

Instruction

Distance Education

Virtual/Online Courses

The mission of the Newtown Public Schools, a partnership of students, families, educators and community, is to INSPIRE EACH STUDENT TO EXCEL in attaining and applying the knowledge, skills and attributes that lead to personal success while becoming a contributing member of a dynamic global community. We accomplish this by creating an unparalleled learning environment characterized by:

High expectations
Quality instruction
Continuous improvement
Civic responsibility

The Board of Education believes that education through virtual/online courses or through university or college courses is an alternative (effective) means of instruction for students. A virtual school is hereby defined as an educational organization that offers courses at various grade levels through Internet or Web-based methods. These schools can offer courses to enhance, supplement or enrich the existing curriculum and can also provide an alternative means of instruction. Interactive distance learning does not require the student to be physically present in the same location as the instructor or other students.

Virtual/on-line courses will be part of this District'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.

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 (a) the workload required by the on-line course is equivalent to that of a similar course taught in a traditional District classroom setting, (b) the content is rigorous and aligned with curriculum guidelines approved by the State Board of Education, where appropriate, (c) 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, (d) the online course does not replicate a course already offered at the high school and (e) the courses are (1) taught by teachers who are certified in the state or another state and have received training on teaching in an on-line environment, or (2) offered by institutions of higher education that are accredited by the Department of Higher Education or regionally accredited.

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The Board of Education recognizes students may benefit from on-line courses or post-secondary courses to assist students in obtaining credits necessary to earn a diploma, to maintain academic standings or to provide enrichment for those who might require special courses.

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, may be allowed to complete on-line District-approved coursework toward meeting high school graduation requirements. The high school shall designate, from among existing staff, an online learning coordinator to administer and coordinate the online credit recovery program.

The District will not use on-line courses as the sole medium for instruction in any required subject area for students in grades K-8.

The District will integrate on-line courses as part of the regular instruction provided by a certified teacher for grades K-12.

High school students may earn academic credits to be applied toward graduation requirements by completing online courses through agencies approved by the Board.

Credit from an accredited online or virtual course or a university/college course may be earned only in the following circumstances:

1. The course is not offered at the District's high school.
2. The high school does offer the course, but the student is unable to take it due to an unavoidable scheduling conflict.
3. The course will serve as an alternative or a supplement to extended homebound instruction.
4. The District has expelled the student from the regular school setting, and the student has been offered an alternative educational opportunity.
5. The Principal, with agreement from the student's teachers and parents/guardians, determines the student requires a differentiated or accelerated learning environment.
6. Students taking such courses must be enrolled in the District and take the courses during the regular school day at the school site.
7. A student has failed a course and wishes to recover credits in that course area.
8. The student's PPT or Section 504 Team has determined it to be an appropriate means of instruction.

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Virtual/Online Courses (continued)

As determined by Board/school policy, students applying for permission to take a virtual/online course will do the following:

- Complete prerequisites and 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.
- Adhere to the District code of conduct to include rules of behavior and consequences for violations.
- Adhere to attendance requirements of the District.

The school must receive an official record of the final grade before awarding credit toward graduation. Only approved courses shall be posted on student transcripts.

Any and all fees imposed on the learner are the sole responsibility of the learner and not the Board of Education or its designee. The Board shall pay the fee for expelled students who are permitted to take virtual courses in alternative settings.

Through its policies and/or supervision plan, the school shall be responsible for providing appropriate supervision and monitoring of students taking virtual courses.

Students will have access to sufficient library media resources such as a “virtual library” available through the World Wide Web, laboratory facilities, technical assistance, and hands-on training and information.

Evaluation

The District will evaluate the educational effectiveness of the distance education courses and the teaching/learning process to include assessments based on state curriculum standards as well as student satisfaction. 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.

- Approval of any course shall be 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.

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Evaluation (continued)

- On line course delivery must be from institutions accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges or Western Association of Schools and Colleges or if the program is recognized by the Connecticut State Department of Education as having appropriate academic standards.

(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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NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Newtown, Connecticut