



<http://www.GAVirtualSchool.org>

**Approved Entities Manual of Best Practices, Policies, and Procedure Tips
For Schools and Districts**

Board Rules, Local Policies and Procedures

Does my district need a local Board rule governing online learning?

Georgia Law O.C.G.A. 20-2-319 grants the State Board of Education and the Department of Education the authority to develop procedures to operate the Georgia Virtual School. State Board Rule 160-8-1.01 provides the Department of Education criteria, policy and procedures for operating the program. Therefore, it is not necessary for local school boards to create a local rule authorizing students to participate in online learning courses offered through the Department of Education's Georgia Virtual School. Some districts have rules that exclude transfer credit from online learning programs that are in direct contradiction to the State Department of Education Board Rule 160-8-1.01 that should be amended.

Do my school and/or district need to develop local policies to determine my district's students' involvement with the Georgia Virtual School?

Yes, your district should make local decisions in several areas of policy and practice. An example of a local policy would be the following:

Students meeting specific county course pre-requisites may enroll in Georgia Virtual School courses pending local school approval.

Some tips have been gathered from online schools and the Department of Education to answer many of the other logistical questions your district may have about student participation in the Georgia Virtual program. These are outlined in the questions and answers below.

Does my district serve private school and home school students?

No, your district does not serve them. Please direct all private and home school students to the Georgia Virtual School website (www.GAVirtualSchool.org) for information and assistance.

How do schools or districts code Georgia Virtual courses in our student information system?

Using the course numbers provided by Georgia Virtual, your district should ensure all Georgia Virtual courses are coded in their student information system by student. All online course numbers follow the same format of

xx.3xxxxxxx and the teacher of record identifier should be 333333333. More details can be found on page 7 of this document.

Funding and Allocation of Units of Instruction

In the State of Georgia, school districts maintain a variety of school schedules. Georgia Virtual School communicates instructional delivery in the language of Carnegie units. This means that for a 4 x 4 block school, 1 period equals 1 Carnegie unit of instruction. For a 6 + period a day schedule, 1 period equals ½ Carnegie unit of instruction.

Will my school or district lose funding for students enrolled in Georgia Virtual School courses?

No. The school claims all funding for students enrolled in Georgia Virtual School and then pays tuition for any student taking a course as a part of the regular school day.

Can the school or district pay for students to take Georgia Virtual courses outside of the regular school day?

Yes, Georgia Virtual has a tuition-based model for students needing courses in addition to their regular school day of FTE funded courses. If the school wishes to pay for these additional, outside-of-the-regular school day courses, the school or district facilitator should follow the directions in the registration system under the school will pay button to ensure that this occurs.

What funds can I use to pay students' tuition?

Districts may use any source of funds to pay for additional units of Georgia Virtual courses for their students that they deem appropriate. Check the local district policies for guidance.

Selection of Students for Enrollment in Georgia Virtual Courses

May I approve any student to take an online course?

Most students can and should take an online course. Students must be 21 or younger. Any necessary course pre-requisites should have been met. The decision to approve students to enroll with Georgia Virtual School is determined by the local school facilitator. Some special education students are not able to be served best in the virtual setting, in which case the local school may decide not to utilize Georgia Virtual School for that particular student.

What about special education students? How will their needs be met?

Most students' IEP or 504 Plan objectives can be easily accommodated in the virtual classroom; however, it is the local school's responsibility, as part of the registration process, to provide Georgia Virtual with a copy of students' IEPs or 504 Plans. They will be reviewed and appropriate accommodations for students within the online learning environment will be implemented. Every attempt will be made to accommodate IEP and 504 Plan requirements; however, as a supplementary program, if Georgia Virtual cannot provide necessary accommodations, the student will not be enrolled in the program.

Is there an application process for my school or district?

No, there is no application process for your school or district. Students register for their courses online at www.GAVirtualSchool.org. However, before students are actually enrolled in their courses, students' choices must be approved through a local school approver/facilitator. When a student from your school registers to take a course online, your school will be contacted to provide that local approver/facilitator.

How do I approve or deny my students' registration choices?

After the local facilitator is identified, an account is created in the registration system and the facilitator is given a log in and password. When a student from the school registers for a Georgia Virtual course, the facilitator will be prompted via email to approve or deny the student's registration choices. The facilitator will do this through the registration system. The system is easy to use, and support is just a phone call or email away. Facilitators will be trained online and have continuous access to online resources to help them approve students for Georgia Virtual courses.

May a student drop a course?

Fall and Spring Semesters

During the fall and spring semesters, students are eligible for a refund during the first thirteen school days that they have access to the course. A student is considered to have access to a course once the semester starts after any of the following occurs: (1) completing the student orientation course, (2) opting out of the student orientation course, or (3) moved into the course on the last start date of the semester. To receive a refund, the student must withdraw from a course while eligible for a refund. For state funded seats, students must withdraw within the first thirteen days of having access to class in order to be eligible to enroll in another course that same semester. A new enrollment is only permitted if the registration window is still open for the semester. State funded seats are limited, so a withdrawal from one state funded enrollment does not guarantee another state funded enrollment.

To withdraw from a course, students should go to the enrollments page and request withdrawal. The facilitator must then approve the withdrawal. If a student is eligible for a refund, the withdrawal process will automatically initiate a refund. There is a \$25 processing fee subtracted from the refund amount. Students who have had course access for more than thirteen school days are not eligible for a refund.

Note that if a student moves from one course to another that is not grounds for a refund. If a request is made to move a student from a full unit AB course to a half credit A or B course, no partial refund will be issued nor will any partial credit carry over to subsequent semesters.

Summer Semester

During the summer semester, students are eligible for a refund during the first three school days that they have access to the course. A student is considered to have access to a course once the semester starts after any of the following occurs: (1) completing the student orientation course, (2) opting out of the student orientation course, or (3) moved into the course on the last start date of the semester.

To withdraw from a course, students should go to the enrollments page and request withdrawal. The facilitator does not need to approve the withdrawal during the summer semester. If a student is eligible for a refund, the withdrawal process will automatically initiate a refund. There is a \$25 processing fee subtracted from the refund amount. Students who have had course access for more than three school days are not eligible for a refund.

Note that if a student moves from one course to another that is not grounds for a refund. If a request is made to move a student from a full unit AB course to a half credit A or B course, no partial refund will be issued nor will any partial credit carry over to subsequent semesters.

Are parents notified of student progress in class(es)?

Yes, parents are given access to view their students' progress in class. Parents can also check the class gradebook and can email teachers anytime. If a parent does not have access to the Internet, Georgia Virtual teachers contact parents directly via telephone at specific times during the course. In addition, once a week an automated calling system contacts the homes to report progress.

Scheduling of Classes & Instruction

Do I need to allocate a classroom or computer lab for a specific period per day in my building for Georgia Virtual School students?

Ideally, you would like to schedule students in a computer lab or provide them with a wireless notebook/classroom. Schools often check out inexpensive netbooks for use by Georgia Virtual students during a period in the media center. You can schedule all Georgia Virtual School students during the same period of the day no matter what subject matter they are taking with the program. Students can sit in the lab, media center, or classroom and complete their online course while being supervised by an adult monitor. High schools often schedule students to take their online learning courses the first or last periods of the day, similar to work study or joint enrollment. This can give students the flexibility to take the class from home or anywhere there is an Internet-connected computer. By scheduling in this manner, you alleviate the need for space or supervision of students. However, this is a bit harder with the middle school student due to transportation issues.

Do I need to supervise my students taking online classes?

You do need to supervise your students only if you schedule the students to take the Georgia Virtual School course in the school building. *Please note – if students are scheduled to take courses during the regular school day in a certain period, the Georgia Virtual teacher will not necessarily be online at that time. Georgia Virtual offers asynchronous learning; therefore, do not set up the expectation for your students that the Georgia Virtual teacher will be “live” with them during the period into which you have scheduled them. Georgia Virtual teachers have 24 hours to respond to student inquiries.*

The following table outlines the pros and cons of requiring the student to take the course within the school building.

Pros

Cons

Supervision in building	Singleton course to schedule around
Comfort level of administration	Need for supervision, space, and technology
Comfort level for parents	Costs of supervision
Ability to check students progress daily face-to-face (facilitators can always check student progress online)	A preliminary study showed students doing other work during that period when taking classes in a building and accessing online class after hours
No transportation issues for Middle School students and parents	Working with final exam and school schedule to ensure student has access to a computer.

Supervision of Students Taking Courses in the School Building

If your school/district requires that students must engage in instruction inside the school building, the following may assist you in scheduling.

- Schedule students into a similar period and provide a supervisor.
- Embed online students into a smaller, traditional class period that has computers in the room and has a regular classroom teacher to “watch over” online students for attendance purposes.
- Schedule students into the media center for their Georgia Virtual class period supervised by media center staff.

The facilitators must still monitor students’ progress, provide students’ Georgia Virtual grades to appropriate local school personnel, and act as a liaison between Georgia Virtual and the students, parents, and local schools when necessary. Facilitators can check student progress online at anytime, from any Internet-connected computer.

Supervision of Students Taking Courses outside the School Building

The local school facilitator will supervise students taking their courses outside of the school building. This will involve keeping up with students' progress, collecting and administering students' Georgia Virtual grades to appropriate, local school personnel, and acting as a liaison between the Georgia Virtual program and the students, parents, and local schools when necessary. Facilitators can check student progress online at anytime, from any Internet-connected computer. If needed, they can access student progress online during the regular school day or schedule after school meetings face-to-face.

How many Carnegie units can a student engage in online learning each semester?

Students may take unlimited units in tuition-based online courses from Georgia Virtual, subject to local school or home school facilitator approval.

What security measures are in place?

Tests are password protected and set up with time limits. Questions on tests are randomized and are implemented from a pool of available questions. Students are locked out of the Internet and cannot communicate with each other during assessments. At any time, if Georgia Virtual instructors suspect academic dishonesty by students, the teacher can require the students to retake the assessment in a proctored setting.

What information do I need to input into my student information and data reporting systems?

Georgia Virtual course numbers are provided on our course catalog available on our home page each semester. When putting a student's schedule in an student information system, input the correct 9 digit course number for the Georgia Virtual course. All Georgia Virtual courses start with a "3" as the first number to the right of the dot (11.3240001). Use 333333333 as a teacher of record in your system for all Georgia Virtual courses.

Local School Facilitators

Do I have to assign a local school facilitator to help students enrolled in Georgia Virtual? If yes, what are his or her responsibilities?

Yes, the local school facilitator is the Georgia Virtual contact person in the local school. This individual may be a classified or certified staff member. Facilitators help the Georgia Virtual teachers and administrators "reach out and touch" the students. They are not the teacher and have no instruction or remediation responsibilities, nor are they responsible for solving technology or accessibility issues if student is taking the course off-site.

What exactly does the facilitator do?

Facilitators have certain responsibilities to help their students be successful; therefore, they do agree to perform duties as needed that may include some or all of the below:

- Approve or deny a student to engage in online learning course through Georgia Virtual. If the facilitator is not the student's counselor, he or she will consult with the appropriate counselor before granting course approval.
- Select the funding method for each student's approved course.

- Provide an IEP or 504 Plan to Georgia Virtual (fax) if a special education student is requesting accommodations.
- Physically check with the students during the first week of class to determine if they have any course concerns, technology concerns, illness, or trouble understanding content, and provide that information to the teacher and/or Georgia Virtual administrators.
- Check students' progress online once a week via the Internet by checking the gradebook in the students' courses or accessing the current grade average posted in the facilitator portal.
- Communicate issues or concerns with or for students to Georgia Virtual administrators.
- Help students solve technology problems, such as facilitating access to a school computer, to help them get started.
- Retrieve final grades from the facilitator portal, and ensure that the grade is transcribed to student's record.

Do facilitators receive any training or have anyone to call at Georgia Virtual when they have a question?

Yes, facilitators will be enrolled in an online training course to support them in getting familiarized with the registration system and learning platform, as well as understanding the expectations for their position and the expectations of participating students. In addition, they will always have access to their online facilitator training course for reference, and may contact their Georgia Virtual regional support person at any time. Facilitators may request Professional Learning Units for completing the online training course.

For the most current information concerning Georgia Virtual School, please visit the website www.gavirtualschool.org or email information@gavirtualschool.org. Policies are subject to change.