

DCSD School Choice Task Force Sub-Committee: On-line Learning Programs

Summary of Online Learning Programs in Colorado

A variety of online learning programs are available to k-12 students in Colorado. Colorado statute defines a distinction among multi-district (statewide), single-district and supplemental online programs.

First, there are 22 multi-district online programs, authorized by 18 school districts, and 11 of which began during the past three years. Multi-district online programs enroll students from any school district in the state. During the 2009/2010 school year, these programs enrolled nearly 13,000 students. The per pupil operating revenue (PPOR) for full-time online students of multi-district online programs is \$6,100, which, per statute, is \$100 less than the DCSD minimum.

Second, there are eight single-district online programs, authorized by eight school districts, in Colorado. Single-district online programs may only enroll in-district residents, with the exception of no more than 10 non-district residents. During the 2009/2010 school year, these programs enrolled 213 students. The PPOR for full-time online students of single-district online programs is equal to the PPOR of traditional brick-and-mortar students of the school district.

Third, there are three supplemental online programs available to students around the state. These programs receive funding on a per course enrollment basis. Tuition for courses is paid by the school district and supplemented by the state.

Summary of Douglas County School District Online Learning Programs

Accordingly, a Douglas County School District (DCSD) offers several online learning opportunities to students. First, DCSD students attending brick-and-mortar schools may choose from many online courses to supplement their regular classes. In the 2009/10 school year, 2,100 students took advantage of these courses to earn 2,750 credits. Second, students may enroll in eDCSD in order to learn full-time online from home. In the 2009/2010 school year, 156 students, 39 of whom were from other school districts, enrolled at eDCSD. Third, students may also enroll at Hope Online in order to learn full-time online at a community-based learning center. In the 2009/2010 school year, 2,846 students, 2,836 of whom were from other school districts, enrolled at Hope Online.

Finally, Douglas County residents also enroll in out of district online learning programs. In the 2009/2010 school year, 2,538 DCSD residents, approximately 400 of whom enrolled in an online school, enrolled in a school outside of DCSD. It will be important to understand why DCSD residents chose these programs instead of DCSD-sponsored options.

Recommendations

The Online Learning Sub-committee of the DCSD School Choice Task Force has developed several recommendations for the DCSD Board of Education's consideration.

1. The DCSD community – parents, students, teachers, counselors, and administrators – need to be made aware of the plethora of online learning options currently available to DCSD students.
2. DCSD schools need to be encouraged to share ideas and best practices, as well as curriculum, so online learning can be used to support students currently enrolled in traditional schools. A program needs to be implemented to enable (i.e. fund) brick-and-mortar DCSD students' enrollment in one or more fully online courses.
3. A financial analysis needs to be developed to determine cost – benefit of DCSD operating a single-district, full-time online program.
4. DCSD needs to reach out to students that are currently enrolled in non-district online schools, discuss the benefits of the DCSD-sponsored online programs and gain an understanding as to why parents opted out of DCSD.
5. Other training opportunities – professional development, parenting, etc. – that DCSD offers online need to be marketed both within the school district and outside of the school district.

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