

Plano ISD eSchool Participation in TxVSN
Senate Committee on Education
Virtual Schools
October 8, 2012

Presentation Points:

Plano ISD supports a virtual school system that increases the educational options for students in general and specifically expands equal access to online learning opportunities for Texas students.

Plano ISD eSchool–Background:

- Launched 2001 – with 12 teachers and 1 course created by district teachers and additional courses provided in partnership with Class.com/Voyager to serve students in grades 9-12
- Have created and implemented specific processes for curriculum development, teacher professional development, student monitoring and motivation, and communication with and between teachers, students, parents and counselors.
- eSchool teacher teams have developed 24 courses based on Plano ISD Learning Objectives as well as the state standards, TEKS.
- Have served over 26,000 students in our district, across Texas, nationally and internationally.
- Serve both students taking courses above (in addition to) their normal campus schedule and students taking courses within their regular campus schedule.
- Serve on average between 2,500 and 3,500 students a year with a completion rate between 86 and 89% for all population groups with a success rate of 96 to 98%

TxVSN Participation and Benefits:

- Have supported the state effort to expand online learning options for students since 2001 as part of the original Texas IQ pilot and have served on the TxVSN Advisory Council since its inception.
- The original vision for a state virtual school system was, at least in part, to help local, public, independent school districts to build capacity to establish and sustain quality online learning options for their own students as well as for students across the state.
- Currently participate in TxVSN as both a Provider and a Receiver district. For example, a Plano ISD eSchool teacher is currently the teacher of record for 17 9th grade World Geography students, with whom she communicates on a daily basis, in a very small Northwest Texas district. TxVSN has made that access possible for those students. There are multiple examples of Plano ISD teachers, and the teachers of other Providers providing this type of access to our young people.
- TxVSN course review process has been excellent for quality control of all offerings. It has raised the level of online learning options and has supported public school districts in the course development and implementation processes.
- TxVSN administrative and support services have been excellent partners and resources in expanding our knowledge base of online learning and teaching including accessibility for all students.

Online Learning Delivery Systems

Hurdles and Demands

- It demands a great deal in resources of capacity, time and personnel to provide and deliver an excellent online learning experience for students. As a provider to a few students or thousands, to students in one district or across districts, a virtual program must invest in the creation and consistent maintenance/improvement of multiple facets, including but not limited to:
 - a dependable infrastructure to deliver online courses

Plano ISD eSchool Participation in TxVSN

- a knowledgeable technical staff, help desk, trained in working with and accessible to students with a wide range of technical background
 - the processes to develop courses that meet local, state, and national standards
 - initial and ongoing teacher professional development specific to online learning
 - specific processes for consistently supporting and monitoring student progress
 - processes for communicating with campus counselors, parents and students to provide the wide-based support necessary for student success
 - processes for ensuring academic integrity
 - the communication between Providers and Receivers is critical to student success but places demands on the resources of both
- The lack of a consistent funding model for the Texas Virtual School Network has made it difficult for public schools to budget for participation in the network and has not supported public school districts in building capacity to provide students with online learning options.
 - A current hurdle that all online learning programs must address is the concern over whether or not students taking online courses will do as well in meeting the new testing standards as students in more traditional settings. Even though data supports the fact that online students have done as well as their counterparts in traditional settings on the TAKS tests, with the new there is a natural hesitancy, and we must prove our viability and quality again.

Online Learning Delivery Systems

Needs and Concerns:

- It is important that the quality of courses, resources, and teaching that the state and local districts have funded to this point are maintained.
- It is critical that any online learning system or policy that is put in place allows each school district equal access to online learning for their students and that implemented policy does not prevent or even deter a district in providing online courses to its own students as well as to students in other districts. A public school should be allowed to provide online learning options through TxVSN for our own students.
- Districts must be allowed to maintain local control in counseling services to work with parents and students to approve course recommendations based on the individual student's learning style, developmental state, and academic needs as well as the demonstrated support for student success on the part of each Provider.