergency rule expired effective January 6, 2022, and the rule reverted to its previous status. Amendments filed December 14, 2021; effective March 14, 2022.

2024. Amendments filed March 25, 2025; effective June 23, 2025.