

Instruction

Distance Education

Virtual/Online Courses

The Board of Education believes that distance education through virtual/online courses is an opportunity for enrichment for Stafford High School students. Online learning has a distinct advantage in that it does not require students to be physically present in the same location as the instructor or other students. Distance education courses are part of Stafford's educational program delivery system to increase accessibility and flexibility in the delivery of instruction. In addition to regular classroom-based instruction, students in the district may earn credit through distance education provided by virtual/online courses *and to recover lost credits*.

Virtual schools are educational organizations that offer courses at various grade levels through Web-based methods. Virtual schools allow students to take courses not currently offered at Stafford High School and, as such, enrich existing curriculum *and to recover lost credits*.

Online courses offered via organizations such as Virtual High School shall not result in a reduction of the current number of electives offered at Stafford High School, nor shall it result in the reduction in force of any existing staff.

In order to earn credits in meeting the requirements for high school graduation through the successful completion of on-line coursework, the Board, in compliance with C.G.S. 10-221a (17) shall ensure, at a minimum, that

1. the workload required by the on-line course is equivalent to that of a similar course taught in a traditional District classroom setting,
2. the content is rigorous and aligned with curriculum guidelines approved by the State Board of Education, where appropriate,
3. the course engages students and has interactive components, which may include, but are not limited to, required interactions between students and their teachers, participation in on-line demonstrations, discussion boards or virtual labs,
4. the program of instruction for such on-line coursework is planned, ongoing and systematic, and
5. the courses are:
 - (a) taught by teachers who are certified in the state or another state and have received training on teaching in an on-line environment, or
 - (b) offered by institutions of higher education that are accredited by the Department of Higher Education or regionally accredited; or
 - (c) *based upon its compliance with Connecticut's academic standards and requirements, including but not limited to the course content and rigor, its length and scope, its method of*

assessing knowledge acquired by the student, the qualifications of the instructor and other appropriate factors.

If the drop-out rate of the District is determined to be 8% or higher in the previous school year, the Board of Education shall establish an on-line credit recovery program for those students who are identified as being in danger of failing to graduate. These students, once identified by certified personnel, must be allowed to complete on-line District-approved coursework toward meeting high school graduation requirements. *Through its policies and/or supervision plan, the school shall be responsible for administering and providing appropriate supervision and monitoring of students taking virtual courses and online credit recovery program.*

Stafford High School students may earn a maximum of three (3) units of academic credit by completing online courses through Virtual High School. *The Principal may waive this requirement based upon individual student needs.*

One or more of the following conditions must exist for students to register for an online or virtual course:

1. Only students registered at Stafford High School may enroll in an online or virtual course.
2. The course or its equivalent is not offered at Stafford High School. (In the event of an unavoidable scheduling conflict that would have a negative impact on a student's academic sequence or ability to complete proscribed graduation requirements, the administration may approve the taking of an online course the equivalent of which is offered at Stafford High School).
3. The course could serve as a supplement to extended homebound instruction.
4. The District has expelled the student from the regular school setting, but educational services are to be continued.
5. The Principal, with agreement from the student's teachers and parents/guardians, determines the student requires a differentiated or accelerated learning environment for a portion of his/her academic program.
6. *A student has failed a course and wishes to recover credits in that course area.*

As determined by Board/school policy, students taking a virtual course will do the following:

- Adhere to the District code of conduct to include rules of behavior and consequences for violations.
- Adhere to attendance *and participation* requirements of the District *and the online course.*
- Adhere to the District's Internet policy.
- Adhere to Stafford High School's policy on withdrawing from a course.
- *Provide teacher/counselor recommendations to confirm the student possesses the maturity level needed to function effectively in an online/college learning environment.*
- *Obtain the written approval of the Principal or his/her designee before a student enrolls in a virtual course or the university/college course.*

The school must receive an official record of the final grade before awarding credit toward graduation.

The Superintendent *or designee* shall establish a committee to review all distance education courses prior to use by the District.

The District will evaluate the educational effectiveness of the distance education courses and the teaching/learning process. The District will use this evaluation to decide whether to grant credit for the course or to continue or discontinue the use of the distance education course.

(cf. [6141.321](#) - Computers: Acceptable Use of the Internet)

(cf. 6141.1 - Independent Study)

(cf. [6146](#) - Graduation Requirements)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

[10-221](#) Boards of education to prescribe rules, policies and procedures.

[10-221a](#) High school graduation requirements. (as amended by P.A. 00-124, An Act Concerning High School Diplomas and Veterans of World War II, P.A. 00-156, An Act Requiring A Civics Course for High School Graduation and P.A. 08-138, An Act Concerning High School Credit for Private World Language Courses ,Other Subject Areas) and P.A. 10-111, An Act Concerning Education Reform in Connecticut.

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