

# how to start an

# ONLINE LEARNING

## program

Online learning can expand student options, provide new distribution models for staffing for hard-to-fill subjects, and power blended learning. It shares many critical success factors with traditional education, such as relying on excellent educators providing instruction and agency, but there are other differences that require a solid plan and well-developed strategy.

## 10 STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

### 1 Clarify goals

Expand advanced options including AP, dual enrollment, STEM, and foreign languages.

Provide options for credit recovery.

Offer students choices and options for courses and services.

Add hard to staff courses.

### 2

### Get to know your state policy

Check out iNACOL's [Statement of Principles for Model Legislation in States](#)

See [Digital Learning Now! Report Card](#)

Read [Keeping Pace profile](#)

### 3 Get/Hire the best people

Hire someone with experience to lead the program.

Like traditional delivery, quality depends on great teaching and supports.

### 4 Consider partners

Consider open educational resources and sharing openly developed content across schools & districts.

Consider using an independent consultant with experience in blended and online learning to assist in the planning and implementation.

Research high capacity national partners that can provide turnkey support or a buffet of content, assessment and technology tools for starting an online learning program.

### 5 Pick a platform

If you don't rely on a partner, you'll need to pick a learning management system and content.

### 6 Leverage online learning tools & capacity to blend schools

You may be able to use the LMS, formative assessment tools and the catalog of digital content resources in online learning to power blended classrooms.

### 7 Staffing

Use iNACOL National Quality Standards for Online Teaching to evaluate professional development offerings for educators; or use these standards to create professional development and training. Consider partnering with a College of Education to provide an online teaching license endorsement.

Explore staffing course delivery using distributed teaching models online for hard-to-staff courses.

### 8 Provide guidance on self-blends

Consider making an online class a graduation requirement. Most students will be learning online when they leave high school whether it's in the military, corporate training, or college.

Communicate with guidance counselors about new opportunities to learn online. It's important to provide guidance to students starting in eighth grade about the range of courses offered online in high schools.

### 9 Marketing

Getting the word out about new learning models is important. What makes your offering distinctive? What supports do you provide for registration, counseling, advising and facilitating courses? Can you offer onsite support—for scheduled times and flexible drop in with one-on-one attention?

### 10 Budget

Now it's time to build a budget. You'll need at least six months to plan, hire and train staff; and do some marketing.

Consider reallocation of instructional materials line items for technology hardware, software, content and infrastructure.

The largest budget items are people: educators, administrators and support staff to run programs.

## 8 KEY ISSUES WHEN STARTING AN ONLINE LEARNING PROGRAM:

Source: iNACOL's [How to Start an Online Learning Program](#)

- Funding
- Policies
- Budget/Staffing
- Administrative Systems
- Curriculum
- Teachers
- Students
- Quality

**Content**  
✓ Acquisition  
✓ Purchase options  
✓ OERs  
✓ Content quality  
✓ District alignment  
✓ Linked to student outcomes

**Teaching**  
✓ Instructional standards  
✓ Quality PD for current staff  
✓ Teacher recruitment & hiring  
✓ Teacher evaluation strategies  
✓ Teacher support system

## PLANNING FOR QUALITY: 4 FOCUS AREAS

Source: Evergreen Education Group's [Keeping Pace with K-12 Online & Blended Learning](#)

**Technology**  
✓ Interoperability  
✓ Total Cost of Ownership  
✓ Devices  
✓ Access  
✓ Integration with existing Student Information System (SIS)  
✓ Learning Management System (LMS)

**Operations**  
✓ Facilities  
✓ Student recruitment  
✓ Budget  
✓ Program evaluation  
✓ Strategic planning

## iNACOL QUALITY STANDARDS

[National Quality Standards for Online Courses](#)

[National Quality Standards for Online Teaching](#)

[National Quality Standards for Online Programs](#)

[Measuring Quality from Inputs to Outcomes: Performance Metrics for Online Schools](#)

## FINAL THOUGHTS:

There is no one "right" way to implement online learning. While there may be many paths to a successful online learning program, the focus should remain squarely on student needs and extending their access to high-quality learning opportunities. Always come back to the goal of student learning.

Download Report

[Online Learning: Myths, Reality & Promise](#)  
<http://digitallearningnow.com/dln-smart-series/>

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