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South Dakota Virtual High School FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the South Dakota Virtual High School?

The South Dakota Virtual High School is a clearinghouse of distance courses offered by providers that have been approved by the South Dakota Department of Education. Courses are offered in a variety of formats, but mainly online or via the Digital Dakota Network. The goal of the Virtual High School is to provide choice, flexibility, quality and equity for students across the state. It is located at www.sdvhs.k12.sd.us.

Who can use it?

Any high school student enrolled in a South Dakota school can take courses via SDVHS. This includes students at public, private, and tribal and BIA schools. Interested students must work with their school's Virtual High School coordinator to make sure virtual classes are the best option available. Home school students can take advantage of the curriculum offerings, as long as they enroll and register through their resident public school district.

How does registration work?

Registration is done electronically at www.sdvhs.k12.sd.us. Schools are responsible for registering students. **Students may not register on their own.**

Each South Dakota high school that wishes to participate in SDVHS will be issued a unique log-in and password from the Department of Education. From the SDVHS homepage, the school's designated representative – generally, a counselor or principal – can log in and register students online. Once a school has registered a student, the provider has the option to approve or deny the registration. The school will receive electronic notification of the status of the application. The provider will initiate direct communication with the school at this point.

When is it appropriate to take classes via SDVHS?

Virtual methods of learning can be great options in many situations. Some of these situations include:

- Students who encounter **scheduling conflicts**.
- Students who want to take **courses** not offered in their resident district.
- Students looking for **advanced** coursework.
- Students needing **credit recovery** due to failure, illness or other issues.
- **Home school students** wishing to take advantage of virtual coursework.
- Schools **not able to find qualified staff** to teach a particular course.

What is the cost, and who pays?

The cost of courses available via the South Dakota Virtual High School depends on the provider, the length of the course, and sometimes by the number of students enrolled in a particular course. Most of the current course offerings fall into a range between \$200 and \$350 per ½-credit course.

In general, the resident school district covers the cost of students taking courses via SDVHS. However, a school may deny a student's request to take a virtual course. There may be cases when the school asks the student to pick up part or all of the cost, before approving a request. The districts may use their state aid to pay for virtual courses in the same way they use it for students taking traditional courses.

Does a school have to grant every request?

Schools have the right to deny a student's request to take a virtual course. For example, a school may determine that a student is not a good candidate for virtual learning. Or, a school district may have a policy that prohibits students from taking virtual courses if the course is offered in a traditional classroom setting within the district.

Do students receive credit for courses taken via SDVHS?

Yes, students receive credit for courses taken via the South Dakota Virtual High School. While the course provider issues the grade for a course, it is the school's responsibility to issue any credit associated with the course. The South Dakota Virtual High School does not grant credit or diplomas.

What is the school's responsibility for students taking virtual courses?

Before registering any student for a SDVHS course, a school must agree that they will monitor student progress in the course and proctor any related assessments. Schools are required to sign an agreement stating that they understand these requirements. Schools also issue any credit related to the course.

Who provides SDVHS courses, and how are they approved?

The South Dakota Virtual High School currently has several approved providers: APEX Learning, DIAL Virtual School, The Virtual Campus (Rapid City School District), and Northern State University's E-learning Center. Potential providers may apply to the South Dakota Department of Education at any time. There is a \$100 application fee, and approved providers must reapply every three years. The department evaluates provider applications based on the following criteria:

- Course content must align to state standards.
- Distance learning instructional staff must have the same qualifications as teachers in a traditional physical school setting.
- Distance learning instructional staff must annually demonstrate proficiency in delivering instruction via the distance learning delivery system.
- The provider must offer professional development to instructional staff delivering distance courses.

How are SDVHS courses approved?

In addition to approving providers, the South Dakota Department of Education approves **each course** offered via the South Dakota Virtual High School. Courses are approved only if the following factors are in place:

- Alignment with state content standards
- Qualified instructional staff
- Evaluation component to demonstrate course completion

- Assurance that provider will work with local district to meet special needs in order to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Can students with special needs take online courses?

Yes, students with special needs may take virtual courses as long as the student, the school and the Individualized Education Program team agree that it is appropriate. School districts work directly with providers to ensure that the course is aligned with the student's instructional program.

Can adult students take courses via SDVHS?

The decision is up to the local district. Districts are not required to admit any student over the age of 21. However, they are not prohibited from doing so. Adult students also have the option of registering through the South Dakota Department of Education, rather than the local district.

Can any district take advantage of courses offered by the E-learning Center?

Northern State University's E-learning Center is one of the providers approved to offer courses via the South Dakota Virtual High School. E-learning Center courses are provided free to schools, according to a priority ranking determined by the South Dakota Department of Education. The ranking gives top priority to small, rural schools. Because of this unique arrangement, schools interested in registering their students for E-learning Center courses need to work directly with the E-learning Center. Registration is not available through the South Dakota Virtual High School.

For more information

For more information about the South Dakota Virtual High School, contact the South Dakota Department of Education at (605) 773-3134.