

**Your Question:** You asked for information about online schools, particularly about school district or regional partnerships for providing online education.

**Our Response:** Below is some general information about online education – including resources, state examples, and legislation – plus specific information about school district or regional partnerships, including some examples.

Much of the information I found is from the excellent 2015 publication “[Keeping Pace with Digital Learning](#)” from Evergreen Education Group. I recommend reviewing that publication for more information. I also spoke with someone from [iNACOL](#), another great resource for online and personalized learning. If you’d like more information about these topics I’m happy to put you in touch.

## Online Education

### Overview

At the state level, students are generally accessing online programs from one of two categories: (1) state-level virtual schools, and (2) supplemental programs (meaning students in brick-and-mortar schools access online courses to supplement to their coursework). According to “[Keeping Pace with Digital Learning](#),” there are far more students accessing supplemental online courses than full-time virtual schools – 2.25 million students compared to 460,000 students respectively during the 2014-2015 school year (see page 16). In addition, high school students access the majority of supplemental courses, while just under half of students in full-time virtual schools are in high school (see page 20).

Public online education programs generally are divided into three levels, as outlined below. These options are a bit simplified, so I recommend reviewing the “Definitions” section of “[Keeping Pace with Digital Learning](#)” for more detailed information (page 5).

- **State-level virtual schools** are available to students across each respective state (and in some cases, like the Florida Virtual School, to students outside of the state).
- **Regional programs** are run by a school district or a group of districts that provide online instruction to schools within participating districts or to students around the state.
- **Intra-district programs** provide online courses only to students at schools within the district.

### Course Access

One of the more interesting state approaches to supplementary online education is the [Course Access](#) model (more information available in [this report](#)). In short, the states with Course Access programs maintain a course catalog of approved online courses from various providers. There are [seven states](#) with Course Access programs – Florida, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin (page 3). Students around the state may participate in Course Access and the courses are often free or have a small fee attached. Providers can be any number of

### Additional data & links

- ✓ ECS recently released a [50-state overview of Advanced Placement policies](#), with one datapoint on [state supports for encouraging access to AP course work](#). This is worth reviewing, as several states provide access to AP courses through state online schools or other online programs.

organizations, including school districts. For example, one of the largest providers of online courses in Texas's program is a small, rural school district from northern Texas.

### Resources

- [iNACOL](#): This organization focuses on policies and practices around personalized, online, and blended learning and they have a number of [resources](#) and webinars.
  - [Fast Facts About Online Learning](#), October 2013
  - [iNACOL National Standards for Quality Online Courses](#), 2011
  - [Keeping Pace with K-12 Digital Learning Webinar](#), December 2015
- [Digital Learning Now](#): Their [state report cards](#) are particularly interesting.
- [Evergreen Education Group](#): Their notable publications are the “[Keeping Pace](#)” series, published yearly. The “Proof Points: Blended Learning Success in School Districts” series of case studies may be of some interest to you. The case studies highlight how school districts use blended learning to enhance student success (case studies available from their [home page](#)).
- [K-12 Virtual Schools Policy History](#), Office of Research and Education Accountability, Tennessee, 2012: Although it is a bit dated, this brief provides an overview of the history of online schooling both in Tennessee and nationally. There are also some useful resources cited.

### State Programs

Not quite half of states have state virtual schools, and below I highlight just a few. I suggest checking “[Keeping Pace with Digital Learning](#)” for a full overview of state virtual schools (see pages 16 and 72-86).

- **Alabama**: [ACCESS Virtual Learning](#) provides online AP, elective, and other courses for students who are not able to access them through their district or school.
- **Florida**: [Florida Virtual School](#) is one of the oldest and largest state online schools in the country and they serve students from around the state and the country (there is a fee for out-of-state students).
- **Iowa**: [Iowa Learning Online](#) is a program through the Iowa Department of Education providing supplemental online high school courses available to all of Iowa's public school districts, private schools, and home school students (free to public school students). Students may also access AP courses through the University of Iowa's [Iowa Online AP Academy](#).
- **Idaho**: The “[My Courses Idaho](#)” program provides students with access to digital courses offered by K-12 schools, higher education institutions, and the Idaho Digital Learning Academy.

### Legislation

#### Utah

- [S.B. 143](#), 2016: This bill created a grant program for districts to create a competency-based education system using competency-based education, blended learning, and personalized learning.
- [H.B. 277](#), 2016: The Digital Teaching and Learning Grant Program provides funding for implementing digital teaching and learning programs, including professional learning for educators in using digital teaching and learning technology.

## School District and Regional Partnerships

There is less information readily available about district collaborations for providing online education. The best information I found is in the 2015 “[Keeping Pace with Digital Learning](#)” report, pages 87-89 and 90-92. Here is the list of highlighted regional programs (page 88):

TABLE 13

### Regional service agency program example

Regional service agency programs	State	Year online started	No. of districts	Course enrollments	Notes
Indiana Online Academy	Indiana	2005	250	18,896	Statewide program with large summer school enrollments.
MySchool@Kent	Michigan	2012	20	3,000+	More than 750 grade 9–12 students, some full-time.
Capitol Region Education Council	Connecticut	1966	78	800+	Serves students statewide through strategic supplier partnerships.
Capital Area Online Learning Association	Pennsylvania	2009	92	17,193	Districts can customize courses and have flexible teacher options.
Northern Star Online	Minnesota	2003	94	4,466	Fifteen member districts and 94 districts served statewide.
The Greater Southern Tier (GST) BOCES	New York	2005	16	852	GST is one of 29 members that make up the NY Distance Learning Consortium.
Wayne Finger Lake BOCES	New York	2003	25	300	Accelerate U is a statewide program.

Here are links for a few of these programs:

- [Northern Star Online](#) (Minnesota)
- [MySchool@Kent](#) (Michigan)
- [Capital Area Online Learning Association](#) (Pennsylvania)
- Although not highlighted in the report, I also ran across [Genesee Intermediate School District’s GenNet](#) program (Michigan)

I also recommend checking out the following state profiles for additional information: **Washington** on pages 18-19, **Florida** on pages 14-15, and **Virginia** on page 21 (you will also note that Ohio is highlighted on pages 22-23). I did not have time to track down all of these district programs, but I encourage you to look at a few.