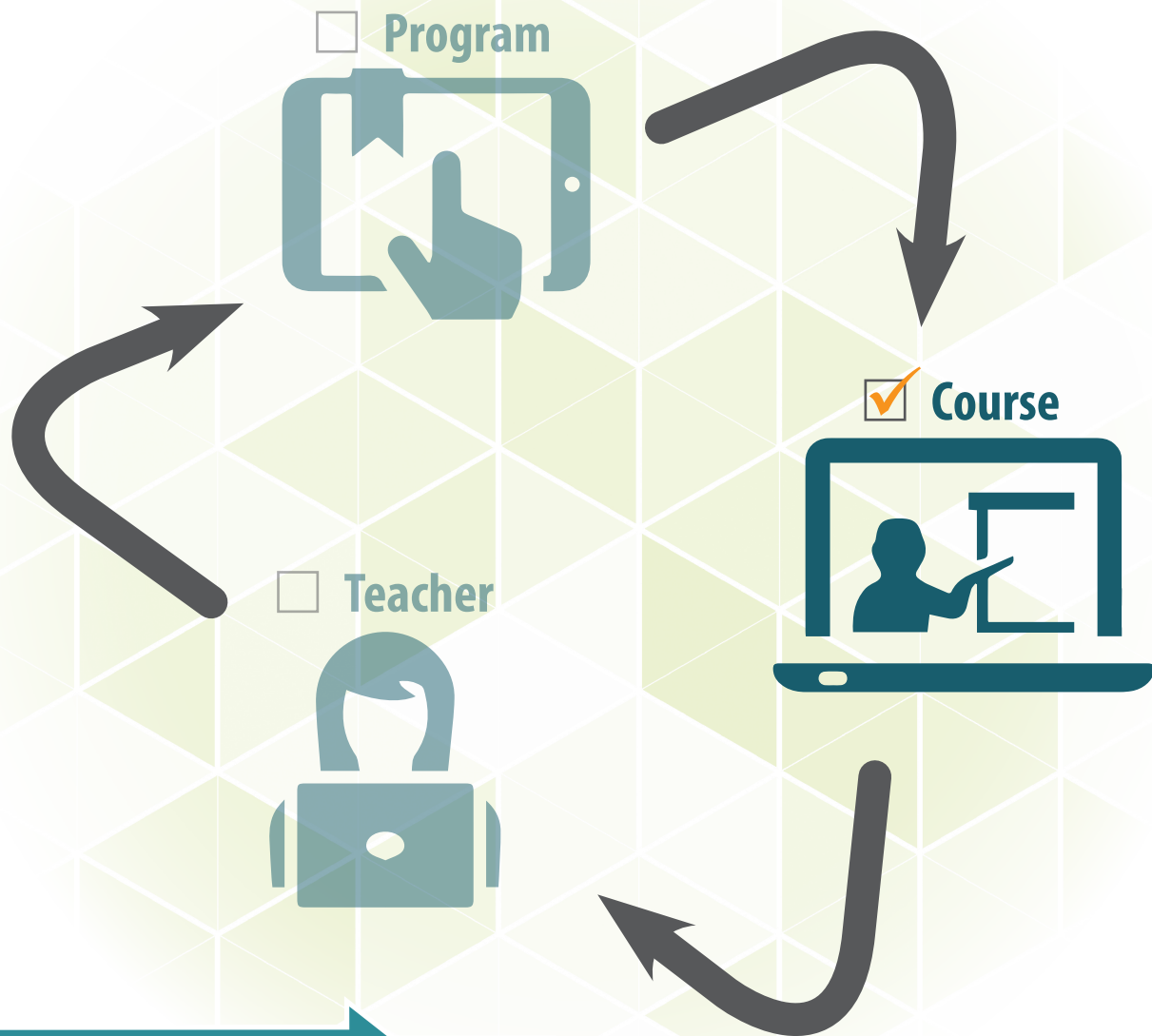


Meeting the Needs of Students with Disabilities in K-12 Online Learning:

An Analysis of the iNACOL Standards for Quality Online Courses

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About Michigan Virtual Learning Research Institute

In 2012, the Governor and Michigan Legislature passed legislation requiring *Michigan Virtual University*® (MVU®) to establish a center for online learning research and innovation, and through this center, directed MVU to work on a variety of projects. The center, known formally as *Michigan Virtual Learning Research Institute*™ (MVLRI™), is a natural extension of the work of MVU. Established in 1998, MVU's mission is to advance K-12 education through digital learning, research, innovation, policy, and partnerships. Toward that end, the core strategies of MVLRI are:

- Research – Expand the K-12 online and blended learning knowledge base through high quality, high impact research;
 - Policy – Inform local, state, and national public education policy strategies that reinforce and support online and blended learning opportunities for the K-12 community;
 - Innovation – Experiment with new technologies and online learning models to foster expanded learning opportunities for K-12 students; and
- Networks – Develop human and web-based applications and infrastructures for sharing information and implementing K-12 online and blended learning best practices.

MVU dedicates a small number of staff members to MVLRI projects as well as augments its capacity through a Fellows program drawing from state and national experts in K-12 online learning from K-12 schooling, higher education, and private industry. These experts work alongside MVU staff to provide research, evaluation, and development expertise and support.

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Course Standards¹

Students and their parents may choose to enroll in online courses as supplemental support, for credit recovery, or because they need the flexibility of a fully online program (Gemin, Pape, Vashaw, & Watson, 2015). Although students, including those with disabilities, may enroll in online courses because they perceive that such a course will meet their educational needs that does not mean those needs will automatically be met (Barbour, Archambault, & DiPietro, 2013). Consequences of not meeting those needs for students with disabilities include high non-completion rates and poor achievement (Deshler, Rice, & Greer, 2014; Franklin, Rice, East, & Mellard, 2015a)

To provide some guidance on quality online programs *National Standards for Quality Online Courses* were developed through the International Association of K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL, 2011). While many of the elements of these standards can be applied easily to students with disabilities, more recent additional research has suggested ways in which online school programs can be more effective in helping students with disabilities remain in these programs and be successful. Some of these recommendations are relevant to course designers:

- Consider the text complexity and anticipate comprehension issues that students with low reading skills might have with reading online (Greer, Rice, & Deshler, 2014; Leu, et. al, 2009; Rice & Greer, 2014);
- Employ more rigorous procedures for construct validity in online courses (Adelstein & Barbour, 2016);
- Solicit feedback from parents as well as student users with and without disabilities and separate their feedback for comparison (Beck, Egalite, & Maranto, 2014);
- Include course supports that anticipate and leverage the roles of learning coaches as they persist in online courses alongside students (Franklin, Rice, East, Mellard, 2015b; Hasler-Waters, 2012);
- Collaborate with vendors in making curriculum that is appropriate for students with various exceptionalities (Franklin, Rice, East, & Mellard, 2015; Greer, Rice, & Deshler, 2014); and
- Design courses to allow for multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression (CAST, 2011).

In order to bring issues of disability service to the attention of online programs and define the responsibilities of these programs, researchers at the University of Kansas undertook a review process to incorporate newly emerging understanding of how programs can serve students with

¹This is the third report in a series of reports offering suggestions for revisions to iNACOL Quality Teaching Standards. The first report is an overview of the entire project. It can be accessed at <http://media.mivu.org/institute/pdf/MeetingNeeds1.pdf>. The second report addresses the National Standards for Quality Online Programs. It is available at <http://media.mivu.org/institute/pdf/MeetingNeeds2.pdf>. The fourth report addresses the National Standards for Quality Online Teaching, available at <http://media.mivu.org/institute/pdf/MeetingNeeds4.pdf>.

disabilities well into iNACOL's *National Standards for Quality Online Courses* (iNACOL, 2011). The team working on this review engaged in the following procedures.

1. Team members performed a thorough review of the existing course standards (iNACOL, 2011).
2. Team members acquired and reviewed recent research and disability legislation,
3. particularly the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
4. Two team members individually reviewed the standards against the research and legislation, noting where the research/laws did not appear or did not support a given standard. Team members then either (a) suggested revisions to the existing standard to include the relevant research/law, or (b) proposed a new standard.
5. Team members came together after their independent reviews to share their findings and discuss language and other modifications to the standards. Where there was disagreement about the level to which language should be changed, or added, a third member added additional perspectives.
6. The revised and newly written program standards were presented to an invited panel of experts (please see description of expert reviewers below), using Qualtrics survey software, for commentary along the dimensions of (1) relevance to students with disabilities, (2) specificity of language, (3) level of competency needed to perform said standard, and (4) difficulty of implementation. All the dimensions were rated on a five-point scale, except specificity, which was rated on a four-point scale. On all the dimensions, a higher score was desirable and indicated that the standard was of good quality.
7. Reviewer feedback was considered, and revisions were made to incorporate reviewer feedback.
8. The revised and newly proposed program standards were presented to a focus group of experts, some of whom had provided input via the Qualtrics survey while others were new to the conversation. These reviewers made further commentary. When panelists could not attend the synchronous meeting, they were invited to share their perspectives in individual telephone calls.
9. Final revision and new standards suggestions were delivered to *MVLRI* for inclusion in their larger review of the standards.

During the review process, members of the research team identified individuals who could comment on both online education and students with disabilities. The ratings from the Qualtrics-based review were used to guide the teleconference; standards that scored low on one or more dimensions were focal points of the conversation.

Thus, following the stages of standards review and revision outlined above, final versions of proposed revisions to the iNACOL *National Standards for Quality Online Courses* emerged. The major considerations that emerged revolved around ensuring that the notions of accommodation and modification as outlined in IDEA 2004 and Section 508 were infused into the standards as law, not as a “nice thing to do.” This focus included prompts for courses to consider the text complexity of their materials and to plan assessments that will provide data sufficient to make decisions about

students at all present levels of achievement. This includes providing enough “easy” items and “difficult” items and that multiple forms of assessment data are gathered and used in an online learning course. In accordance with IDEA, this data should also be put into forms where they can be shared with parents and students for decision-making purposes. Another area of focus emphasized in the revisions was Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (CAST, 2011). While the present standards were attending to ideas from UDL that focused on input – (e.g., visual and audio text) the revisions are attuned to place a greater emphasis on output from the students in multiple and varied forms. Other aspects of UDL were also included, such as guided goal setting. More than well-written objectives, UDL asks instructional designers to include learners as decision makers in determining whether to learn, what to learn, what to use to learn, how to learn, and how to show learning.

These revisions include a justification for the indicated changes that stem from cited research and law. The suggestions for revision have several important potential implications for improving the learning experiences of students with disabilities in online learning settings. These implications center on practice, research, and policy.

Practice Implications

At present, it seems unclear what the pathway is to becoming an online course designer. Some of these designers may be trained teachers, other administrators, and still others might be individuals with educational or instructional psychology training. Perhaps some are content experts who learned how to develop modules on the job. What is apparent is that course designers need professional knowledge about students with disabilities to plan courses that meet their needs. This knowledge may be developed in initial preparation, although as stated it seems there are many pathways to becoming a course designer. More likely, professional development will need to occur in programs, and it would be beneficial to consult special education teachers and administrators during the course design process.

Research Implications

In terms of research, researchers should learn more about how course designers are prepared for their work and how they make decisions about learner variability as they build modules and courses. Further, more research is needed around the use of data for students with disabilities in online learning environments since the course is where instruction is personalized. These data should focus on course enrollment, but also progress at the lesson or module level. Researchers can also work with course designers to embed programming that tracks the use of student supports, which could provide data for analyzing when and how students with disabilities access in-course supports.

Policy Implications

Policies around course design for students with disabilities should be developed at the state level. These policies include requirements to adhere to section 508 guidelines; but there need to be requirements for data collection, student information privacy in regards to disability, and reporting to relevant agencies as well. In addition, states should develop policies around qualifications for course design member teams to have preparation in disability accommodation and modification.

Data Analysis Documents

The remainder of this document is comprised of a list of the original program standards, the suggestions determined by professional consensus, and the rationale based on research. This list appears as Appendix A. This document also includes a list of the ratings, the range of the ratings, and the average rating of each of the proposed revised standards. These ratings appear as Appendix B.

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Appendix A

Suggested Changes to Course Standards and Accompanying Justifications

A: Content

Current Standard

The course provides online learners with multiple ways of engaging with learning experiences that promote their mastery of content and are aligned with state or national content standards.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

A-1

Current Standard

The goals and objectives clearly state what the participants will know or be able to do at the end of the course. The goals and objectives are measurable in multiple ways.

Recommended Revision to Standard

The goals and objectives clearly state what students will know or be able to do at the end of the course. The goals and objectives are measurable, have high potential for compatibility with disability service plans, and allow for multiple means of expression of learning.

Justification

Students with disabilities should be served through the implementation of social and academic goals that consider their present levels of achievement and move them to greater competency (IDEA, 2004). Multiple means of expression is a critical component in the Universal Design for Learning framework for instruction (Rose & Meyer, 2002).

A-2

Current Standard

The course content and assignments are aligned with the state's content standards, common core curriculum, or other accepted content standards set for Advanced Placement® courses, technology, computer science, or other courses whose content is not included in the state standards.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

A-3

Current Standard

The course content and assignments are of sufficient rigor, depth and breadth to teach the standards being addressed.

Recommended Revision to Standard

The course content and assignments are of appropriate rigor, depth, and breadth to teach the standards being addressed.

Justification

Students with disabilities are entitled Free and Appropriate Education in public school settings (IDEA, 2004).

A-4

Current Standard

Information literacy and communication skills are incorporated and taught as an integral part of the curriculum.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

A-5

Current Standard

Multiple learning resources and materials to increase student success are available to students before the course begins.

Recommended Revision to Standard

Course assignments are segmented into readily comprehensible units to help reduce cognitive load. Course assignments and learning resources are sufficiently available, accessible, and adaptable to meet the needs of all students.

Justification

Content is instructionally enhanced through strategic organization that is shared with the students (Bulgren, Deshler, & Lenz, 2007).

A-6

Current Standard

A clear, complete course overview and syllabus are included in the course.

Recommended Revision to Standard

A course overview and syllabus are included in the course with clear and consistent navigation through syllabi.

Justification

Section 508 requires that individuals with disabilities are given the same access to the course that those without disabilities have.

A-7

Current Standard

Course requirements are consistent with course goals, are representative of the scope of the course, and are clearly stated.

Recommended Revision to Standard

Course requirements are consistent with course goals, are representative of the scope of the course, and are clearly stated to reflect important knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Justification

Quality assurance measures for online courses across institutions have clear course requirements (Britto, Ford, & Wise, 2013).

A-8

Current Standard

Information is provided to students, parents and mentors on how to communicate with the online instructor and course provider.

Recommended Revision to Standard

The course provides information to students, parents, and mentors about communicating with the online instructor, course provider, counselors, SPED teachers, and other support staff (e.g., related services professionals).

Justification

Parents of students with disabilities are often caught unaware of the time and work commitments involved in online learning and they are not always able to find the support they need (Franklin, Burdette, East, Mellard, 2015; Franklin, Rice, East & Mellard, 2015).

A-9

Current Standard

The course reflects multi-cultural education, and the content is accurate, current and free of bias or advertising.

Recommended Revision to Standard

Course design reflects multicultural education; course content depicts multiple perspectives and promotes the student evaluation of materials (as necessary) for bias and advertising.

Justification

All students benefit from curriculum that intentionally leverages multiple perspectives for learning (Terwel, 2005; Gannon-Cook, 2016).

A-10

Current Standard

Expectations for academic integrity, use of copyrighted materials, plagiarism and netiquette (Internet etiquette) regarding lesson activities, discussions, and e-mail communications are clearly stated.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

A-11

Current Standard

Privacy policies are clearly stated.

Recommended Revision to Standard

Course privacy policies are clearly stated and reveal the terms under which information, such as disability status, is confidential.

Justification

IDEA requires that schools keep information about disability status confidential (IDEA, 2004).

A-12

Current Standard

Online instructor resources and notes are included.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

A-13

Current Standard

Assessment and assignment answers and explanations are included.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

B: Instructional Design

Current Standard

The course uses learning activities that engage students in active learning; provides students with multiple learning paths to master; the content is based on student needs; and provides ample opportunities for interaction and communication — student-to-student, student-to-instructor and instructor-to-student.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

B-1

Current Standard

Course design reflects a clear understanding of all students' needs and incorporates varied ways to learn and master the curriculum.

Recommended Revision to Standard

Course design incorporates feedback channels for teachers to recommend changes or additions to resources, design, or content.

Recommended Additional Standard

Multiple peer grouping structures are enabled within the course.

Justification

Students with disabilities benefit from multiple grouping structures while receiving instruction from teachers (Swanson, 1999).

B-2

Current Standard

The course is organized by units and lessons that fall into a logical sequence. Each unit and lesson includes an overview describing objectives, activities, assignments, assessments, and resources to provide multiple learning opportunities for students to master the content.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

B-3

Current Standard

The course instruction includes activities that engage students in active learning.

Recommended Revision to Standard

Course instruction includes activities that engage students in active learning where they are provided choices and guided in finding their strengths.

Justification

Learners benefit from the opportunity to engage in project-based learning where they can set their own goals for learning (English & Kitsantas, 2013).

B-4

Current Standard

The course and course instructor provide students with multiple learning paths, based on student needs that engage students in a variety of ways.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

B-5

Current Standard

The course provides opportunities for students to engage in higher-order thinking, critical reasoning activities and thinking in increasingly complex ways.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

B-6

Current Standard

The course provides options for the instructor to adapt learning activities to accommodate students' needs.

Recommended Revision to Standard

The course provides options for instructors, parents, and mentors to adapt learning activities to accommodate student needs.

Justification

Parent involvement in decision making is a core principle of IDEA (2004). Further, research has suggested that there are others besides teachers and parents who may assist a child working on an online course (Hasler-Waters & Leong, 2014).

B-7

Current Standard

Readability levels, written language assignments and mathematical requirements are appropriate for the course content and grade-level expectations.

Recommended Revision to Standard

A quality online course provides information to students, parents, and teachers about difficult aspects of the course (e.g., readability level) and includes access to additional resources for support.

Justification

Reading difficulties for students with disabilities are persistent by middle school. Interventions (except fluency) have low to moderate effects (Bulgren, Graner, & Deshler, 2013; Flynn, Zheng, & Swanson, 2012; Israel, Maynard, & Williamson, 2013).

B-8

Current Standard

The course design provides opportunities for appropriate instructor-student interaction, including opportunities for timely and frequent feedback about student progress.

Recommended Additional Standard

The course design provides multiple forms of feedback to students and parents about progress.

Justification

Students with learning disabilities make greater improvements when provided with specific immediate feedback on their work (Bulgren, Graner, & Deshler, 2013; Swanson, 1999).

B-9

Current Standard

The course design includes explicit communication/activities (both before and during the first week of the course) that confirms whether students are engaged and are progressing through the course. The instructor will follow program guidelines to address non-responsive students.

Recommended Additional Standard

The course design provides explicit information about the responsibilities shared between instructors and parents for monitoring student progress throughout the course.

Justification

To instruct and assess students with disabilities, instructors rely more on parent cooperation (Rice, & Carter, 2015).

B-10

Current Standard

The course provides opportunities for appropriate instructor-student and student-student interaction to foster mastery and application of the material.

Recommended Revision to Standard

The course provides opportunities for appropriate varied instructor-to-student and peer-to-peer interactions (e.g., dyads and small group, rather than merely discussion posting) to foster mastery and application of the material.

Justification

Variation in peer interaction types influences where peer-to-peer learning occurs for students with disabilities (Johnston, Greer, & Smith, 2014).

B-11

Current Standard

Students have access to resources that enrich the course content.

Recommended Revision to Standard

Students have access to resources that ensure their ability to access the course in a meaningful way (e.g., text-to-speech).

Recommended Additional Standard

Students can contribute resources that enrich the content of the course.

Justification

Students need the ability to engage with curriculum through multiple means (CAST, 2011).

C: Student Assessment

Current Standard

The course uses multiple strategies and activities to assess student readiness for and progress in course content and provides students with feedback on their progress.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

C-1

Current Standard

Student evaluation strategies are consistent with course goals and objectives, are representative of the scope of the course and are clearly stated.

Recommended Revision to Standard

Student evaluation strategies are consistent with course goals and objectives, are representative of the scope of the course, and are valid and reliable for all students, including students with disabilities.

Recommended Additional Standard

Student evaluation instruments have adequate, easy items and difficult ones to properly assess students with disabilities.

Justification

Many instruments, such as universal screeners, may not have been designed to assess students with disabilities adequately. It is important to use appropriate measures in the assessment of students with disabilities to adequately measure their abilities (e.g., Catts, Petscher, Schatschneider, Bridges, & Mendoza 2009), (IDEA, 2004). Further, a greater variety of item difficulty enables personalization (Greer, Rowland, & Smith, 2014).

C-2

Current Standard

The course structure includes adequate and appropriate methods and procedures to assess students' mastery of content.

Recommended Revision to Standard

The course structure includes adequate and appropriate methods and procedures to assess students' content mastery as well as progress in other goals (i.e., IEP).

Justification

Students with disabilities are entitled to goals and services that will help them achieve those goals (IDEA, 2004).

C-3

Current Standard

Ongoing, varied, and frequent assessments are conducted throughout the course to inform instruction.

Recommended Revision to Standard

The course includes on-going, varied, and frequent assessments to inform instruction and progress towards student goals (i.e., Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)).

Justification

IDEA stipulates that student goals must be monitored using data (IDEA, 2004).

C-4

Current Standard

Assessment strategies and tools make the student continuously aware of progress in class and mastery of the content.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

C-5

Current Standard

Assessment materials provide the instructor with the flexibility to assess students in a variety of ways.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

C-6

Current Standard

Grading rubrics are provided to the instructor and may be shared with students.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

C-7

Current Standard

The grading policy and practices are easy to understand

Recommended Revision to Standard

Course grading policies and practices are easy to understand and are reflective of achievement, effort, and progress.

Justification

Students with disabilities are entitled to a Free and Appropriate Education (IDEA, 2004).

D: Technology

Current Standard

The course takes full advantage of a variety of technology tools, has a user-friendly interface and meets accessibility standards for interoperability and access for learners with special needs.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

D-1

Current Standard

The course architecture permits the online instructor to add content, activities and assessments to extend learning opportunities.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

D-2

Current Standard

The course accommodates multiple school calendars; e.g., block, 4X4 and traditional schedules.

Recommended Revision to Standard

The course accommodates multiple school calendars (e.g. block, 4X4, traditional) and is capable of accommodating student schedules due to health impairments or other disabling conditions (e.g. medical appointments or hospital stays).

Justification

Students with disabilities should be provided an education in the Least Restrictive Environment possible, and all placement decisions should be made to accommodate their present levels of achievement and other needs (IDEA, 2004).

D-3

Current Standard

Clear and consistent navigation is present throughout the course.

Recommended Revision to Standard

The course features clear and consistent navigation meeting Section 508 requirements.

Justification

Section 508 stipulates that online information must be equally accessible to all users.

D-4

Current Standard

Rich media are provided in multiple formats for ease of use and access in order to address diverse student needs.

Recommended Revision to Standard

The course uses multiple means of representation to grant students access to course materials and address other needs of diverse students.

Recommended Additional Standard

The richness/aesthetics of media is balanced with efficiency of understanding (i.e., media is optimized for efficient comprehension to minimize cognitive load).

Justification

Illustrations and visuals should supplement the learning from the text without being redundant (Mayer, 1993).

D-5

Current Standard

All technology requirements (including hardware, browser, software, etc.) are specified.

Recommended Additional Standard

A quality online course is designed with the understanding that students have varying access to Internet bandwidth.

Justification

Both schools and families need access to broadband when Internet use is required for school (Waters, 2013).

D-6

Current Standard

Prerequisite skills in the use of technology are identified.

Recommended Revision to Standard

The course specifies prerequisite technological skills for students and parents.

Justification

Students with disabilities and their parents often enter online learning environments unaware of the various demands these courses present (Franklin, Burdette, East, Mellard, 2015; Franklin, Rice, East, Mellard, 2015).

D-7

Current Standard

The course uses content-specific tools and software appropriately.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

D-8

Current Standard

The course is designed to meet internationally recognized interoperability standards.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

D-9

Current Standard

Copyright and licensing status, including permission to share where applicable, is clearly stated and easily found.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

D-10

Current Standard

Course materials and activities are designed to provide appropriate access to all students. The course, developed with universal design principles in mind, conforms to the U.S. Section 504 and Section 508 provisions for electronic and information technology as well as the W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0).

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

D-11

Current Standard

Student information remains confidential, as required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Recommended Revision to Standard

Student information including information about disability status and related testing remains confidential as required by FERPA.

Justification

IDEA safeguards information about disability status (IDEA, 2004).

E: Course Evaluation and Support

Current Standard

Description: The course is evaluated regularly for effectiveness, using a variety of assessment strategies, and the findings are used as a basis for improvement. The course is kept up to date, both in content and in the application of new research on course design and technologies. Online instructors and their students are prepared to teach and learn in an online environment and are provided support during the course.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

E-1

Current Standard

The course provider uses multiple ways of assessing course effectiveness.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

E-2

Current Standard

The course is evaluated using a continuous improvement cycle for effectiveness and the findings used as a basis for improvement.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

E-3

Current Standard

The course is updated periodically to ensure that the content is current.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

E-4

Current Standard

Course instructors, whether face-to-face or virtual, are certificated and “highly qualified.” The online course teacher possesses a teaching credential from a state-licensing agency and is “highly qualified” as defined under ESEA.

Recommended Revision to Standard

Course instructors, whether face-to-face or virtual are certified and otherwise qualified. The instructor possesses a teaching credential from a state-licensing agency and has online preparation and credentials to the greatest extent possible. Educators working with special populations (e.g., students with disabilities, ESL) are credentialed and qualified to work with these populations.

Justification

ESSA/ESEA requires that teachers be qualified for the subjects and populations they teach.

E-5

Current Standard

Professional development about the online course delivery system is offered by the provider to assure effective use of the courseware and various instructional media available.

Recommended Additional Standard

Instructors are provided professional development around how to serve students with diverse needs in an online environment (e.g., SPED, at-risk, gifted, general education) including instruction, social skill development, and goal monitoring.

Justification

Students must have access to educators who are qualified to provide needed services (IDEA, 2004).

E-6

Current Standard

The course provider offers technical support and course management assistance to students, the course instructor, and the school coordinator.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

E-7

Current Standard

Course instructors, whether face-to-face or virtual, have been provided professional development in the behavioral, social, and when necessary, emotional, aspects of the learning environment.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

E-8

Current Standard

Course instructors, whether face-to-face or virtual, receive instructor professional development, which includes the support and use of a variety of communication modes to stimulate student engagement online.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

E-9

Current Standard

The provider assures that course instructors, whether face-to-face or virtual, are provided support, as needed, to ensure their effectiveness and success in meeting the needs of online students.

No suggestions for modifications to this standard

Appendix B

Ratings Resulting from Online Survey: Course Standards

Standard (at time of review)	Rating Dimension	Range	Average Rating
The goals and objectives clearly state what students will know or be able to do at the end of the course. The goals and objectives are measurable, compatible with IEP or other disability service plan goals, and allow for multiple means of expression of learning.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	2-4	3.25
	Competency	2-5	3.75
	Difficulty	3-5	4.25
The course content and assignments are of appropriate rigor, depth, and breadth to teach the standards being addressed.	Relevance	3-5	4.5
	Specificity	2-4	2.5
	Competency	1-4	3
	Difficulty	1-4	3
Course assignments are segmented into readily comprehensible units to help reduce cognitive load. Course assignments and learning resources are sufficiently available, accessible, and adaptable to meet the needs of all students.	Relevance	2-5	4.25
	Specificity	3-4	3.75
	Competency	None	4
	Difficulty	2-4	3
A course overview and syllabus are included in the course with clear and consistent navigation through syllabi.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	3-4	3.75
	Competency	4-5	4.75
	Difficulty	4-5	4.75
Course requirements are consistent with course goals, are representative of the scope of the course, and are clearly stated to reflect important knowledge, skills, and dispositions.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	3-4	3.67
	Competency	None	5
	Difficulty	None	5

Standard (at time of review)	Rating Dimension	Range	Average Rating
The course provides information to students, parents, and mentors about communicating with the online instructor, course provider, counselors, SPED teachers, and other support staff (e.g., related services professionals).	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	3-4	3.75
	Competency	1-5	4
	Difficulty	1-5	4
Course design reflects multicultural education; course content depicts multiple perspectives and promotes the student evaluation of materials (as necessary) for bias and advertising.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	3-4	3.75
	Competency	4-5	4.75
	Difficulty	4-5	4.75
Course privacy policies are clearly stated and reveal the terms under which information, such as disability status, is confidential.	Relevance	2-5	4.25
	Specificity	None	4
	Competency	None	5
	Difficulty	4-5	4.75
Course design reflects a clear understanding of all students' needs and incorporates ways to express learning within the curriculum.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	2-3	2.75
	Competency	3-5	3.75
	Difficulty	2-5	3
Multiple peer grouping structures are enabled within the course.	Relevance	4-5	4.75
	Specificity	3-4	3.5
	Competency	4-5	4.75
	Difficulty	4-5	4.5
Course instruction includes activities that engage students in active learning where they are provided choices and guided in finding their strengths.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	3-4	3.75
	Competency	4-5	4.75

Standard (at time of review)	Rating Dimension	Range	Average Rating
(Continued)	Difficulty	2-5	3.75
The course provides options for instructors, parents, and mentors to adapt learning activities to accommodate student needs.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	2-4	3.25
	Competency	2-5	4
	Difficulty	2-5	3
The course specifies readability, written language, and mathematical requirements to students and parents; these are adaptable to the maximum extent possible for course content and grade-level expectations.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	1-4	2.75
	Competency	1-5	2.75
	Difficulty	2-5	2.75
The course design provides multiple forms of feedback to students and parents about progress.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	None	4
	Competency	None	5
	Difficulty	None	5
The course design provides explicit information about the shared responsibilities between instructors and parents for monitoring student progress throughout the course.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	2-4	3.5
	Competency	2-5	4.25
	Difficulty	2-5	4.25
The course provides opportunities for appropriate instructor-to student-and peer-to-peer interactions (e.g., dyads and small group) to foster mastery and application of the material.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	3-4	3.75
	Competency	3-5	4.5
	Difficulty	3-5	4.25
Students have access to resources that ensure their ability to access the course in a meaningful way (e.g., text-to-speech).	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	3-4	3.75

Standard (at time of review)	Rating Dimension	Range	Average Rating
(Continued)	Competency	2-5	3.75
	Difficulty	2-5	3.5
Students have the ability to contribute resources that enrich the content of the course.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	3-4	3.75
	Competency	2-5	4
	Difficulty	2-5	4
Student evaluation strategies are consistent with course goals and objectives, are representative of the scope of the course, and are valid and reliable for all students, including students with disabilities.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	None	4
	Competency	2-5	4.25
	Difficulty	3-5	4
Student evaluation instruments have adequate floors and ceilings to properly assess students with disabilities.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	3-4	3.5
	Competency	2-5	3.75
	Difficulty	2-4	3.25
The course structure includes adequate and appropriate methods and procedures to assess students content mastery as well as progress in other goals (i.e., IEP).	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	3-4	3.5
	Competency	2-5	3.25
	Difficulty	1-5	3
The course includes on-going, varied and frequent assessments to inform instruction and progress towards student goals (i.e., IEP).	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	3-4	3.75
	Competency	3-5	4.5
	Difficulty	2-5	3.75

Standard (at time of review)	Rating Dimension	Range	Average Rating
Course grading policies and practices are easy to understand and are reflective of achievement, effort, and progress.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	None	4
	Competency	4-5	4.75
	Difficulty	2-5	4.25
The course accommodates multiple school calendars (e.g. block 4 x4, traditional) and is capable of accommodating student schedules due to health impairments or other disabling conditions (e.g. medical appointments or hospital stays).	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	None	4
	Competency	2-5	3.75
	Difficulty	1-5	3.75
The course features clear and consistent navigation according to Section 508 requirements.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	None	4
	Competency	2-5	3.75
	Difficulty	2-4	3.25
The course uses multiple means of representation to grant students access to course materials, and address other needs of diverse students.	Relevance	4-5	4.75
	Specificity	2-4	3
	Competency	3-4	3.75
	Difficulty	2-4	3.25
The richness/aesthetics of media is balanced with efficiency of understanding (i.e., media is optimized for efficient comprehension in order to minimize cognitive load).	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	3-4	3.5
	Competency	2-5	3.75
	Difficulty	2-4	3.5
Bandwidth requirements of materials are optimized.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	None	4
	Competency	1-5	3.67

Standard (at time of review)	Rating Dimension	Range	Average Rating
(Continued)	Difficulty	1-3	2
The course specifies prerequisite technological skills for students and parents.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	None	4
	Competency	None	5
	Difficulty	2-5	4
Student information remains confidential as required by FERPA and IDEA, including images of students, student work, anecdotal records, and information about disability status.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	None	4
	Competency	2-5	4.25
	Difficulty	2-5	4.25
Course instructors, whether face-to-face or virtual are certified and otherwise qualified. The instructor possesses a teaching credential from a state-licensing agency and has online preparation and credentials to the greatest extent possible. Educators working with special populations (e.g., students with disabilities, ESL) are credentialed and qualified to work with these populations.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	None	4
	Competency	1-5	3.5
	Difficulty	1-5	3
Instructors are provided professional development around how to serve students with diverse needs in an online environment (e.g., SPED, at-risk, gifted, general education) including instruction, social skill development, and goal monitoring.	Relevance	None	5
	Specificity	None	4
	Competency	1-5	3.5
	Difficulty	1-5	3.5

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