

Virtual Education FAQs

Effective August 1, 2026

Question	District Virtual Instruction <i>NDCC 15.1-07-25.4</i>	North Dakota Center for Distance Education <i>NDCC Ch. 15-19 controls; NDCC 15.1-07-25.4 otherwise applies</i>
How should virtual students be treated compared to in-building students?	• Law requires: Students remain district students, subject to the same policies and rules as when taking classes in person. • Best practice: Apply the same prerequisites, registration deadlines, attendance expectations, grading policies, and accountability rules as for in-person students.	• Law requires: Students remain district students, subject to the same policies and rules as when taking classes in person. • Best practice: Be aware that NDCDE has policies in addition to district requirements. Apply the same rules to NDCDE students as in-building students for registration, prerequisites, grading, and accountability.
Who pays for courses? Retakes?	• Law requires: District must pay if it does not offer the course and credit is needed for on-time graduation. • District discretion: No obligation if the course is offered locally; retakes are discretionary. • Best practice: Publish a clear list of what the district covers; mirror in-person retake rules. District covers retakes tied to disability, medical issues, or documented need.	• Law requires: District must provide a Request for School District Approval for Payment of NDCDE Courses Form. District must approve the form and pay for any NDCDE course if: ○ The desired course is not offered locally by the school district ○ Scheduling issues prevent a student from taking a locally offered course ○ The student has previously failed a locally offered course and there is no other teacher for them to retake the course from ○ The student needs the course to meet the requirements of Graduation and/or Choice Ready and the school is unable to offer it locally for the student to still graduate on time Note: Each district must have a written appeal process in instances of applicant denial AND must track the number of approved and denied applications for reporting purposes. • District discretion: School districts should thoughtfully consider whether to pay for a locally offered course if presented with compelling rationale in Reason 5 on the application. The decision of whether to pay for retakes for failed NDCDE courses is at the district's discretion. • Best practice: Utilize the Request for School District Approval for Payment of NDCDE Courses, or create a district-specific application that includes the same key information (including everything from Part 3 and 4).

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Extensions or holds	• Law requires: Nothing specific. • District discretion: District may approve or deny. • Best practice: Approve for good cause (illness, family emergency).	• Law requires: Nothing specific. • District discretion: Local policy governs approval and payment. • Best practice: Same as district virtual — approve for good cause. Treat long-term extensions the same as retakes.
Who pays for supplies and materials?	• Law requires: Nothing specific. • District discretion: Local policy decides. • Best practice: Parents buy items normally provided at home (notebooks, calculators). District provides items normally provided in-person (lab kits, microscopes).	• Law requires: Nothing specific. • District discretion: Local policy decides. • Best practice: Same split as district virtual — parents cover home items; districts cover school-supplied items.
Registration, add, and drop	• Law requires: The law allows districts to require add/drop periods for virtual courses to coincide with in-person deadlines. • Best practice: Use the same registration/add/drop windows as for building-based courses.	• Law requires: The law allows districts to require add/drop periods for NDCDE courses to coincide with in-person deadlines. • Best practice: Use the same registration/add/drop windows as for building-based courses.
Onsite requirements	• Law requires: District may set a minimum number of onsite hours during which virtual or in-person instruction takes place but cannot unreasonably restrict access. • District discretion: Define local requirements for onsite learning. • Best practice: Publish a clear onsite attendance policy so families know when a Statement of Intent to Homeschool should be considered.	• Law requires: District may set a minimum number of onsite hours, but cannot unreasonably restrict access to NDCDE courses. On-site time may include a combination of NDCDE, district virtual, and in-person courses. • District discretion: Define local requirements for on-site learning. • Best practice: Publish a clear onsite attendance policy so families know when a Statement of Intent to Homeschool should be considered.
Grades and credit transfer	• Best practice: District virtual courses count as district courses with the same grading standards as those associated with in-person courses.	• Best practice: NDCDE courses should be accepted by the district regardless of who paid for them and be transcribed and applied to graduation requirements based on the MIS03 code. Districts should establish a policy on which portion of the NDCDE completion certificate they will use to determine the local letter grade (percentage or NDCDE letter grade).
Special education services	• Law requires: District of residence responsible for FAPE and IEP/504 services.	• Law requires: District of residence responsible for FAPE and IEP/504 services. • Best practice: Set a clear process to communicate accommodations to NDCDE, which will assist with implementing them.
Dual credit courses	• Law requires: Parents pay for dual credit regardless of delivery method (NDCC 15.1-25-03).	• Law requires: Same — parents always pay for dual credit.

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Homeschool students (also see Onsite requirements)	• Law: May take in-person or virtual courses through the school, and the school district is entitled to proportionate state payment. The total amount may not exceed the equivalent of one full state aid payment. Students are subject to the rules the district has established for virtual instruction. • Best practice: Communicate virtual course-taking expectations with these families.	• Law: May take NDCDE courses through the school, and the school district is entitled to proportionate state payment. The total amount may not exceed the equivalent of one full state aid payment. Students are subject to the rules the district has established on virtual instruction. • Best practice: Communicate NDCDE course-taking expectations with these families.
Accountability for test scores	• Law requires: District is accountable for the test scores of students in district virtual instruction.	• Law requires: District is accountable for the test scores of students in district virtual instruction. • Best practice: As NDCDE transitions to competency-based education, it will provide districts with information on which standards students have not yet achieved proficiency in after completing NDCDE courses. Districts should review this information when processing NDCDE completion certificates and adjust their procedures to guide interventions and improve test scores.
Learning coaches	• Law requires: Nothing specific. • District discretion: Decide supervision requirements. • Best practice: On campus → district provides a Learning Coach. At home → parent designates a learning coach outside the immediate household.	• Law requires: Nothing specific. • NDCDE requires: On campus → district provides a Learning Coach. At home → parent designates a learning coach outside the immediate household.
Summer school	• Law requires: Courses listed in 15.1-21-16, whether virtual or in person, qualify for payment as provided in section 15.1-27-19. Registration, pre-reqs, and onsite requirements for summer virtual courses cannot exceed those established for in-person summer courses (NDCC 15.1-07-25.4).	• Law requires: Courses listed in 15.1-21-16, including those the district pays for through NDCDE, qualify for payment as provided in section 15.1-27-19. Registration, pre-reqs, and onsite requirements for district-paid summer courses through NDCDE cannot exceed those established for in-person summer courses (NDCC 15.1-07-25.4).